



The Philosophy of Antoine Arnauld

Eric Stencil

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANTOINE ARNAULD

Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) was a wide-ranging and influential thinker and one of the most important philosophical and theological figures of his time. He engaged in theological controversies, took part in philosophical correspondence, sparred with popes and kings, was expelled from the Sorbonne, and penned texts that would have great influence on subsequent generations of thinkers. In this book on Arnauld, the first book-length systematic study of his philosophical thought to appear in English, Eric Stencil draws on texts from throughout Arnauld's corpus to present an analysis of his philosophical thought, with chapters on method and epistemology, ontology, substance dualism, the mind–body union, ideas and perception, human freedom, modality, knowledge of God, God's nature, and the creation doctrine. His book illuminates the richness and originality of Arnauld's philosophical project and its key contributions to Enlightenment-era thought.

ERIC STENCIL is Professor of Philosophy at Utah Valley University. He has published articles in journals including *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, and *History of Philosophy Quarterly*.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANTOINE ARNAULD

ERIC STENCIL

Utah Valley University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009426770

DOI: [10.1017/9781009426756](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009426756)

© Eric Stencil 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI [10.1017/9781009426756](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009426756)

First published 2025

Cover image: Portrait of Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694). Artist: Champaigne, Jean-Baptiste de
(1631–1681) / Heritage Image Partnership Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Stencil, Eric author <http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n2025025773> <http://id.loc.gov/rwo/agents/n2025025773>

TITLE: The philosophy of antoine arnauld / Eric Stencil, Utah Valley University.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press,
2025. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2025025928 (print) | LCCN 2025025929 (ebook) | ISBN 9781009426770
hardback | ISBN 9781009426732 paperback | ISBN 9781009426756 epub

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Arnauld, Antoine, 1612-1694 <http://id.loc.gov/rwo/agents/n50001539>

CLASSIFICATION: LCC B1824.A854 S74 2025 (print) | LCC B1824.A854 (ebook) | DDC 194–dc23/
eng/20250613

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2025025928>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2025025929>

ISBN 978-1-009-42677-0 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal,
56, 1º, 28003 Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org

For Brooke, Gus, Mom, and Dad

Contents

<i>Prologue</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<i>List of Primary Source Abbreviations</i>	xv
INTRODUCTION	I
I Arnald's Life through His Philosophical Texts	3
1.1 From Nominalism to Cartesianism: 1612–1648	4
1.2 The Fronde and the Expulsion from the Sorbonne: 1648–1679	12
1.3 The Exile Years: 1679–1689	17
1.4 Arnald's Thomistic Turn: 1689–1694	20
1.5 Conclusion	22
PART I METHOD, METAPHYSICS, AND EPISTEMOLOGY	23
2 Method and Epistemology: Faith, Reason, and Rationalism	25
2.1 Method and the Sources of Knowledge	26
2.2 Rationalism	37
2.3 The Truth Rule in Descartes and Arnald	42
2.4 Conclusion	48
3 Ontology: Arnald's Dual Dualisms	50
3.1 Dual Dualisms	51
3.2 The Real Distinction Argument and the Trilemma Objection	55
3.3 Arnald's Later Writings on Dualism	66
3.4 Conclusion	69
4 The Mind–Body Union: Sensation, Causation, and Occasionalism	70
4.1 Efficient Causation, Occasional Causation, and Occasionalism	71
4.2 Arnald's Objections to Descartes and Descartes's Replies	74
4.3 Mind–Body Union in the <i>Logic</i>	78

4.4	Mitigated Occasionalism in the <i>Examen</i> and Later Texts	81
4.5	Conclusion	87
5	Ideas: Perception and the Polemic with Malebranche	91
5.1	(In)direct Realism and Act Theories of Ideas	92
5.2	Malebranche	95
5.3	Malebranche–Arnauld Polemic	97
5.4	Direct Realism or Indirect Realism	104
5.5	Conclusion and Some Taxonomical Considerations	115
6	Human Freedom: Jansenism, Thomism, and the Power to Do the Opposite	118
6.1	Molina, Bañez, and Jansen	122
6.2	Arnauld's Letters on Freedom	125
6.3	<i>De Libertate</i>	133
6.4	Reconciliation	135
7	Modality: Arnauld's Actualism	142
7.1	The Complete Concept Theory of Substance	144
7.2	Arnauld's Nature	147
7.3	Against Purely Possible Substances	151
7.4	Arnauld's Positive Account	157
7.5	Conclusion	164
	PART II GOD	165
	Preface to Part II: Conceptions of God	167
	The Voluntarist Conception of God	168
	The Rationalist Conception of God	174
	Interpretations of Arnauld	178
8	Knowledge of God: Sources and Scope	181
8.1	Sources of Natural Knowledge of God	183
8.2	The Idea of God	189
8.3	<i>Dieu Caché</i> Considerations	193
8.4	Sensory Experience and Divine Illumination	196
8.5	Knowledge via Faith, and Concluding Remarks	198
9	God's Nature: Simplicity and Rationality	200
9.1	Divine Simplicity	201
9.2	God's Reasons	208
9.3	Conclusion	214
10	God and the Eternal Truths I: 1641–1648	216
10.1	The Epistemic and Metaphysical Creation Doctrines	219
10.2	<i>Philosophical Conclusions</i>	221

	<i>Contents</i>	ix
10.3	<i>Fourth Objections</i>	230
10.4	The Defense and <i>Quod est nomen Dei?</i>	234
10.5	<i>New Objections</i>	240
10.6	Conclusion	243
11	God and the Eternal Truths II: The 1680s	244
11.1	Epistemic Background and the Prima Facie Case	245
11.2	Arnauld's Epistemological Creation Doctrine	247
11.3	Silence, Faith, and the Eternal Truths	257
11.4	Conclusion	260
	Afterword	263
	<i>References</i>	265
	<i>Index</i>	287

Prologue

Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) was an intellectual celebrity and a central figure in the scholarly life of Europe in the latter half of the seventeenth century. He engaged in theological controversies, took part in philosophical correspondence, sparred with popes and kings, was expelled from the Sorbonne, and penned texts that would have great influence on subsequent generations of thinkers. His philosophical exchanges with René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, and Nicolas Malebranche were closely followed by other thinkers of the day. Contemporary scholars agree that Arnauld is a central and important thinker. Nevertheless, Arnauld has been somewhat neglected by contemporary scholars. This book is the first ever English-language monograph on Arnauld's systematic philosophical commitments. My goal is to provide a cohesive account of his main philosophical contributions, deepen our understanding of Arnauld, and demonstrate the originality of Arnauld's philosophical project.

One central theme throughout this book is that, contrary to many treatments, Arnauld is not merely a skilled critic and interlocuter – though he certainly is both of these things. In addition, Arnauld follows a careful, albeit subtle, method, and once this method is established, his philosophy comes into focus, proves systematic, and offers many novel contributions to Enlightenment-era thought. I begin, in Chapter 1, with an account of Arnauld's life and works of philosophical import. I divide Arnauld's life and works into four broad periods based on key events in his life. The rest of the book proceeds in two parts, with Part I focusing on method, metaphysics, and epistemology, and Part II on Arnauld's account of God.

Part I begins, in Chapter 2, with Arnauld's method and his account of the various sources of knowledge, especially his distinction between reason and faith. I also discuss his rationalist epistemology and argue for a subtle difference between Descartes's and Arnauld's epistemologies. In Chapter 3, I outline Arnauld's basic ontology, focusing on his dual dualisms: a substance-mode ontology and a mind–body substance

dualism. I then investigate Arnauld's famous objections to Descartes's real distinction argument and Descartes's replies. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of Arnauld's endorsement of arguments very much like the real distinction argument in later texts. Chapter 4 considers Arnauld's accounts of the mind-body union and causation throughout his whole career. I begin by considering his early worries with the Cartesian account in the *Fourth Objections* and *New Objections*. I then argue that he holds an occasional cause account of body-to-mind interaction in the *Logic* and a mitigated occasionalist account of mind-body interaction in later texts.

Chapter 5 examines Arnauld's account of ideas and his much-debated view of perception. I focus on his debate with Malebranche and argue that Arnauld is best understood as a direct realist (about sensory perception at least). That said, his view eludes straightforward classification and in reflection, both virtual and explicit, ideas are direct objects of perception for Arnauld. Chapter 6 considers his account of human freedom in its historical context. I argue that Arnauld's view of freedom changes later in his life from a compatibilism to a libertarianism. I also argue that many of the cases that Arnauld uses that have been the focus of recent scholarship are not in fact meant to illuminate the nature of human freedom but to defend efficacious grace and its compatibility with human freedom. Finally, I conclude Part I of the book with Chapter 7, which centers on Arnauld's actualist theory of possibility. I argue, focusing on the correspondence with Leibniz, that Arnauld holds an essence-based modal actualist theory of possibility.

In Part II of the book, I consider Arnauld's conception of God and develop a novel interpretation that I call a "partially hidden" conception of God. This account has some similarities to Descartes's conception of God and other similarities to the *Dieu caché* of the Jansenists. I begin with a short preface where I outline two other prominent conceptions of God, the voluntarist conception (focusing on Descartes) and the rationalist conception (focusing on Malebranche). I then outline Arnauld's partially hidden conception of God as well as two other prominent interpretations of Arnauld's God. In Chapter 8, I consider Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God. I develop an interpretation of Arnauld that combines aspects of a Cartesian view that grounds knowledge of God in an innate idea and the Jansenist *Dieu caché* that denies we have any knowledge of God through reason. In brief, Arnauld thinks our innate idea of God grounds some knowledge of God, including that God exists, but he thinks the scope of knowledge this idea allows is quite limited.

Chapter 9 considers Arnauld's account of God's nature, focusing specifically on God's simplicity and whether God acts for reasons. I defend an interpretation of Arnauld where he holds a strong account of divine simplicity, according to which there are only conceptual distinctions among God's attributes. With respect to his account of God's reasons, I argue Arnauld is agnostic about whether God has reasons in any sense (such questions are beyond the scope of reason), but we know that God does not have practical reasons. Chapters 10 and 11 concern whether Arnauld endorsed Descartes's claim that God freely creates the eternal truths. Chapter 10 focuses on texts from early in Arnauld's life (the 1640s) and Chapter 11 on texts from later in his life (mostly the 1680s). I argue, in Chapter 10, that in Arnauld's earliest texts he does not hold any version of the doctrine, but through the 1640s his view develops into an epistemic version of the doctrine, according to which we cannot know whether God creates the eternal truths and we ought not to say of God that God could not have made the eternal truths other than they are. I conclude the book with Chapter 11, where I consider the later texts and show that Arnauld holds this epistemic version of the creation doctrine in these texts as well. I argue, contrary to some recent treatments, that neither Arnauld's commitment to divine simplicity, nor to God's indifferent freedom, commit him to anything stronger than the epistemic version of the doctrine.

Acknowledgments

I have been studying, thinking, and writing about the philosophy of Antoine Arnauld for nearly twenty years and have incurred many debts along the way, a full accounting of which would push this book well past its word limit. I shall instead acknowledge just some of the many people who have contributed and offer sincere apologies to everyone omitted.

I benefited from the generosity of many people who read and commented on earlier drafts of various chapters of this book. Chris Weigel read nearly the entire manuscript at one point or another over the last few years and offered much valuable support and feedback. Steven Nadler read and commented on many chapters, offered many insights and a few potential concerns, and the book benefited significantly from my engaging with them. I received helpful comments on two chapters at meetings of the Utah Early Modern Philosophy group and I thank them for their feedback, especially Alexander Barrientos, Nate Rockwood, and Lex Newman (Lex also provided astute comments on a third chapter). I also thank Tad Schmaltz and Sam Newlands for help and support with the project. Finally, I thank Walter Ott and Kenneth Pearce for valuable comments and discussion on various parts of the project, as well as two readers for Cambridge University Press who offered abundant and invaluable feedback.

I thank Julie Walsh for helpful discussions and suggestions concerning my translations of Arnauld's French (and for being a wonderful collaborator over the years) and Tyson Paskett for helpful discussions and suggestions concerning my translations of Arnauld's Latin.

I am reusing material from three previously published journal articles in this book. I thank *History of Philosophy Quarterly* for permission to reuse material from "Arnaud's God Reconsidered" (36:1, 2019, pp. 19–38), which appears primarily in Chapter 9; *Res Philosophica* for permission to reuse material from "Arnauld's Silence on the Creation of the Eternal Truths" (96:4, 2019, pp. 445–470), which appears primarily in

Chapter 11; and *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* for permission to reuse “Essence and Possibility in the Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence” (97:1, 2016, pp. 2–26), which appears in Chapter 7. I also thank Utah Valley University’s Office of Engaged Learning for fellowship support during the 2020–2021 academic year that allowed for one course of reassigned time in the spring of 2021 and the purchase of numerous books essential to the completion of this project. I also thank Pierre Lamarche for supporting the project in various ways while serving as chair of the Department of Philosophy and Humanities, including securing the funding for a research assistant. I thank David Maxwell for the substantial and high-caliber work as said research assistant, especially on the bibliography and the index.

I wrote my dissertation on the theories of modality of René Descartes and Arnaud. While this book is not directly related to that project (other than Chapter 7 which is a descendant of some of the work in my dissertation), many of my views of Arnaud developed during this time. In addition to some of those thanked above, I also received much feedback and guidance from Alan Sidelle, Dennis Stampe, and Peter Vranas when working on my dissertation.

I thank Cambridge University Press and the production team for their help with the book, and especially Hilary Gaskin for having an interest in the project, and for invaluable (and astonishingly prompt) help throughout the process.

Finally, I want to thank my family for their inexhaustible love and support, including my mother Annette, my father Jim, and my sisters Katy and Kari. I thank my spouse Brooke and my son Gus for more than I can say.

Primary Source Abbreviations

Antoine Arnauld

CA	Arnauld, Antoine. 1699. <i>Causa Arnaldina</i> , edited by Pasquier Quesnel. Apud Hoyoux: Leodici Eburonium.
E	Arnauld, Antoine. 1999. <i>Examen du traité de l'essence du corps contre Descartes</i> . Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard.
K	Arnauld, Antoine. 1990a. <i>On True and False Ideas</i> , translated by Elmar Kremer. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
KM	Arnauld, Antoine. 2003. <i>Oeuvres philosophiques d'Arnauld</i> , edited by Elmar Kremer and Denis Moreau. Bristol: Thoemmes Press.
OA	Arnauld, Antoine. 1775. <i>Oeuvres de Messire Antoine Arnauld</i> , 43 vols. Paris: Sigismond D'Arnay.
PF	Arnauld, Antoine. 1781. <i>La perpétuité de la foi de l'église Catholique touchant l'eucharistie</i> , tome premier. Paris: Sigismond D'Arnay.
SG	Arnauld, Antoine. 1990b. <i>On True and False Ideas</i> , translated by Stephen Gaukroger. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
TP	Arnauld, Antoine. 2001. <i>Textes philosophiques</i> , edited and translated by Denis Moreau. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
<i>Conclusions</i>	<i>Conclusiones philosophicae</i> (OA.38/TP)
<i>Disquisitio</i>	<i>Disquisitio utrum juxta Sanctum Thomam in Sua Summa amor beatificus sit liber ea libertate quam Theologi vocant a necessitate</i> (OA.10)

<i>Dissertation</i>	<i>Dissertation de M. Arnauld sur la manière dont Dieu a fait les fréquens miracles de l'ancienne loi par le ministère des anges</i> (OA.38)
<i>Examen</i>	<i>Examen d'un écrit qui a pour titre: Traité de l'essence du corps, et de l'union de l'âme avec le corps, contre la philosophie de M. Descartes</i> (OA.38/E)
<i>Fourth Objections</i>	<i>Fourth Objections to Descartes's Meditations</i> (OA.38/AT.VII/CSM.II)
<i>Géométrie</i>	<i>Nouvelle éléments de géométrie</i> (OA.42/DD)
<i>Instruction</i>	<i>Instruction sur la Grâce, selon l'Ecriture & les Pères</i> (OA.10)
<i>Neuf lettres</i>	<i>Lettres de M. Arnauld, Docteur de Sorbonne, au Révérend Père Malebranche, Prêtre de l'Oratoire, sur les Idées générales, la Grace & l'étendue intelligible</i> (OA.39)
<i>The New Objections</i>	<i>The New Objections to Descartes's Meditations</i> (OA.38/AT.V/K)
<i>Première Apologie</i>	<i>Apologie de Monsieur Jansénius/Première Apologie pour Jansénius</i> (OA.16)
<i>Réflexions</i>	<i>Réflexions philosophiques et théologiques sur le nouveau système de la nature et de la grâce</i> (OA.39)
<i>Règles</i>	<i>Règles du bon sens</i> (OA.40/TP)
<i>Seconde Apologie</i>	<i>Seconde Apologie pour Jansénius</i> (OA.17)
<i>VFI</i>	<i>On True and False Ideas</i> (OA.38/K/SG)

Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole

B	Arnauld, Antoine and Pierre Nicole. 1996. <i>Logic or the Art of Thinking</i> , translated by Jill Vance Buroker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
CG	Arnauld, Antoine and Pierre Nicole. 1981. <i>La logique ou l'art de penser</i> , edited by Pierre Clair and François Girbal. Paris: Vrin.
Logic	<i>The Port Royal Logic; Logic or the Art of Thinking</i> (OA.41/B)

Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot

RR	Arnauld, Antoine and Claude Lancelot. 1975. <i>The Port Royal Grammar</i> , translated by Jacques Rieux and Bernard E. Rollin. The Hague: Mouton.
Grammar	<i>The Port Royal Grammar</i> (OA.41/RR)

Antoine Arnauld and Gottfried Leibniz

- LR Leibniz, Gottfried and Antoine Arnauld. 1957. *Discours de métaphysique et correspondance avec Arnauld*, edited by Georges Le Roy. Paris: Vrin.
- M Leibniz, Gottfried and Antoine Arnauld. 1967. *The Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence*, translated by H. T. Mason. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- RL Leibniz, Gottfried and Antoine Arnauld. 1952. *Lettres de Leibniz à Arnauld: d'après un manuscrit inédit*, edited by Geneviève (Rodis-)Lewis. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- V Leibniz, Gottfried and Antoine Arnauld. 2016. *The Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence: With Selections from the Correspondence with Ernst, Landgrave of Hessen-Rheinfels*, edited and translated by Stephen Voss. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Arnauld and others

- DD Pascal, Blaise, Antoine Arnauld, and François de Nonancourt. 2009. *Géométries de Port-Royal*, edited by Dominique Descotes. Paris: Honoré Champion.

René Descartes

- AT Descartes, René. 1964–1974. *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 11 vols., edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery. Paris: Vrin.
- CSM Descartes, René. 1984–1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2 vols., translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Douglas Murdoch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CSMK Descartes, René. 1991. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* vol. 3, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugland Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DPW Descartes, René. 1954. *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, translated by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company.
- Fourth Replies* *Author's Replies to the Fourth Set of Objections* (AT.VIII/OA.38/CSM.II)

This format is followed for all other sets of objections and replies to the *Meditations* although only introduced at the first use of the *Fourth Objections and Replies*.

<i>Meditations</i>	<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (AT.VII/CSM.II/DPW)
<i>Principles</i>	<i>Principles of Philosophy</i> (AT.VIIIa/CSM.I)

Gottfried Leibniz

A	Leibniz, Gottfried. 1923–. <i>Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe</i> , edited by the German Academy of Sciences of Berlin. Darmstadt and Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
AG	Leibniz, Gottfried. 1989. <i>Philosophical Essays</i> , edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
G	Leibniz, Gottfried. 1875–1890. <i>Die Philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz</i> , 7 vols., edited by C. I. Gerhardt. Berlin: Weidman.
GM	Leibniz, Gottfried. 1997. <i>Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology</i> , translated by George Montgomery. La Salle: Open Court Publishing.
<i>Discourse</i>	<i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> (G.IV/AG/GM)

Nicolas Malebranche

JS	Malebranche, Nicolas. 1997b. <i>Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion</i> , edited by Nicholas Jolley and David Scott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
LO	Malebranche, Nicolas. 1997a. <i>The Search After Truth</i> , translated by Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
OC	Malebranche, Nicolas. 1958–1986. <i>Oeuvres complètes de Malebranche</i> , 20 vols., edited by André Robinet. Paris: Vrin.
R	Malebranche, Nicolas. 1992. <i>Treatise on Nature and Grace</i> , translated by Patrick Riley. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
<i>Search</i>	<i>Search after Truth</i> (OC.I-III/LO)
<i>Traité</i>	<i>Treatise on Nature and Grace</i> (OC.V/R)

Other

C	Arnauld, Angélique. 1757. <i>Entretiens ou conférences de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld, abbesse et réformatrice de Port-Royal</i> . Brussels: A. Boudet.
---	---

- CP Galen. 1998. *Galen on Antecedent Causes*, translated by R. J. Hankinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DM Cusanus, Nicolaus. 2001. *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism*, translated by Jasper Hopkins. Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning Press.
- DSPW Duns Scotus, John. 1987. *Philosophical Writings*, translated by Allan Wolter. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- EIP Reid, Thomas. 2002. *Thomas Reid: Essays on the Intellectual Power of Man*, edited by Derek Brookes. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- F Fonseca, Pedro da. 1615. *Commentariorum in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae*, tomus secundus. Cologne: Sumptibus Lazari Zetzneri.
- FK William of Ockham. 1991. *Quodlibetal Questions*, translated by Alfred Freddoso and Francis Kelley. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- GB Biel, Gabriel. 1973–1992. *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*, 5 vols., edited by W. Werbeck and U. Hofman. Tübingen: Mohr.
- GV Vásquez, Gabriel. 1631. *Commentariorum ac Disputationum in Primam Partem Sancti Thomae*. Lyon: Sumptibus Jacob Cardon.
- H Hurtado de Mendoza, Pedro. 1624. *Universa Philosophia*, nova editio. Lyon: Ludovici Prost, Haeredis Roville.
- IA Aquinas, Thomas. 1995. *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*, edited by Anton Pegis. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- L Pascal, Blaise. 1963. *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Louis Lafuma. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- MM Al-Ghazâlî, Abû Hâmid. 2000. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, translated by Michael E. Marmura. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.
- N Cordemoy, Géraud de. 2015. *Six Discourses on the Distinction between the Body and the Soul and Treatises on Metaphysics*, translated by Steven Nadler. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- OO Cusanus, Nicolaus. 1932–2007. *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia jussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis*. Leipzig/Hamburg: Meiner.
- OP Cordemoy, Géraud de. 1968. *Oeuvres philosophiques*, edited by Pierre Clair and François Girbal. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

- OPD Desgabets, Dom Robert. 1983. *Oeuvres philosophiques inédites*, 7 vols., edited by J. Beade. Amsterdam: Quadratures.
- OPh William of Ockham. 1974–1988. *Opera Philosophica*, 7 vols., edited by Philotheus Boehner. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute.
- OPW William of Ockham. 1990. *Philosophical Writings*, translated by Philotheus Boehner. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- OTh William of Ockham. 1967–1988. *Opera Theologica*, 10 vols., edited by G. Gál. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute.
- P Pascal, Blaise. 1995. *Pensées and Other Writings*, translated by Honor Levi. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- PSG Régis, Pierre-Sylvain. 1690. *Cours entier de philosophie, ou système général selon les principes de M. Descartes*. Amsterdam: Huguétan.
- S Soto, Domingo de. 1589. *De iustitia et iure, Libri decem*. Medina del Campo: Franciscus à Canto.
- SFTW Suárez, Francisco. 1944. *Selections from Three Works of Francisco Suárez, S.J.*, edited by Gwladys L. Williams, Ammi Brown, and John Waldron. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- SL William of Ockham. 1974. *Ockham's Theory of Terms: Part I of the Summa Logicae*, translated by Michael J. Loux. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- T La Forge, Louis de. 1974. *Oeuvres philosophiques, avec une étude bio-bibliographique*, edited by Pierre Claire. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- THM La Forge, Louis de. 1997. *Treatise on the Human Mind*, translated by Desmond M. Clarke. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Vatican Duns Scotus, John. 1950–2013. *Opera Omnia*, edited by C. Balić and others. Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis.
- WW William of Ockham. 1969. *Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, edited by John F. Wippel and Allan B. Wolter. Toronto, ON: Collier-Macmillan.

Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

Introduction

Arnauld's Life through His Philosophical Texts

Antone Arnauld was a major figure in the intellectual landscape of France for the majority of the seventeenth century. Most of Arnauld's intellectual energy was spent engaging with theological issues of the day, but he also wrote many directly philosophical works and in many cases his thought simultaneously engages with both philosophical and theological issues. One of the main obstacles to a better understanding of Arnauld's philosophical thought is identifying his key philosophical texts, so in this introductory chapter I offer a brief overview of his life and introduce some of those texts. I focus on texts that are crucial to understanding his philosophical thought, illustrate his influence, and/or contain work of relevance to contemporary philosophical debates.

In order to offer such an introduction, I divide Arnauld's works and life into four broad periods that are distinguished by key events in his life. The first group of Arnauld's texts, addressed in Section 1.1, were written in the 1630s and 1640s; some of these are directly related to Arnauld's studying and teaching at the Sorbonne. The most important texts from this period are from the 1640s. In Section 1.2, I consider the second set of texts, which were written after his expulsion from the Sorbonne in 1655 and include those written through a period called the "Peace of the Church." His expulsion from the Sorbonne was directly related to his involvement with the French Catholic movement of Jansenism and the closely related convent(s) of Port-Royal.¹ The Jansenists were often subject to

¹ Much has been written on Arnauld's life. A biography by Noël de Larière is included in volume 43 of OA. For shorter treatments see Nadler (1989: ch. 2); Adorno (2005: ch. 2); and the introductions in K and KM. Jacques (1976) focuses on Arnauld's life beginning in 1679. Le Guern (2003) focuses on the relationship between Arnauld and Pascal (roughly 1646–1662). See also Armogathe (2018) and *Chronique de Port-Royal 44*, both of which have numerous chapters focusing on Arnauld's life. Finally, Sedgwick (1977) and (1998) are studies of Jansenism and the Arnauld family respectively and contain much about Antoine Arnauld. For a wonderfully helpful chronology of Arnauld's written works, see Laporte (1922: xvi–xxxiii) (Laporte follows dates given in OA).

persecution, but the Peace of the Church offered a short reprieve. When this peace came to an end in 1679, Arnauld fled from France to the city of Mons in the Spanish Netherlands (now Belgium) and would spend the rest of his life in exile. The third set of texts – which I consider in Section 1.3 – are distinguished from the second set by having been written after his going into exile. These texts include his famous correspondence with Leibniz and debate with Malebranche. The fourth and final set of texts, considered in Section 1.4, are from the late 1680s and the 1690s. The third and fourth groups of texts are not as clearly distinct as the other sets. Nevertheless, this fourth group is noteworthy because Arnauld's views seem to shift towards Thomism during this period. While I think Arnauld's "Thomistic turn" in these later works is less pronounced than often supposed, there is no doubt that the later texts represent their own period in Arnauld's intellectual life. This turn to Thomism is not merely a contemporary assessment, but was discussed by Arnauld's peers and subsequent Jansenists.² Finally, I offer some concluding remarks.

1.1 From Nominalism to Cartesianism: 1612–1648

Arnauld was born on February 6, 1612 in Paris. His parents, Antoine (père) and Catherine, had twenty children, ten of whom survived infancy, and he was the youngest. The Arnaulds were a prominent family in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and many of Arnauld's siblings and other relations also played key roles in significant events and movements.³ According to Arnauld's biographer Noël de Larrière, Arnauld's father put a lot of concern into Arnauld's early education and had hoped Arnauld would become a teacher. After he passed away in 1619, Arnauld's mother took over his education. She was more interested, we are told, in "inspiring piety than in cultivating his talents," but she did not neglect the latter and Arnauld was sent to the Collège de Calvi-Sorbonne where he studied the humanities.⁴ Arnauld considered, for a time, pursuing a career in law; however, at least partially under the influence of Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (Saint-Cyran), he decided to pursue the priesthood.⁵

Arnauld began his studies in theology at the Sorbonne in 1633.⁶ He defended his tentative (a public defense of theses often written by

² As noted by O'Connor (2012: 327), for example.

³ See Moreau TP.3–7.

⁴ OA.43.3–4.

⁵ OA.43.6; Nadler (1989: 16).

⁶ OA.10.ii; K.xiv. For a more detailed, but still brief, account of these early years at the Sorbonne, see Lesaulnier (1995). For more on Arnauld's education see Armogathe (2018: ch. 1).

one's teacher) in November of 1635 and earned his bachelor's degree. From November 12, 1638 through December 18, 1641, Arnauld defended a series of four theses as part of his doctoral degree.⁷ During these two years (October 1639–1641), Arnauld was teaching a course in philosophy at the Collège de Mans in Paris. One of his students, Charles Wallon de Beaupuis, defended his tentative on July 25, 1641. This tentative – the *Philosophical Conclusions* [*Conclusions*] – was edited by Arnauld himself, probably on the basis of the course he taught. The *Conclusions* are the earliest work of philosophical import from Arnauld. Arnauld was ordained a priest in September of 1641 and became a doctor of theology at the Sorbonne in December of that same year.

During the same two years that Arnauld was teaching his course at the Sorbonne he burst onto the philosophical scene with his response to Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* [*Meditations*]: *The Fourth Set of Objections to Descartes's Meditations* [*Fourth Objections*]. Arnauld had received Descartes's *Meditations* by December of 1640 and wrote the *Fourth Objections* sometime between December of 1640 and February of 1641.⁸ Thus, Arnauld wrote the *Fourth Objections* at the end of his teaching duties, but before the defense of the *Conclusions* (and before acquiring his doctorate). While the chronology here is a bit nuanced, it is best to first examine the *Conclusions* and then move on to the *Fourth Objections* as this will best follow the development of Arnauld's philosophical views.

1.1.1 The Philosophical Conclusions

The *Conclusions* are a key work for understanding Arnauld's first philosophy and his views undergo key changes in the 1640s. While I do address the *Conclusions* later in the book – in Chapter 10 – they are not a large focus. Since the *Conclusions* are important for establishing Arnauld's early views, I shall spend a bit more time on it here.

In an insightful paper, Vincent Carraud has argued that the *Conclusions* illustrate that Arnauld's early philosophical views are broadly Ockhamist, perhaps even a Cartesianizable Ockhamism.⁹ I generally agree with Carraud's interpretation. Arnauld mentions William of Ockham explicitly in that text and later in this section I compare passages from the *Conclusions* with passages from Ockham to further make this case.

⁷ OA.10.3–38.

⁸ Carraud (1995: 115–117) offers a helpful account of the timeline.

⁹ Carraud (1995).

However, rather than think of Arnauld's early views as Ockhamist *per se*, I suggest we should think of them as keeping with the broadly nominalist tradition of philosophy that had been especially prominent at the University of Paris in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁰ While nominalism might bring to mind only a specific view of universals, the nominalist tradition represented a school of philosophy in this period.¹¹ Perhaps the three most important historical sources and inspirations for nominalism are John Buridan, Marsilius of Inghen, and Ockham, though the former two are often considered more important.¹² Other thinkers associated with this nominalist tradition include Gregory of Rimini, John Mair (or Mayor), and Gabriel Biel.¹³

Philosophical education during Arnauld's time at the Sorbonne often revolved around the use of textbooks and, within these texts, philosophical thought was often divided into many schools. Roger Ariew observes that textbooks from the seventeenth century note as many as four "great systems of philosophy" – namely, Thomist, Scotist, Nominalist (or Ockhamist) and Averroist.¹⁴ While Nominalism is not as prominent as Thomism or Scotism in the seventeenth century, it was still discussed and well-known.¹⁵ While ultimately speculative, there are any number of paths by which Arnauld may have studied nominalism while at the Sorbonne. One source may have been the classes of Jacques du Chevreul. L. W. B. Brockliss, based on his study of manuscripts in Parisian libraries, notes that du Chevreul taught courses at the University of Paris on logic and ethics in 1623/24, 1625/26, and 1633/34 and on metaphysics and philosophy in 1628/29 and 1634/35. Of particular interest, Brockliss adds that du Chevreul was "under the influence of the Nominalist conception of God," and held the view that "God must be able to do everything."¹⁶

Returning to nominalism generally, Calvin Normore identifies what he calls a "Nominalist Catechism," where he summarizes much of what

¹⁰ Calvin Normore identifies 1530 as the year when nominalism seems to lose its prominence (2017: 130).

¹¹ See Normore (2017) for a nice overview of this tradition and Courtenay (2008) for a treatment of the influence of Ockham's thought over these centuries.

¹² See Hoenen (2003: 20–21).

¹³ See Normore (2017: 122). For more on: Buridan, see Zupko (2003); Gregory, see Friedman (2013: 845–866); Marsilius, see Hoenen (1993); Mair, see Broadie (2009: ch. 4) and Lagerlund (2017); and Biel, see Oberman (1963).

¹⁴ Ariew (2011: 77). Thomas and Scotus will be discussed later in the book. See Richardson (2017) for discussion of the Averroist tradition.

¹⁵ Though not directly relevant to Arnauld's education, Rodis-Lewis (1971) has argued that Descartes may have had a nominalist instructor, Étienne Noël, at La Flèche.

¹⁶ Brockliss (1981: 40). Ariew (2011: 187, n. 19) reports the courses taught by du Chevreul.

captures nominalism (focusing on sixteenth-century nominalism). Included in Normore's catechism are the nominalist view of universals; that "anything is possible that does not involve a contradiction, and God can do anything that is possible"; and that "most of theology depends upon revelation, and natural reason can prove less about God than one might think – perhaps not even that God exists."¹⁷

The *Conclusions* itself is divided into five sections: Logic; Mathematics; Morals; Physics; and Metaphysics. We can begin with the most famous component of nominalism: the nominalist view of universals. According to nominalism, universals are merely names (or perhaps concepts) used to pick out many particulars. Ockham and the *Conclusions* defend a similar view of universals:

Conclusions: Whatever is, is singular and something through itself. What, then, is universal? Either a sign, which, without varying, personally and immediately represents many singulars; or many singular natures represented by a common notion and a univocal name . . . Universals can easily be made through the work of reason. (OA.38.2/TP.10)¹⁸

Ockham: The universal is not a thing outside the mind . . . every substance is numerically one and a particular . . . every universal is an intention of the mind which, on the most probable account, is identical with the act of understanding. (OPh.I.50–53/SL.79–81)

Both texts suggest that a universal could simply be a name, or perhaps a concept, which suggests something closer to what we would today call conceptualism rather than nominalism. In either case, the texts endorse a similar view.

Another aspect of the *Conclusions* that is reminiscent of Ockham and/or nominalism is the relation between the essence and existence of things:

Conclusions: Ockham plausibly thought that extension is not really distinguished from extended things. (OA.38.5/TP.20)

Ockham: We shall make a digression for a while and consider . . . whether the existence of a thing and its essence are two entities extra-mentally from each other. It appears to me that they are not two such entities, nor does 'existence' signify anything different from the thing itself . . . We have to say, therefore, that essence and existence are not two things. (OPh.I.553–554/OPW.92–93)

¹⁷ Normore (2017: 133–134).

¹⁸ Some of the translation is from Carraud (1995: 122). 'Personally/personaliter' seems to be a technical term for personal supposition, which for Ockham is one of the three main types of supposition. See, for example, Maurer (1999: 23–32).

Here we have Arnauld claiming that extension is not really distinct from extended things, where Ockham claims that existence and essence are not distinct ‘extra-mentally.’¹⁹ Further, both Ockham’s and Arnauld’s interests in this question seem tied to the Eucharist and the seeming tension created by Ockham’s view (or the Cartesian view) and the accepted account of transubstantiation.²⁰

Finally, both Ockham and the *Conclusions* defend the doctrine of univocity:

Conclusions: *Being pertains synonymously to God and to creatures*, to substance and to accident. (OA.38.2/TP.10)

Ockham: I claim that ‘being’ is predicated univocally and *in quid* of the name ‘God’ and of the names ‘substance’ and ‘quality’ – and this in the strict sense of univocal predication. (OTh.IX.358/FK.297)

Arnauld defends the doctrine of univocity, the view that some predicates (in this case ‘being’/‘*ens*’) when applied to creatures and God have the same meaning. This view is most often contrasted with the doctrine of analogy – held by Thomas Aquinas, for example – that holds such predicates have the same meaning in only an analogical sense. All in all, the *Conclusions* seem to put Arnauld in the nominalist camp.²¹

1.1.2 *The Fourth Objections to Descartes’s Meditations*

Arnauld received the *Meditations* towards the end of 1640, which puts his writing of the *Fourth Objections* at nearly the same time as the *Conclusions*. When Arnauld received the *Meditations*, he was already familiar with Descartes’s *Discourse on Method* and its accompanying scientific essays, and thought very highly of them.²² The *Fourth Objections* are written to Marin Mersenne, and Arnauld writes: “What exactly do you want? You can hardly be after my opinion of the author, since you already know how highly I rate his outstanding intelligence and exceptional learning.”²³ Both Arnauld’s *Fourth Objections* and Descartes’s responses, the *Author’s Replies to the Fourth Set of Objections* [*Fourth Replies*], were included in published editions of the *Meditations*.

¹⁹ See Carraud (1995: 125); and Adams (1987: ch. 6).

²⁰ See Panaccio (2023: 54–57); and Nadler (1988a).

²¹ At the defense of the *Conclusions* (July 25, 1641), Arnauld appears to abandon univocity – an event considered in Chapter 10.

²² AT.VII.199/CSM.II 140. ²³ OA.38.8/AT.VII.197/CSM.II.138.

The *Fourth Objections* are notable in many respects. Arnauld offers many philosophically and historically important objections to Descartes's *Meditations*, and his objections seem to reveal a general sympathy for the Cartesian worldview as opposed to pushing a different worldview altogether – for example, the Thomism of the *First Objections* or the empiricism of the *Fifth Objections*. Arnauld distinguishes between two sorts of objections: “philosophical objections regarding the major issues of the nature of our mind and of God” and “the problems which a theologian might come up against.”²⁴ Arnauld invokes in this early text a distinction that is (as we shall see in Chapter 2) paramount in his method. Arnauld's distinction is not merely practical, but reveals a substantive difference in the correct method between philosophical issues (roughly, issues approached via reason and/or the senses) and issues best approached by the authority of others (which include, but are not limited to, many matters of faith and theology).

One important feature of the *Fourth Objections* for understanding his eventual Cartesianism is that Arnauld begins his discussion on the philosophy of mind by claiming that Descartes “has laid down as the basis for his entire philosophy exactly the same principle as that laid down by St Augustine.”²⁵ Arnauld cites the similarity of Descartes's discussion of the evil deceiver with Augustine of Hippo's claims in *On the Free Choice of the Will*, Book II, chapter 3. While the extent to which Augustine and Descartes in fact build their philosophy on the same principle is beyond the scope of this chapter, there is no doubt that their relation is important to Arnauld, and his Cartesianism is in part motivated by the similarities between the two. I address much of the rest of the discussion related to the nature of the mind in Chapters 3 and 4.

When discussing theological difficulties, Arnauld suggests that Descartes should emphasize that he never actually doubted God's existence and that the standard of clear and distinct perception applies only to philosophical matters, not to matters of faith or “the conduct of life.”²⁶

Arnauld is also the first to offer the infamous charge that the argument of the *Meditations* is circular. He tells Descartes:

I have one further worry, namely how the author avoids reasoning in a circle when he says that we are sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true only because God exists.

²⁴ OA.38.8–9/AT.VII.197/CSM.II.138.

²⁵ OA.38.9/AT.VII.197–198/CSM.II.139.

²⁶ OA.38.34–35/AT.VII.215–216/CSM.II.151–152.

But we can be sure that God exists only because we clearly and distinctly perceive this. Hence, before we can be sure that God exists, we ought to be able to be sure that whatever we perceive clearly and evidently is true. (OA.38.32–33/AT.VII.214/CSM.II.150)

This worry, which has become known as the “Cartesian circle,” concerns whether Descartes’s reasoning in the *Meditations* is circular insofar as he argues (or seems to argue) that the validity of our clear and distinct perception is grounded in God’s existence and our confidence that God exists depends on our clear and distinct perception of God. Whether Arnauld is correct is beyond the scope of this chapter, but suffice to say much great scholarship has been devoted to this question.²⁷

1.1.3 *Jansenism and Theological Works 1641–1645*

While Arnauld was affiliated with the Sorbonne he also composed several works focused on theological issues and controversies. While they by and large are not of direct philosophical import, they are significant enough in his life and intellectual journey to warrant at least brief mention. In order to understand these texts, we must first discuss Jansenism.

Jansenism was a movement within French Catholicism, ultimately coming out of the Counter Reformation.²⁸ Jansenism was so named because of Cornelius Jansen’s posthumously published *Augustinus* and its influence on the movement. Jansen began writing *Augustinus* in 1628, completed it in 1636, and it was published posthumously in 1640 (Jansen having succumbed to the plague in 1638). *Augustinus* is a robust three-volume work. The first part considers the heresy of Pelagianism; the second part argues, in effect, that Augustine of Hippo is the ultimate authority in matters of grace; and the third part considers the relation between free will and grace.²⁹ I consider Jansen’s account of grace and freedom in Chapter 6.

While there is no doubt that Jansenism is related to this work (especially the doctrine on grace), central aspects of the movement pre-date

²⁷ See, for example, Kenny (1968); Curley (1978); Wilson (1978); Van Cleve (1979); Sosa (1997); Newman and Nelson (1999); Broughton (2002); Della Rocca (2005); Hatfield (2006); Carriero (2009); and Newman (2012).

²⁸ For more on Jansenism see Abercrombie (1936); Cogner (1968); Sedgwick (1977); O’Connor (2012); Radner (2016); and Doyle (2000). For discussion of the (often exaggerated) connections between Port-Royal and Cartesianism, see Rodis-Lewis (1950); Nadler (1988b); Schmalz (1999); and Stencil (2025).

²⁹ See Sedgwick (1977: 48–49); for a more thorough summary, see Abercrombie (1936: 125–158).

Augustinus. Alexander Sedgwick, in his histories of Jansenism and the Arnauld family, identifies the first phase of the Jansenist movement as beginning with Arnauld's sister Jacqueline Marie (Angélique) Arnauld and the *journée du guichet* (a 1609 event where Angélique prohibited her family from coming on convent grounds) and ending with the death of another central figure, Saint-Cyran, in 1643.³⁰

The convents of Port-Royal are also connected to both Jansenism and Arnauld (and his family). There are two such convents: Port-Royal-des-Champs (the original) and Port-Royal-de-Paris. The nuns that came to be associated with Jansenism initially lived at Port-Royal-des-Champs and started to move to Port-Royal-de-Paris in 1625 due to the poor state and unsafe conditions of Port-Royal-des-Champs.³¹ These convents also became associated with a group of men called the Port-Royal solitaires. In 1637, the solitaires began to take up residence at the original Port-Royal and rehabilitated the facilities, as well as starting their famous schools – the *petites écoles*. In 1648 some of the Port-Royal nuns reoccupied the original convent and both convents were governed together.

Antoine Arnauld decided to join the Port-Royal solitaires in 1639 and had joined them by December of 1641. In the 1640s, he gave some of his inheritance to Port-Royal in return for an annual stipend and was serving as a confessor to the nuns of Port-Royal.³² In 1641 he wrote a posthumously published work called *On the Necessity of Faith in Jesus Christ* and in 1643 he published *On Frequent Communion*. In these texts, he defends a rigorist account of the sacraments inspired by Saint-Cyran and other views associated with Jansenism. Jansen's *Augustinus* created controversy almost immediately, as did Arnauld's *On Frequent Communion*. In 1643, Pope Urban VIII offered a modest reproach of *Augustinus*, though it did not seem to have much impact.³³ In 1644 Arnauld penned an explicit defense of Jansen in response to attacks – most notably Isaac Habert's *Défense de la foy de l'église*. This first defense of Jansen was called the *Apologie de Monsieur Jansénius*, but has since become known as the *Première Apologie pour Jansénius* [*Première Apologie*]. In 1645, Arnauld wrote another defense – the *Seconde Apologie pour Jansénius* [*Seconde Apologie*].³⁴

³⁰ Sedgwick (1977: 44). For more on the Port-Royal nuns, see Sedgwick (1998); Conley (2009); Kostroun (2011); Conley (2019); and Walsh and Stencil (2025).

³¹ Sedgwick (1998: 47–50). ³² *Ibid.*, 132–133.

³³ Sedgwick (1977: 50); O'Connell (1997: 124).

³⁴ For a book-length treatment on Arnauld and grace, see Laporte (1922).

1.1.4 *Quod est nomen Dei? and the New Objections*

On February 9, 1647, Wallon de Beaupuis once again publicly defended theses under the direction of Arnauld, namely *Quod est nomen Dei?* The central import of this text, as I address in Chapter 10, is that it helps confirm that several of Arnauld's views shift from his broadly nominalist early view to a more Cartesian view by 1647.

Finally, in 1648 Arnauld exchanged two letters with Descartes, known as the *New Objections to Descartes's Meditations* [*New Objections*]. The exchange between Arnauld and Descartes is significant. Arnauld begins his first letter with a noteworthy claim when he identifies himself as "As one who agrees with almost everything you have taught in first philosophy."³⁵ He asks several further questions of Descartes in these letters on the human mind, God, the nature of extension and the Eucharist, and the possibility of a vacuum.

1.2 The Fronde and the Expulsion from the Sorbonne: 1648–1679

The key event demarcating this period of Arnauld's life is his expulsion from the faculty of the Sorbonne on February 16, 1656. However, this event in Arnauld's life occurs in a specific geopolitical context in France that greatly impacted Arnauld and the Jansenist movement. One central component of this context begins in 1648, namely the Fronde. The Fronde was a series of civil wars in France, which lasted until 1653.³⁶ Arnauld's last major philosophical contribution from the first period of his life are his letters to Descartes in 1648, so I use 1648 as both the final year in the first stage of Arnauld's life and the first year in the second stage.

The events that led to Arnauld's expulsion from the Sorbonne trace back to the works mentioned in Section 1.1.3. The first significant censure of *Augustinus* came on May 31, 1653. Pope Innocent X condemned the following five claims:

1. Some commandments of God are impossible for righteous men, although they wish to fulfill them and strive to fulfill them in accord with the power they presently possess. They lack the grace that would make it possible.

³⁵ OA.38.67/AT.V.186/K.185.

³⁶ See Sedgwick (1977: ch. 3) for a discussion of Jansenism and the Fronde.

2. In the state of fallen nature, interior grace is never resisted.
3. In order to deserve merit or demerit in the state of fallen nature, freedom from necessity is not required in men; rather, freedom from constraint is sufficient.
4. The Semi-Pelagians admitted the necessity of prevenient and interior grace for each action, even for the beginning of faith; but they were heretics in that they held that this grace is such that the human will can either resist it or obey it.
5. It is an error of the Semi-Pelagians to say that Christ died or that he shed his blood for everyone without exception.³⁷

As is often noted, while there is not explicit reference to *Augustinus* or Jansen in this condemnation, it was known to be directed at *Augustinus*. Arnauld (perhaps at Pierre Nicole's suggestion) responded by making a distinction between *questions de droit* and *questions de fait*. In a posthumously published manuscript dated to 1653 or 1654, Arnauld explains the distinction this way:

The questions and the disputes that can arise in the Church concern *le droit* or *le fait*.

They concern *le droit*, when we argue over whether a doctrine is Catholic or heretical, or if it is good to observe or not to observe some point of discipline.

They concern *le fait*, when we argue over whether a particular person is a heretic or a Catholic; whether the sentiments that we attribute to an author are really his sentiments or not; whether a book is [merely] supposed to be by a [particular] author or whether it really is by that author.

With respect to the former questions, those concerning *le droit*, that is to say, the doctrine itself, or the general discipline, when the Church has spoken . . . all Catholics who recognize its authority must submit to the judgment of the Church and change not only their language, but also their sentiments, if they had any previously contrary to the decision.

But in the latter questions, which concern only *le fait* and individuals, the Church has never attempted to oblige her children to go beyond a submission of humility, of respect and of silence, and often the Church does not oblige them to do so; permitting Catholics to hold opinions contrary to what was decided with respect to matters *de fait*. (OA.10.705)³⁸

³⁷ Translation, Sleigh (1990: 27). See also Kolakowski (1995: 3–30).

³⁸ Translation mostly following Sedgwick (1977: 109); and Walsh and Stencil (2025).

Though intuitively the distinction is rather straightforward, a full parsing of it – especially as it played out in the controversy – is no easy matter, at least in part because different people and groups seem to use the distinction differently. *Questions de fait* may rather uncontroversially be translated as ‘questions of fact.’ *Questions de droit* has been translated as ‘questions of law’ or ‘questions of faith.’ Arnauld himself, in a work cited later, indicates that these *questions de droit* concern faith and Church doctrine.³⁹

In essence, Arnauld argues that the pope has the authority to declare what is or is not a heresy, but that this authority and infallibility do not extend to certain factual matters, including what views Jansen defends in his book. The pope has authority over *questions de droit*, but not *questions de fait*. Thomas Lennon accurately describes Arnauld’s position: “The Pope no doubt condemned something, and correctly, but he did not condemn Jansenism.”⁴⁰

In 1655, the duc de Liancourt – well-known for his Jansenist sympathies – was denied absolution at the church of Saint Sulpice and was also told it was due to his association with Port-Royal.⁴¹ Arnauld responded almost immediately with his *Lettre d’un Docteur à une personne de condition* and followed up with a second letter – *Seconde lettre à un duc et pair*. These letters reignited the controversy over the five propositions, with Arnauld doubling down on the distinction between *fait* and *droit*, and denying that the relevant propositions are in Jansen.⁴² This ultimately led to Arnauld’s expulsion from the Sorbonne. This is also the controversy that instigated Blaise Pascal’s writing the *Provincial Letters* defending Arnauld. Several months before Arnauld’s expulsion, in the fall of 1655, he took up residence near Port-Royal-des-Champs, though he spent much of his time up to 1669 in hiding.⁴³

There are three main works from this period that warrant mention, two of which are related to the *petites écoles*. These works are the *Nouveaux éléments de géométrie* [*Géométrie*], the *Port-Royal Grammar* [*Grammar*], and the *Logic or the Art of Thinking* often called the *Port-Royal Logic* [*Logic*]. Arnauld wrote the *Géométrie* in the mid 1650s (published in 1667) after reading Pascal’s *Introduction to Geometry*. Arnauld’s purpose was to fix some methodological problems he saw in Pascal’s text. The *Géométrie* is

³⁹ OA.19.360. See also Sedgwick (1977); Parish (1989: 20); Lennon (1996); and Nadler (2008b). For a discussion of the distinction focusing on its legal precursors, see Frigo (2022).

⁴⁰ Lennon (1977: 302). See also Lennon (1996) for discussion of Arnauld and skepticism related to these issues.

⁴¹ O’Connell (1997: 126–127).

⁴² E.g., OA.19.360.

⁴³ Sedgwick (1977: 75); and K.xvii.

designed as a textbook to accompany the reading of Euclid's *Elements* and includes an important preface by Nicole.⁴⁴

Arnauld wrote the *Grammar* with Claude Lancelot which was first published in 1660. Grammar, according to the authors, is "the art of speaking," where "speaking is explaining one's thoughts by signs which men have invented for this purpose."⁴⁵ The book is divided into two parts, mirroring the two different questions about these signs: their nature and their signification. The *Grammar* was influential, especially in France, where it was frequently taught. Several commentaries on the *Grammar* were published, including two major ones in the 1750s.⁴⁶ The *Grammar* received a resurgence of interest after the publication of Noam Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics* in 1966, in which Chomsky credited the *Grammar* with anticipating some of his own linguistic theory.⁴⁷

Arnauld co-wrote the *Logic* with Nicole.⁴⁸ There are some disputes about who wrote which parts, but Arnauld is most often treated as the work's primary author.⁴⁹ The *Logic* is a work of great influence and plays a large role in this book. The first edition was published in 1662, and underwent four substantive revisions, with the fifth edition coming out in 1683.⁵⁰ Claude Clerselier provided a manuscript of Descartes's *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* to the authors after the first edition, and the influence of that work can be seen in the later editions.⁵¹ The 1981 critical edition by Pierre Clair and François Girbal lists sixty-three French editions (forty-nine of which were published after the death of the authors), ten English editions, and thirteen Latin editions.⁵² And, as is often noted, the 1818 English edition was used as a text at Cambridge and Oxford.⁵³ One can see the direct influence of the *Logic* on thinkers like John Locke and Mary Astell.⁵⁴

The 1683 edition of the work itself has a preface, foreword, first and second discourse, and four major parts.⁵⁵ The authors define logic as the "art of conducting reason well in knowing things" and break this art down

⁴⁴ Descotes (2009); and Kotevska (2021). ⁴⁵ OA.41.5/RR.41. ⁴⁶ RR.22–23.

⁴⁷ Chomsky (2009), especially the "Deep and surface structure" and "Description and explanation in linguistics" chapters.

⁴⁸ For overviews, see the introduction in B; Nelson and Buroker (2022); and Martin (2024). For other important discussions of the *Logic*, see Dominicy (1984); Auroux (1985); Auroux (1993; ch. 2); and the works cited in notes 58 and 62.

⁴⁹ See CG.365 note 1; and McKenna (1986) for discussion of its authorship.

⁵⁰ See, for example, B.ix. ⁵¹ AT.X.351–52; Wahl (2008: 668); and OA.41.362/B.234/CG.300.

⁵² CG.4–9. ⁵³ E.g., Nelson and Buroker (2022). ⁵⁴ Sowaal (2007); and Pearce (2019).

⁵⁵ See the very helpful chart at B xxxvii–xxxviii.

into four main operations: conceiving, judging, reasoning, and ordering.⁵⁶ Each operation is the focus of one part of the *Logic*.

The *Logic* describes conceiving thus:

The simple view we have of things that present themselves to the mind is called *conceiving*, as when we represent to ourselves a sun, an earth, a tree, a circle, a square, thought, and being, without forming any explicit judgment about them. The form by which we represent these things is called an *idea*. (OA.41.125/B.23/CG.37)

As such, Part I of the *Logic* is devoted to ideas, including discussions of the origin and nature of ideas, the objects of ideas, clear and distinct versus obscure ideas, and a discussion of definitions. In chapter 6 of Part I, the authors distinguish between the extension and the comprehension of an idea. They define the comprehension of an idea as “the attributes that it contains in itself, and that cannot be removed without destroying the idea,” and the extension as “the subjects to which this idea applies.”⁵⁷ This distinction is often noted as a significant achievement, and has been considered as a precursor to modern set theory, modern semantics, and Fregean notions of sense and reference, though there is much debate about whether these suggestions are well-grounded.⁵⁸ The authors also discuss the concept of external/extrinsic denominations – one which will prove important in Chapter 5.⁵⁹

Part II of the *Logic* focuses on judging and propositions. Arnauld and Nicole note that, after we conceive things by our ideas, we compare them and unite or separate them and make judgments.

They go on to claim that “this judgment is also called a *proposition*.”⁶⁰ The act of judging is the bringing together of ideas, and this judgment is also called a proposition and so propositions are mental entities. Most of Part II of the *Logic* is devoted to propositions.⁶¹ Arnauld’s account of propositions in general, as well as the account offered in the *Logic*, has been the focus of discussion by scholars, often in comparison with Locke’s account. Among the debates are the relation between forming a proposition or judgment and asserting that proposition.⁶²

⁵⁶ OA.41.125/B.23/CG.37. ⁵⁷ OA.41.145/B.39–40/CG.59.

⁵⁸ See Pariente (1985), e.g., at 264–274; Buroker (1994); Wahl (2008: 672–673); Nelson and Buroker (2022: section 4); Martin (2020); Pearce (2022: section 1).

⁵⁹ OA.41.136/B.32/CG.48–49. ⁶⁰ OA.41.197/B.82/CG.113.

⁶¹ See Nelson and Buroker (2022: section 5) for more.

⁶² See especially: Buroker (1993); Buroker (1996a); Ott (2002); van der Schaar (2008); and Marušić (2014). See van der Schaar (2008: 328) for a succinct overview of the debates, which often invoke the *Grammar* as well.

With Part III of the *Logic*, the authors move to consider *reasoning*. This part opens with a note of caution on the value of reasoning and the extent to which it is useful.⁶³ Throughout this part, they focus on assorted rules for, and ways of, categorizing syllogisms. Part IV of the *Logic* concerns method. This part of the *Logic* is especially rich and will be central to my treatment of Arnauld's method in Chapter 2 and many other chapters throughout this book.

1.3 The Exile Years: 1679–1689

In 1679, Arnauld fled France and spent the rest of his life in exile, mostly in what is now Belgium. His years in exile were the most philosophically active of his life (at least in terms of writing). There are three especially key texts (or sets of texts) from this period: the *Examen d'un écrit qui a pour titre: Traité de l'essence du corps, et de l'union de l'âme avec le corps, contre la philosophie de M. Descartes* [*Examen*], the Malebranche polemic, and the Leibniz correspondence.

1.3.1 *Examen*

Arnauld wrote the *Examen* in 1680, in response to a now lost attack on Cartesianism by M. Le Moine. Le Moine's treatise was sent to Arnauld by his niece Angélique de Saint Jean.⁶⁴ In the posthumously published work, Arnauld generally defends Cartesianism from Le Moine's attacks.⁶⁵ The work is divided into four parts. In part one, Arnauld defends Descartes's philosophy in general, including the relation between philosophy and theology. He points out, for example, that philosophies like Descartes's that revere the mysteries of faith, stay within the scope of reason, and accept revelation are not, as Le Moine suggests, "the mother or sister of heresy."⁶⁶ And Arnauld focuses on passages that accentuate the distinction between philosophy and theology in Descartes.⁶⁷ In part two, Arnauld considers issues with Descartes's positions and the Eucharist.⁶⁸ In part three, he discusses the nature of the body and its relation to the "glorious body." In part four, he considers the union of mind and body and defends an occasionalist account, which I address in Chapter 4.

⁶³ OA.41.254/B.135/CG.177

⁶⁴ Schmaltz (2002: 254). For more on Angélique de Saint Jean, see Conley (2009: ch. 4); and Walsh and Stencil (2025).

⁶⁵ For more on the *Examen*, see Faye (2000a,b); Schmaltz (2002: 54–59); and Belgioioso (2003).

⁶⁶ OA.38.90/E.11–12. ⁶⁷ Belgioioso (2003: 181). ⁶⁸ OA.38.100–101/E.29.

1.3.2 *The Arnauld–Malebranche Polemic*

The Arnauld–Malebranche debate was one of the central intellectual events in Europe in the later decades of the seventeenth century. It was followed closely by thinkers like Locke, Leibniz, and Pierre Bayle and influenced subsequent thinkers, not least Thomas Reid.⁶⁹ Following Denis Moreau, we can divide the debate into five stages. The first stage, which Moreau calls the preliminary stage, concerns the relations between Malebranche and Arnauld prior to Arnauld’s publication of *On True and False Ideas* [VFI].⁷⁰ Until the late 1670s, Malebranche and Arnauld appeared to be on good terms.⁷¹ Malebranche cites the *Logic* in the first edition of the *Search after Truth* [Search], even praising the “wise author” of that text.⁷² Arnauld, we are told, initially loved Malebranche’s *Search*. The Marquis de Roucy writes to Malebranche that Arnauld is “charmed by” the *Search* and that he cites it often and “preaches it everywhere.”⁷³ Some confirmation of Arnauld’s positive view of the *Search* is his citing it in the *Examen* quite favorably, almost as if Malebranche were the spokesperson for Cartesianism.⁷⁴ This period appears to last until around 1679 when their disagreements over grace and theodicy, and very likely the “Elucidations” added in 1678 to the *Search*, soured the relationship. In May of 1679, just a month before Arnauld was to flee France, de Roucy hosted a meeting to try and reconcile the two, for which there are competing reports of the dynamics, but it resolved little.⁷⁵ Malebranche then sent a manuscript of the *Treatise on Nature and Grace* [Traité] to Arnauld for comment. Malebranche never received a response from Arnauld (though there is disagreement over why) and Malebranche published it in 1680.⁷⁶

The next four stages each involve numerous works from both thinkers.⁷⁷ The second stage of the debate revolves around ideas and

⁶⁹ There are several excellent overviews of the Arnauld–Malebranche polemic. See Moreau (1999) for a book-length effort. See Moreau (2000); Pyle (2003: ch. 4); Schmalz (2017: 152–159); and Stencil and Walsh (forthcoming), for shorter overviews.

⁷⁰ There is a modern French edition edited by Moreau (Arnauld, 2011) and several recent English translations: K and SG.

⁷¹ See OA.43.250 and André (1886: 78). ⁷² OC.I.393/LO.204–205. ⁷³ OC.18.95.

⁷⁴ E.g., at OA.38.140–141/E.91–92.

⁷⁵ See Nadler (2008b: 143) for discussion of the meeting. See Jacques (1976: ch. 5) for details on Arnauld’s fleeing from France to Mons.

⁷⁶ OC.18.170–171.

⁷⁷ All of the works in the Malebranche–Arnauld polemic are compiled in OC.VI–IX and OA.38–40.

Malebranche's view of intelligible extension. This stage includes *VFI*, which is central to Arnauld's view of ideas discussed in Chapter 5.

The third stage of the polemic revolves around issues more directly tied to theodicy and providence. This stage includes Arnauld's *Dissertation de M. Arnauld sur la manière dont Dieu a fait les fréquens miracles de l'ancienne loi par le ministère des anges*, 1685 [*Dissertation*]; his *Neuf Lettres de Monsieur Arnauld Docteur de Sorbonne au Révérend Père Malebranche*, 1685 [*Neuf lettres*]; and book I of Arnauld's *Réflexions philosophiques et théologiques sur le nouveau système de la nature et de la grâce*, 1685 [*Réflexions*]. I cite each of these texts later in the book, and the *Réflexions* is especially important (including books II and III which are part of the next stage of the debate) in my analysis of Arnauld's account of God.

Stage four of the Malebranche–Arnauld polemic concerns grace. As noted above, this stage of the debate contains books II and III of the *Réflexions* (1686). And finally, in stage five, the two thinkers return to ideas and also discuss pleasure. The polemic outlasts Arnauld, with Malebranche's final contribution coming in 1704.

1.3.3 The Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence

In the late 1680s, Leibniz and Arnauld exchanged a series of letters concerning an outline of what would become Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* [*Discourse*]. This correspondence has garnered much attention from scholars and rightly so. Yet most of the scholarly interest in the correspondence revolves around its impact on the development of and use for understanding Leibniz's philosophy. Arnauld's own contributions have received considerably less attention.⁷⁸ In Chapter 7, I focus on one such contribution, namely his actualist account of modality.

One important fact about their correspondence is that Leibniz later amended some of his letters.⁷⁹ Many of the standard editions of the letters do not include Leibniz's letters as they were received by Arnauld, but only the letters after Leibniz had revised them. Geneviève Rodis-Lewis discovered the letters as received by Arnauld at the National Archives at The Hague and published them in 1952.⁸⁰ So, it is necessary to also consult those letters to fully appreciate all aspects of the correspondence.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Notable exceptions include Nelson (1993); Scribano (1996); and Schmaltz (2002: 163–166). Sleigh's (1990) monograph focuses mostly on Leibniz.

⁷⁹ See Sleigh (1990: 7–8). ⁸⁰ The work abbreviated as RL.

⁸¹ There are many different collections of these letters. In addition to the one in Leibniz's main oeuvre by Gerhardt (G), there is the edition edited by Georges Le Roy (LR). For English translations,

In Arnauld's letter from March of 1686 he calls Leibniz's outline "shocking" and suggests it would be better if Leibniz abandon "these metaphysical speculations which cannot be of any use to him or others."⁸² After this awkward beginning, Arnauld in his second letter (May 1686) apologizes for the "unduly harsh" language.⁸³ He then offers a more thorough assessment of his worry about Leibniz's views, especially Leibniz's account of substance. Arnauld's next letter engages with Leibniz's view on "the hypothesis of the concomitance and harmony between substances" (pre-established harmony) and Leibniz's defense of substantial forms.⁸⁴ Arnauld's fourth letter (March 1687) and fifth letter (August 1687) largely continues the discussion on these latter two issues.

1.4 Arnauld's Thomistic Turn: 1689–1694

The fourth set of texts were also written while Arnauld was in exile. They are distinguished from the third set not on account of any biographically significant event, but by their content. In these later texts, at least in some of them, Arnauld surprisingly seems to move towards Thomism in interesting ways. There are numerous texts in this period that warrant mention. I'll distinguish between two groups: texts related to freedom and texts written as part of controversies.

1.4.1 Freedom Texts

The central freedom-centric text from this late period is *De Libertate*. The exact date of the work is unknown, but most scholars suggest Arnauld wrote it around 1689.⁸⁵ This work has been the focus of some recent scholarship especially on the question of whether Arnauld abandons compatibilism for a type of libertarianism. These later texts on freedom are central to my discussion in Chapter 6, where I argue he does indeed adopt a libertarian view. Several other texts are worth introducing from this

I follow the H. T. Mason translation (M), but two other important translations are by George Montgomery (GM) and Stephen Voss (V). Throughout this book, I cite G and M for each reference to this correspondence. I add a reference to RL when the passage appears in the Rodis-Lewis edition. When including French text, I follow Le Roy's modern renderings and include a reference to that edition as well.

⁸² G.II.15–16/M.9–10. ⁸³ G.II.25–26/M.24.

⁸⁴ G.II.63–68/M.77–82. Arnauld also writes two letters to von Hessen-Rheinfels, one in May 1686 and one in August 1687.

⁸⁵ Kremer (2021: n. 37) suggests 1684 or 1685. Originally in Latin (available in TP and CA), it appears in OA only in French translation.

period that I discuss later. One such text is the *Disquisitio utrum juxta Sanctum Thomam in Sua Summa amor beatificus sit liber ea libertate quam Theologi vocant a necessitate* [*Disquisitio*] which includes many quotations from Aquinas.⁸⁶ Another relevant text is the *Instruction sur la Grâce, selon l'Écriture & les Pères* [*Instruction*]. This work was published posthumously in 1700, and though we do not know the exact date of this text, it is clear it belongs to his later texts on freedom. Finally, this is one area where Arnauld's correspondence is helpful, and he considers freedom in a handful of letters in his later period.

1.4.2 Controversies

There are two related controversies in this period that warrant highlighting. The first involves Nicole and primarily concerns grace, though it does branch into other areas as well, not least the possibility and nature of *pensées imperceptibles* or imperceptible thoughts. In brief, Nicole proposed an account of "general grace" that is an Augustinian type of illumination of all minds, which, if properly grasped, would allow all people to do good and avoid sin.⁸⁷ The debate between Arnauld and Nicole started in 1688 or 1689 when Arnauld read Nicole's *Abrégé de théologie*. Arnauld responded with *Premier écrit sur la Grâce générale selon la méthode des géomètres* (1688/1689) and a series of responses between the two continued.⁸⁸

The second controversy in this period can be seen as an extension of the Malebranche polemic as well as the Nicole debate. At one point, while responding to Arnauld, Nicole cites the thought of Gommaire Huygens. This led to Arnauld responding with his *Dissertatio Bipartita* (1693).⁸⁹ Then Arnauld wrote the *Règles du bon sens* [*Règles*], also in 1693, in response to a now lost text by François Lamy who had responded to Arnauld at Nicole's request. As noted by Moreau, there are three key themes or questions in the *Dissertatio Bipartita* and the *Règles*: whether we see necessary and immutable truths in God; the love of virtue in God; and *pensées imperceptibles*. The first thesis has many similarities to

⁸⁶ OA gives the date of this work as 1691, though in a letter cited in Chapter 6, Arnauld suggests he wrote it before finishing *De Libertate*.

⁸⁷ Moriarty (2006: 368). See also James (1973); Chedozeau (1995); Solère (1996); and Stencil and Walsh (2023).

⁸⁸ See Kilcullen (1988: essay 1) for a discussion of another controversy from this period, with the Jesuits over philosophical sin.

⁸⁹ See TP.33–47; Soléré (1996); Moreau (1999: ch. 6); Faye (2005); and Schmaltz (2017: 160–164).

Malebranche's vision in God doctrine that is the focus of Arnauld's first work against Malebranche (see Chapter 5). The latter two are centrally related to Nicole's project on grace. In these two texts, we can see why Arnauld is thought to move towards Thomism as he often cites Aquinas and does so favorably.⁹⁰ Arnauld died on August 8, 1694, in Liège.

1.5 Conclusion

As is clear from this introduction, Arnauld produced a remarkable amount of writing in his life. His works fill forty-two large folio volumes and are incomplete. His philosophical writings, though only a small percentage of his overall writings, on their own amount to quite a substantive body of work. In this book, it is inevitable that I will focus on some texts to the exclusion of others, but I have made a point of engaging with texts from each of the periods of Arnauld's life.

⁹⁰ E.g., OA.40.154/TP.98.

PART I

Method, Metaphysics, and Epistemology

Method and Epistemology
Faith, Reason, and Rationalism

Many of Arnauld's philosophical texts, including those he is most remembered for, revolve around other thinkers' writings – for example, Descartes's *Meditations*, Leibniz's *Discourse*, and Malebranche's *Search*. In those texts, Arnauld rarely offers a systematic account of his own philosophical positions and we commentators are left putting the pieces together. In fact, some scholars have suggested, not without reason, that Arnauld is not concerned about systematic philosophy and makes use of whichever positions serve his dialectical interests at any particular moment – even flatly contradicting himself from time to time.¹ A central theme of this book is that this is not the case. I shall argue that Arnauld is a methodological and consistent philosopher in his own right. Arnauld is certainly not a system builder like Leibniz or Malebranche, and his main interests are often not squarely on philosophical issues but rather on their connections to and implications for theological positions. Nevertheless, Arnauld follows a careful and subtle method. Once this method and related aspects of his epistemology are appreciated, the general consistency of his overall philosophical account becomes clear. While Arnauld's method is interesting on its own, it is also essential to understanding his epistemology, conception of God, and metaphysics.

Unlike many of his other philosophical commitments, method is one key area where Arnauld offers us explicit and extended discussions.² There are important discussions of method in the *Fourth Objections*, *VFI*, the *Examen*, the *Géométrie*, and the *Règles*. The most thorough discussion

¹ Not everyone shares this assessment. Kremer suggests an “impressive consistency” in Arnauld's thought despite not offering a systematic account, though Kremer does not much explore the issue (2002: 113). Moreau (1999) offers an interesting account of Arnauld's method, focusing on its use in the Arnauld–Malebranche controversy and his criterion of evidence; see especially ch. 1. See also Adorno (2005).

² This fact may be at least partially explained by the fact that including a book on method in logic texts was common, see Martin (2020: ch. 5).

comes in the co-authored *Logic*. Therein, the Port-Royalists sum up the value of method: It “is doubtless one of the most useful and important parts” of logic and “the whole point is to order our thoughts well, using those that are clear and evident to get to the bottom of what appears more obscure.”³

The general tenor of Arnauld’s method as well as his epistemology is unmistakably Cartesian. In fact, Arnauld’s method and epistemology are often so reminiscent of Descartes’s that one needs to be careful not to uncritically import too much Descartes into Arnauld. Despite many robust similarities and direct influence (Arnauld often explicitly cites Descartes on these topics), Arnauld offers several key departures from Descartes that have a large and heretofore underappreciated impact on Arnauld’s philosophy.

In this chapter, I outline Arnauld’s basic method and epistemology. I begin, in Section 2.1, with a discussion of Arnauld’s method, focusing on his account of the various sources of knowledge: intelligence, faith, and reason. Each of these sources is capable of grounding genuine knowledge, and each has its own unique method and standards of use. In Section 2.2, I focus on Arnauld’s commitment to the general features of a Cartesian rationalist epistemology. In Section 2.3, I consider a key principle in Arnauld’s thought, namely the clear ideas principle, which is his version of Descartes’s famous truth rule from the *Fourth Meditation*. While these two principles are similar and often treated as identical, I develop one key, but subtle, difference between Descartes’s and Arnauld’s versions of the rule that has been underappreciated (if not ignored). In short, the difference is that Descartes takes propositional content to be included in the clear and distinct ideas while Arnauld and Nicole take the clear and distinct idea to be the content from which the finite mind actively creates propositional content. This difference has a significant impact on their respective methods and on other areas of Arnauld’s thought. For example, Arnauld’s method outlined in this chapter allows him to offer an account of our epistemic access to God that is more limited than Descartes’s, despite both starting with a clear and distinct idea of God. Finally, I conclude the chapter with some brief remarks.

2.1 Method and the Sources of Knowledge

Arnauld’s method is fundamentally tied to a distinction he makes between three sources of knowledge: intelligence, reason, and faith. Things known through intelligence are known in and of themselves. Reason encompasses

³ OA.4I.354/B.227/CG.291.

things known through reason alone as well as things known through sensory experience. And faith is knowledge grounded in the authority of others (whether God, Catholic tradition, or other finite persons). All of these provide genuine knowledge for Arnauld, but the latter two – faith and reason – represent the most important components of this tripartite distinction. In fact, Arnauld often mentions only reason and faith when he appeals to this key part of his method. One example is his often-invoked Augustinian slogan – “what we know, we owe to reason; what we believe, to authority.”⁴ While the quote suggests that authority grounds belief rather than knowledge, Arnauld’s use of ‘belief’ in this context is consistent with the faith-acquired belief constituting knowledge.⁵ The relationship between faith and reason will be elaborated throughout this section, but they are in some key respects independent of each other. Two aspects of their independence are: (i) that they have different methods for use; and (ii) neither source reduces, at least fully, to the other. Concerning (ii), Arnauld seems to hold (or at least his treatment seems to require) that faith, much of which we shall see amounts to testimonial knowledge or justification, does not (at least entirely) reduce to reason.⁶ One might think that testimonial knowledge or justification is grounded in inductive or abductive inference. For example, Odessa should trust Maggie’s claim that Barry was at the lecture, because given the evidence in front of Odessa, by abductive inference, it is more likely than not that Barry was at the lecture. Arnauld, however, treats faith-based knowledge as a unique source that has its own method of application and does not simply reduce to abductive arguments based on other types of evidence. Maggie’s testimony is itself a basic or fundamental source of epistemic justification. Faith and reason are not autonomous in other ways, however; the appropriate method for the use of faith requires reason to apply it – for example, using reason to determine things like the trustworthiness of the source – and it is perfectly possible (and indeed common) that one would need both reason and faith to pursue a question.

Arnauld never wavers in his commitment to this three-fold distinction, especially the distinction between faith and reason. This distinction, as between philosophy (which is a reason-based inquiry) and theology (which

⁴ E.g., at OA.39.94/E.17 and OA.41.395/B.260/CG.336. Cf., OA.40.153/TP.97–98. See also Gouhier (1978: 128); Ndiaye (1991: 272–283); and Schmaltz (2002: 63).

⁵ OA.41.395/B.260/CG.335. See Hunter (1996: 117), for discussion.

⁶ I thank an anonymous reader for CUP for their helpful suggestion that I am defending a non-reductive epistemology of testimony reading of Arnauld. See Lackey (2011) and Greco (2012) for contemporary discussions of this view.

is based on authority), is on display in one of his earliest major philosophical texts as well as his last. As we saw in Chapter 1, it is central to the *Fourth Objections* (1641), where Arnauld divides his worries between philosophical and theological ones.⁷ And it is clear this is not merely a practical distinction in that text for Arnauld. He implores Descartes to explicitly note in the *Meditations* that where Descartes “asserts that we should assent only to what we clearly and distinctly know,” this does not apply to “matters belonging to faith and the conduct of life,” nor “to the prudent beliefs of the faithful.”⁸

This distinction is similarly given pride of place in his last major philosophical work, the *Règles* (1693). In article one, Arnauld offers the first rule of good sense:

Take careful note of the nature of the question under dispute: is it philosophical or theological? For, if it is theological, it is principally by authority that we must decide the question; conversely if it is philosophical, it must be decided principally by reason. (OA.40.153/TP.97–98)⁹

The first rule of good sense is to make sure to note whether the question is philosophical or theological.¹⁰ Arnauld’s most thorough account of this important distinction, however, occurs in the *Logic* and I shall focus on this text in my account.

2.1.1 Intelligence

Arnauld and Nicole discuss their concept of intelligence in Book IV, chapter 1 of the *Logic*, where they claim: “whenever we consider some maxim, if we recognize its truth in itself and by the evidence we perceive in it that convinces us without any other reason, this sort of knowledge is called intelligence.”¹¹ This, according to the Port-Royalists is how we know first principles. Later in the *Logic*, Arnauld and Nicole elaborate on intelligence. In Book IV, chapter 6, they discuss ‘axioms’ and define them as “propositions which are clear and evident in themselves” – which, in fact, are “so clear and evident in themselves they do not need to be demonstrated.”¹² Axioms seem to be more or less interchangeable with first principles for Arnauld. While axioms, or first principles, do not need to be demonstrated, Arnauld will also at times offer arguments in favor of principles treated as axioms. What is key here is that Arnauld holds that

⁷ OA.38.8–9/AT.VII.197/CSM.II.138.

⁸ OA.38.34–35/AT.VII.216/CSM.II.152.

⁹ See also Kremer (2002: 114).

¹⁰ See, for example, Solère (1996: 132–133).

¹¹ OA.41.354/B.227/CG.291–292.

¹² OA.41.376/B.246/CG.315.

some principles are knowable in and of themselves if they are clear and evident in themselves.

In the *Logic*, Arnauld and Nicole offer an account of what makes a claim or principle clear and evident. The authors emphatically point out that the fact that there are people who deny a certain claim does not undermine its being clear and distinct, because “there are philosophers who have made a career out of doubting everything.”¹³ But they offer an account that depends on introspection and a psychological criterion. They suggest that we should take “as clear whatever appears so to everyone who is willing to take the trouble to consider things attentively and is sincere in saying what is inwardly thought.”¹⁴ As an example, the Port-Royalists consider the claim that ‘the whole is greater than its part’:

Certainty, rather, depends solely on the fact that our clear and distinct ideas of a whole and a part clearly imply both that the whole is greater than its part, and that the part is smaller than the whole. (OA.41.378/B.247/CG.317)

Arnauld and Nicole take the certainty of ‘the whole is greater than the part’ to depend only on the clear and distinct ideas of ‘whole’ and ‘part.’ We need not go outside the proposition itself to see that it is true. Arnauld and Nicole tell us that “what we have said about this axiom [the whole is greater than the part] can be said about all the others.”¹⁵ I shall return to clear and distinct ideas in Sections 2.2 and 2.3, but for now, Arnauld thinks that intelligence grounds first principles, which can be known with certainty based on the clear and distinct ideas of the components of the proposition. One need not go outside the proposition to know that it is true.

In the following chapter of the *Logic*, the Port-Royalists introduce eleven axioms, many of which I shall return to in later chapters. The axioms can helpfully be grouped into three sets: the epistemological axioms, the causal axioms, and the foundations of faith axioms.¹⁶ The first two make up the epistemological axioms:

1st Axiom: Everything contained in the clear and distinct idea of a thing can truthfully be affirmed of it.

2nd Axiom: At least possible existence is contained in the idea of everything we conceive clearly and distinctly.

¹³ OA.41.376/B.246/CG.315.

¹⁴ OA.41.377/B.246/CG.316.

¹⁵ OA.41.378/B.247/CG.317.

¹⁶ Arnauld and Nicole do not group them this way. They do, however, note that 8–10 are “the foundations of faith.”

From the fact that something is clearly conceived, we cannot avoid viewing it as being able to exist, since only a contradiction between ideas makes us think that something cannot exist. Now there can be no contradiction in an idea when it is clear and distinct. (OA.41.381–382/B.250/CG.321)

The first axiom will be addressed in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 and is foundational to Arnauld's epistemology.

The next set of axioms can be grouped together as the causal axioms:

3rd Axiom: Nothingness cannot be the cause of anything.

From this axiom arise several others that can be called corollaries, such as the following.

4th Axiom: No thing, nor any perfection of an actually existing thing, can have nothingness or a nonexistent thing for the cause of its existence.

5th Axiom: All the reality or perfection in something exists formally or eminently in its first and total cause.

6th Axiom: No body is capable of moving itself, that is, of giving itself motion when it has none.

7th Axiom: No body can move another body if it is not itself in motion. For if a body at rest cannot impart motion to itself, it is even less able to impart it to another body. (OA.41.382–383/B.250–251/CG.321–322)¹⁷

Some of these axioms are reminiscent of Descartes's proof for God's existence based on the idea of God, and the sixth and seventh axioms are similar to ones relevant to many discussions of occasionalism among seventeenth-century Cartesians, a position of which Arnauld holds a mitigated form later in his life (see Chapter 4).¹⁸

After the causal axioms, the Port-Royalists introduce the foundations of faith axioms:

8th Axiom: We should never deny what is clear and evident because we cannot understand what is obscure.

9th Axiom: It is the nature of a finite mind not to be able to understand the infinite.

10th Axiom: The testimony of an infinitely powerful, wise, good, and true person should have more power to persuade the mind than the most convincing reasons.

¹⁷ Arnauld and Nicole note that axioms 4–7 are all corollaries of the third axiom.

¹⁸ E.g., Géraud de Cordemoy at OP.135–136/N.93–94; see also Nadler (2011a: ch. 8).

11th Axiom: When the facts that the senses can easily judge are witnessed by a great number of persons from different times, different nations, and diverse interests, who speak about them as if from personal experience, and who cannot be suspected of having conspired to maintain a lie, they should be considered as constant and indubitable as if we had seen them with our own eyes. (OA.41.383–384/B.251/CG.322)

The eighth and ninth axioms shall prove to be especially important in my discussion of the relation between faith and reason. From this list of axioms, it is clear that Arnauld holds that intelligence gives us robust knowledge.

2.1.2 Reason

Other than these first principles, Arnauld and Nicole claim that “there are two general paths that lead us to believe that something is true,” namely reason and authority. This distinction is the key one for Arnauld’s epistemology and method. The Port-Royalists elaborate on reason:

The first [path that leads us to believe that something is true] is knowledge we have of it ourselves, from having recognized and examined the truth either by senses or by reason. This can generally be called *reason*, because the senses themselves depend on a judgment by reason, or *science*. (OA.41.395/B.260/CG.335)¹⁹

Reason pertains to things known either through the faculty of reason alone or through sensation and reason. Sensation belongs in the category of reason since the senses (here, presumably, knowledge via the senses) depend on a judgment by reason.

Arnauld and Nicole begin their discussion of method with a chapter on scientific knowledge. They define scientific knowledge as knowledge had through reason when:

reason convinces us completely ... [and] if the reason is not merely apparent but cogent and reliable, which is recognized by longer and more exact attention, firmer persuasion, and the quality of the clarity, which is livelier and more penetrating, then the conviction this reason produces is called scientific knowledge. (OA.41.355/B.227/CG.292)

The Port-Royalists distinguish scientific knowledge from opinion or mere opinion – beliefs based on reason where reason does not produce a “complete conviction.”

¹⁹ See also Moreau (1999: 129–137).

The title of the chapter on scientific knowledge captures much of the spirit of Arnauld's views on knowledge through reason:

On scientific knowledge. That there is such a thing. That the things known by the mind are more certain than whatever is known by the senses. That there are things the human mind is incapable of knowing. The utility we can derive from this necessary ignorance. (OA.41.354/B.227/CG.291)

Arnauld and Nicole focus on both the fact that finite beings can gain much knowledge about the world, but that there are also things the human mind is incapable of knowing and limits to human knowledge. Reason can give us much scientific knowledge, but there are also many things the human mind is incapable of knowing.

Arnauld and Nicole continue to distinguish between three types of things that are the objects, or supposed objects, of knowledge from reason:

Some things can be known clearly and certainly. Some things we do not in fact know clearly, but we can hope to come to know them. Finally, some are virtually impossible to know with certainty, either because we lack the principles to lead us to them, or because they are too disproportionate to the mind. (OA.41.357–358/B.230/CG.295)

The first category – things that can be known clearly and certainly – includes “everything known by demonstration or by the understanding.”²⁰ They continue:

The second is the object of study by philosophers. But it is easy for them to waste a lot of time on such issues if they do not know how to distinguish them from the third, that is if they cannot distinguish things the mind can come to know from those that are beyond its grasp. (OA.41.358/B.230/CG.295)

Arnauld and Nicole claim that the second type are the objects of study of philosophers. They advise philosophers to take care to not waste time on issues beyond their grasp, that is, not to pursue the third supposed type of knowledge. They elaborate:

There are countless metaphysical questions that are too vague, too abstract, and too removed from clear and known principles ever to be resolved. The safest thing to do is to get rid of them as quickly as possible, and after studying cursorily how they arise, to resolve in good faith to ignore them. (OA.41.358/B.230/CG.296)

Certain metaphysical questions are too far beyond the finite intellect to be resolved. With respect to the third category, Arnauld and Nicole give two

²⁰ OA.41.358/B.230/CG.295.

reasons why certain supposed objects of knowledge are in fact beyond our capacity: We lack the principles to lead us to them, or they are disproportionate to the mind.

Arnauld and Nicole continue to offer advice on how to search for scientific knowledge within our epistemic limits, namely “never to try to inquire about anything beyond us, which we cannot reasonably hope to be able to understand.”²¹ Arnauld and Nicole explicitly consider infinity and claims related to infinity as those about which we should be careful in our search for truth. While Arnauld and Nicole seem to have some theological knowledge in mind, they are not limiting their discussion to theological claims. They consider an example from Cartesian physics:

How to understand that the smallest bit of matter is infinitely divisible and that one can never arrive at a part that is so small that not only does it not contain several others, but that it does not contain an infinity of parts . . . All these things are inconceivable, and yet they must necessarily be true, since the infinite divisibility of matter has been demonstrated. (OA.4I.359/B.231/CG.296–297)

In this passage, the Port-Royalists note that matter is infinitely divisible. They are endorsing Descartes’s view of matter as divisible by nature in such a way that any bit of matter, however small, has an infinite (or indefinite) number of smaller parts. Yet, Arnauld and Nicole hold that matter being infinitely divisible is inconceivable; we cannot conceive how a piece of matter could be so divided. However, this fact should not make us doubt that matter is in fact infinitely divisible since it has been demonstrated.

Arnauld and Nicole nicely sum up their position on rational knowledge: “some ignorance is a great part of wisdom.”²²

2.I.3 Faith

The third source of knowledge is faith:

The other path is the authority of persons worthy of credence . . . This is called faith or belief [*foi, ou créance*] . . . But since this authority can have two sources, God or people, there are always two types of faith, divine and human. Divine faith cannot be subject to error, because God can never deceive us nor be deceived. (OA.4I.395/B.260/CG.335–336)²³

²¹ OA.4I.358/B.230/CG.295.

²² OA.4I.358/B.230/CG.296.

²³ See Hunter (1996: 117–118) for a discussion of whether to translate “*foi*” throughout these passages as “testimony” or “faith.”

The things known through faith are based on authority, either of God or of other finite persons. There is some ambiguity in terminology worth pausing over that I first noted in Section 2.1. Arnauld and Nicole suggest that believing based on reason and the senses as well as believing based on authority can produce knowledge. Believing of the former kind is reason or science; the latter is faith or belief. Hence, “belief” signifies knowledge had through faith, which the Port-Royalists claim “often is no less certain” than reason or science. But they also use “belief” for the mental state of taking something to be true. It is clear for the Port-Royalists that one can acquire knowledge though faith. When they take up faith later in the *Logic*, they claim “to discuss another kind of knowledge that often is no less certain nor less evident in its own way, namely knowledge derived from authority.”²⁴

For the Port-Royalists, human faith is prone to error, but is also essential. In order for us to trust such faith, we need to keep two criteria in mind:

- i. Truthfulness: The person(s) relaying the information is being honest.
- ii. Accuracy: That person’s judgment that they are relaying to others is not mistaken.

The Port-Royalists are clear that both of these conditions are difficult to meet and do not suggest that either needs to be met with certainty for us to have knowledge via faith. With respect to (i), the Port-Royalists rather acerbically claim: “all humans are liars.”²⁵ So, with respect to faith in other persons, there is always a consideration that the testimonial information is somehow based on dishonesty. With respect to (ii), the Port-Royalist note how rare good judgments are in many instances throughout the *Logic*. So, human faith relies on others making good judgments. Nevertheless, human faith is essential for their method, and they note that there are “some things we know only by human faith, which we ought to consider as certain and as indubitable as if we had mathematical demonstrations of them.”²⁶ Arnauld and Nicole seem to be taking testimony as a basic epistemic source here. It is not simply the case that we can make an abductive inference to the truth of some proposition based on the evidence that speaker S claims P as this would give us at most very probable knowledge.

While the last claim about the certainty of testimonial knowledge seems rather overstated, two observations are in order. First, Arnauld and Nicole only claim that we ought to consider some things known through faith as

²⁴ OA.41.395/B.260/CG.335.

²⁵ OA.41.395/B.261/CG.336.

²⁶ OA.41.395/B.261/CG.336.

certain as if we had a mathematical demonstration. This is not, strictly speaking, committing to them *being* as certain. Second, the examples they give are things such as that Cicero or Virgil existed. These sorts of claim, they note, “we know from the constant testimony of so many people that it is morally impossible that they could have conspired to assure us of the same thing if it were not true.”²⁷ There is no indication that believing something on one person’s testimony could ever attain such levels of certainty (certainly, at least, in day-to-day matters).

Arnauld and Nicole also note that “it is often fairly difficult to mark precisely when human faith has attained this certainty and when it has not,” and this difficulty has led people both to believe “too readily based on the least rumor” and to doubt too much and not believe things when there is ample evidence.²⁸ There is a correct middle ground that we should strive for. Once more, human faith primarily concerns day-to-day life judgments and beliefs and contingent matters where one should not accept a claim simply because it is possible, nor reject it because a contrary claim “is not impossible.”²⁹

The other type of faith is divine faith. This type of faith is in many ways parallel to human faith, but the testimony is grounded on the authority of God rather than on other finite persons (though other finite persons can perhaps play a role in the transmission of said testimony). The Port-Royalists tell us that divine faith “cannot be subject to error, because God can never deceive us nor be deceived.”³⁰ This might seem to put divine faith as the cornerstone of their method and entail that, when divine faith comes into conflict with reason, divine faith is always epistemically stronger and we should believe what divine faith tells us, irrespective of whether it coheres with reason. And there are some passages that might suggest this. Arnauld and Nicole claim, for example:

It is certain that divine faith should have more power over the mind than our own reason. This is because reason itself shows us that we must always prefer what is more certain to what is less certain, and that it is more certain that what God says is true than what our reason convinces us of, because God is less capable of misleading us than our reason is of being misled. (OA.41.396/B.262/CG.337)

²⁷ OA.41.395–396/B.261/CG.336. This may seem like an instance where Arnauld relies on abductive inference to justify testimony. Still, all told, I think the totality of evidence suggests the reading given in this chapter.

²⁸ OA.41.396/B.261/CG.336.

²⁹ OA.41.398/B.263–264/CG.339–340. For more on human faith, see Shiokawa (1995).

³⁰ OA.41.395/B.260/CG.336.

Several aspects of their view, however, show that the above claim is much more mitigated than it might seem. All this amounts to for Arnauld is that we can know that whatever God reveals to us is true.³¹ We must use reason to determine what in fact God has revealed, and subsequently how to understand what was revealed. As we shall see in the chapters on God below, Arnauld frequently denies we must accept a claim from scripture as a literal truth – for example, that God is angry (e.g., Exodus 4:4). He claims instead: “there is nothing . . . more clearly repugnant to the idea of the perfect being than to be corporeal or subject to human passions.”³² Because God’s having anger is inconsistent with our idea of God, we can know that God is not (nor ever is) angry. So, while Arnauld thinks that the Catholic biblical texts are in fact revealed truths, there is still a large role for the finite mind and reason in determining what to believe based on those texts.

Arnauld and Nicole makes this commitment to reason being the foundation of faith rather explicit in the *Logic* (while citing Augustine):

If we compare the two general routes – reason and faith – that make us believe that something exists, it is certain that faith always presupposes some reason. As St. Augustine says in letter 122³³ and many other places, we could not be led to believe what is beyond reason if reason itself had not persuaded us that there are things that it is good to believe although we are not yet capable of understanding them. This is mainly true with respect to divine faith, because true reason teaches us that since God is truth itself, he could not deceive us in what he reveals to us about his nature or his mysteries. From this it appears that even though we are obligated to hold our understanding captive to obey Jesus Christ, as St. Paul says, still we do not do it blindly and irrationally, which is the origin of all false religions. Rather, we do it knowing the cause and because it is reasonable to be a captive in this way to God’s authority whenever he has given us sufficient evidence, such as miracles and other prodigious events, which oblige us to believe that he himself has revealed to us the truths we ought to believe. (OA.41.396/B.261/CG.336–337)

A second reason why divine faith would not outweigh reason in Arnauld’s method is that, if faith and reason are employed correctly, they are never truly in conflict. Arnauld and Nicole claim:

Nevertheless, considering things exactly, whatever we see evidently and by reason, or by the faithful testimony of the senses, is never opposed to what

³¹ See Walsh and Stencil (2025). ³² OA.39.237.

³³ This is likely a mistake, as the letter was numbered 222; see B.261, n.3.

divine faith teaches us. But we believe it is because we do not pay attention to the limits of the evidence of reason and the senses. (OA.41.396–397/B.262/CG.337)

If both methods are used properly, there should not be any conflict.

In the *Logic*, Arnauld and Nicole note that reason and faith are two different *paths* to knowledge. In other texts, Arnauld sometimes treats the distinctions as if they were between two domains of knowledge. In the *Règles* quote at the beginning of this section, for example, he distinguishes between questions that are theological and those that are philosophical. However, he adds the important qualifier *principally* – that is, “if it is philosophical, it must be decided principally by reason.” So, I suggest we take the distinction to primarily be one of two different sources of knowledge, neither of which ultimately reduces to the other. Faith tends to be the path for theological questions, and reason tends to be the path for philosophical questions. Generally speaking, I think Arnauld’s main point is that reason (and the senses) and authority (or testimony) are both basic and non-reducible paths to knowledge, though in actual practice we often use both in our pursuit of truth.

2.2 Rationalism

Arnauld’s basic epistemological commitments fall squarely in line with the rationalist tradition associated with Descartes.³⁴ The defining feature of Arnauld’s view in this respect is his thesis about the source of our ideas. Arnauld holds that at least some of our ideas are innate. Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the *Logic* takes up the question of “ideas according to their nature and origin.”³⁵ The authors claim that:

The issue comes down to whether all our ideas come from the senses, and whether this common maxim should be considered true: *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu* [nothing is in the intellect which was not previously in the senses] (OA.41.131/B.28/CG.43–44).

The Port-Royalists reject this view that nothing is in the intellect which was not previously in the senses as “absurd” and “as contrary to religion as to true philosophy.” Invoking Descartes, they claim that there is nothing more clear and distinct nor more certain than ‘I think therefore I am.’ They claim that such certainty is dependent on distinctly conceiving

³⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1, Arnauld connects this epistemological project to Augustine as well.

³⁵ OA.41.127/B.25/CG.39.

‘being’ and ‘thinking.’ This is taken to imply that it “is undeniable that we have in us the ideas of being and thought,” and they deny that we could acquire such distinct ideas through the senses. They conclude that “it must be admitted that the ideas of being and thought in no way originate in the senses.”³⁶

Arnauld and Nicole note that, with respect to ideas like ‘being’ and ‘thought,’ the “soul has the faculty to form them from itself.” So, in their view, such ideas are innate in the sense that the soul has the ability by its nature to form them. As they note, however, “often it is prompted to do so by something striking the senses.”³⁷

They offer a similar argument with respect to our idea of God. The Port-Royalists consider the view “that our idea of God originates in the senses because we conceive him under the idea of a venerable old man.”³⁸ They reject this view, noting that “it is only necessary to consider that if we had no other idea of God than that of a venerable old man, all our judgments about God would have to appear false to us whenever they conflict with this idea” – for example, that God is incorporeal.³⁹ I return to this issue in Part II of the book.

Arnauld holds that at least some of our ideas are had innately; Arnauld and Nicole offer being, thought, and God as key examples of innate ideas in the *Logic*. Once more, these ideas can ground substantive knowledge of the mind-independent world. The fact is clear if we move on to consider more of Arnauld’s epistemological commitments.

One central component of Arnauld and Nicole’s positive epistemological project, if not the central component, is the clear ideas principle (CIP). This principle was listed as an axiom above, though they reiterate the principle later with a slightly different wording:

CIP: Everything contained in the clear and distinct idea of a thing can truthfully be affirmed of that thing. (OA.41.378/B.247/CG.317)

In order to further unpack this principle, we need to know what Arnauld takes clear and distinct ideas to be. The Port-Royalists tell us that “the word ‘idea’ is one of those that are so clear that they cannot be explained by others, because none is more clear and simple.”⁴⁰ This is not very helpful to the commentator, and contrary to this claim, Arnauld often does

³⁶ OA.41.131–132/B.29/CG.44–45.

³⁷ OA.41.132/B.29/CG.45. I’ll return to the question of whether the soul forms all its own ideas, according to the *Logic*, in Chapter 4.

³⁸ OA.41.132/B.29/CG.45. ³⁹ OA.41.132–133/B.29–30/CG.45.

⁴⁰ OA.41.127/B.25/CG.39.

spend a lot of time discussing what an ‘idea’ is and even offers a few potential definitions.⁴¹ For example:

Whenever we speak of ideas, then, we are not referring to images painted in the fantasy, but to anything in the mind when we can truthfully say that we are conceiving something, however we conceive it. (OA.41.129/B.26/CG.41)

While I address Arnauld’s theory of ideas more thoroughly in Chapter 5, for now what is important is that Arnauld and Nicole take care to distance themselves from the “false interpretation we could give this word [*idea/idée*] by restricting it merely to that form of conceiving things that consists in applying the mind to images formed in the brain, which is called imagining.”⁴² They go on to say that to imagine something is to “represent it under a corporeal image” and they reject the idea that the only way we have of thinking and conceiving is imagining.⁴³ It is clear for Arnauld that there are many ideas that are not imagistic.

Clear and distinct ideas are the main topic of chapter 9 of Book 1. There the Port-Royalists claim:

In an idea we can distinguish the clarity from the distinctness, and the obscurity from the confusion. For we can say that an idea is clear to us when it strikes us in a lively manner, even though it is not distinct. The idea of pain, for example, strikes us very vividly, and accordingly can be called clear, and yet it is very confused since it represents pain as in the wounded hand although it is only in the mind.

Nevertheless we can say that all ideas are distinct insofar as they are clear, and that their obscurity derives only from their confusion, just as in pain the single sensation which strikes us is clear and also distinct. But what is confused, namely that the sensation is in the hand, is by no means clear to us. (OA 41.156/B.48/CG.70)⁴⁴

They add:

Taking the clarity and distinctness of ideas for the same thing, then, it is very important to examine why some ideas are clear and others obscure. (OA 41.156/B.49/CG.70)

⁴¹ Pearce (2016: 366) makes this point.

⁴² OA.41.127/B.25/CG.41. Arnauld and Nicole’s describing imagining as applying the mind to images in the brain echoes Descartes’s claims in a few places early in his career, e.g., AT.11.176/CSM.I.106. See Simmons (2003) and Ott (2017) for discussion.

⁴³ OA.41.127–128/B.25/CG.40.

⁴⁴ See Nadler (1989: 36–38) for a nice discussion of Arnauld on clarity and distinctness.

This is a perhaps surprising claim to make, namely taking clarity and distinctness as the same thing. The Port-Royalists are clearly invoking terminology from Descartes. Descartes demarcated the two in the *Principles of Philosophy* [*Principles*]. There Descartes calls “a perception ‘clear’ when it is present and accessible to the attentive mind” and “a perception ‘distinct’ if, as well as being clear, it is so sharply separated from all other perceptions that it contains within itself only what is clear.”⁴⁵ When Arnauld discusses clear and distinct or clear and evident ideas, he, like Descartes, takes clear ideas to be a function of how lively or accessible the idea is to the mind. But the Port-Royalists do not seem especially concerned with the precise terminology and throughout his writings Arnauld calls the ideas in CIP ‘clear and distinct ideas,’ ‘clear and evident ideas,’ or even just ‘clear ideas.’⁴⁶ Since clear ideas, clear and distinct ideas, and clear and evident ideas all seem to play the same role in his various discussions, we can treat these expressions as representing the same kind of idea for Arnauld.⁴⁷

While Arnauld does not seem especially concerned with the distinction, in the above passages from the *Logic*, ‘clarity’ and ‘distinctness’ are distinguished, as clarity is when an idea “strikes us in a lively manner” and is thus grounded in the way in which we perceive an idea. Distinctness, on the other hand, seems more directly concerned with the idea’s content – for example, where the pain is located. Pain is a “confused” idea and represents “pain as in the wounded hand although it is only in the mind.”⁴⁸ Though Arnauld does not develop this point, it is clear that there must be a certain degree of precision in a distinct idea. So, we can describe the relevant type of ideas for CIP as ideas that have two qualities: they appear strongly to the mind, and they are precise in their content.

Arnauld seems to think that CIP is almost so clearly true as not to need defense. He lists it in his axioms, which suggests he treats it as ‘intelligence’ and thus knowable in and of itself. Yet, he does offer something of an argument for it – what I shall call the argument from Pyrrhonism. In the *Logic*, Arnauld and Nicole distinguish Pyrrhonist skepticism from Academic skepticism. The Academics deny that we can have any “clear and certain knowledge,” but allow for “probability,” whereas the Pyrrhonists “reject even probability and claim that everything is equally obscure and uncertain.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ AT.VIIIa.22/CSM.I.207–208.

⁴⁶ E.g., OA.38.210/K.30.

⁴⁷ See, for example, OA.38.197/K.19.

⁴⁸ OA.41.156/B.48/CG.70.

⁴⁹ OA.41.355/B.227–228/CG.292.

Arnauld and Nicole make the argument that denying CIP leads to Pyrrhonism explicitly in the *Logic*. Just before CIP, they note: “I believe that the certainty and evidence of human knowledge about natural things depends on this principle [CIP].” The Port-Royalists add a bit later:

This principle cannot be contested without destroying everything evident in human knowledge and establishing a ridiculous Pyrrhonism. We can judge things only by our ideas of them, since we have no other means of conceiving of them except as they are in the mind, and since they exist there only by means of their ideas. Now suppose the judgments we form in considering these ideas did not concern the things themselves, but only our thoughts. In other words, suppose that from the fact that I see clearly that having three angles equal to two right angles is implied in the idea of a triangle, I did not have the right to conclude that every triangle really has three angles equal to two right angles, but only that I think this way. It is obvious that we would know nothing about things, but only about our thoughts. Consequently, we could know nothing about things except what we were convinced we knew most certainly, but we would know only that we thought them to be a certain way, which would obviously destroy all the sciences. (OA.41 378–379/B.247–248/CG.318)

They argue that we can judge things only by means of the ideas we have of them. We can only conceive things through the mind, and we can only conceive things in the mind by our ideas. If our judgments about our clear ideas did not give us knowledge about the things in themselves, then we would not have any knowledge of anything except our own ideas.⁵⁰ Without CIP, we would be stuck in our minds and never have knowledge about the world. Arnauld and Nicole do not claim that denying CIP leads to Academic skepticism – that is, a lack of certainty – but to Pyrrhonist skepticism – that is, not having any even probable knowledge about the world. While the Port-Royalists certainly hold that CIP can lead to certainty, they explicitly claim above that CIP leads to certainty and evidence, and thus also gives us probable knowledge. This is an important distinction, I argue, because Arnauld is not claiming that denying the principle undermines certainty, but even probable knowledge. If we do not trust CIP, then knowledge derived from the senses is just as much suspect as any a priori knowledge.

Arnauld’s primary defense for CIP is two-fold. First, CIP is a principle that qualifies as intelligence; it is clear and evident in itself. Second, denying the principle leads to the claim that we could know nothing

⁵⁰ See also Lennon (2000: 19–20).

about the outside world, not even with probable knowledge. Of special note is that Arnauld does not invoke considerations of divine goodness or divine power (as Descartes does in the *Fourth Meditation*) to validate our clear and distinct perception. This is for at least two good reasons. First, as we will see in Part II of this book, Arnauld wants to ground our belief in God in our idea of God and CIP, so this move would produce a circularity (and Arnauld was of course keenly aware of any such circularity worries). Second, Arnauld does not want to rule out in this context that God could deceive us even systematically.⁵¹

2.3 The Truth Rule in Descartes and Arnauld

Arnauld's CIP is reminiscent of Descartes's famous truth rule from the *Third Meditation*. There Descartes claims: "whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true."⁵² Their similarity has not escaped the attention of scholars. In fact, many scholars interpret Arnauld's CIP as the exact same principle as Descartes's truth rule.⁵³ Yet, there is a *prima facie* difference between the two principles. Descartes's truth rule tells us that what we perceive clearly and distinctly *is* true, whereas Arnauld's principle tell us that what is contained in the clear idea of a thing *can be affirmed* of it with truth. This wording suggests that Descartes thinks that the clear and distinct idea itself has propositional content (since it *is* true) whereas Arnauld seems to suggest that clear and distinct ideas provide the contents of true propositions that are actively formed by the finite mind. In this section I shall argue that this difference is not merely *prima facie* but is in fact a considered difference in their respective views that corresponds with a different view of the nature of judgment. The difference between the CIP and the truth rule in fact reveals a subtle, but key, difference in a foundational aspect of their respective epistemologies.

Descartes's truth rule has attracted a vast amount of attention in the scholarly literature, and unsurprisingly there is disagreement about how best to understand it. While I cannot here fully engage with the debate, I outline what I take to be the most plausible interpretation. Given the

⁵¹ As suggested by an anonymous reader, a comparison of this view to Locke's view on these issues would be illuminating, but is beyond the scope of the chapter. See Bolton (1992) for a comparison of Locke and the *Logic* on the epistemic properties of ideas.

⁵² AT.VII.35/CSM.II.24.

⁵³ For example, Nadler (1989: 36); Lolordo (2005: 70–71); Lennon (2008: 158). Nadler cites a different instance of Arnauld's use of the principle in question. Nelson (1993: 690–691) offers a difference, but not one I focus on here.

significance of the *Third Meditation* text on this issue, I shall quote a larger extract than was quoted above.

I am certain that I am a thinking thing. Do I not therefore also know what is required for my being certain about anything? In this first item of knowledge there is simply a clear and distinct perception of what I am asserting; this would not be enough to make me certain of the truth of the matter if it could ever turn out that something which I perceived with such clarity and distinctness was false. So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true. (AT.VII.35/CSM.II.24)

Descartes claims that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly *is* true. Intuitively, in order for something to be true it must either be a proposition or have propositional content. Yet, Descartes often speaks of *ideas* as being clear and distinct. In the *Fourth Meditation*, for example, he claims that there is “in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God.”⁵⁴ And he describes ideas: “Some of my thoughts are as it were the images of things, and it is only in these cases that the term ‘idea’ is strictly appropriate.”⁵⁵

Since ideas, properly speaking, are of things, and things are not propositional, we have a *prima facie* puzzle. How can things perceived with clarity and distinctness be true if ideas are what are perceived and ideas are of things? One perhaps elegant solution to this puzzle is to interpret Descartes as intending ‘true’ in the truth rule to mean something other than propositionally true. And, it is clear that Descartes does use the terms ‘true’ and ‘false’ more inclusively than we do today. He has no problem calling ideas materially false, for example. He does note, however: “as far as ideas are concerned, provided they are considered solely in themselves and I do not refer them to anything else, they cannot strictly speaking be false.”⁵⁶ And when he does identify ideas as false he notes: “For although, as I have noted before, falsity in the strict sense, or formal falsity, can occur only in judgements, there is another kind of falsity, material falsity, which occurs in ideas, when they represent non-things as things.”⁵⁷

Do we then need to conclude that the truth rule is an aberration or perhaps that ‘truth’ in the truth rule is truth in an improper sense? Ultimately, this tension is only *prima facie*. In order to see why, let us turn to other instances where Descartes invokes this rule, both in the

⁵⁴ AT.VII.53/CSM.II.37.

⁵⁵ AT.VII.37/CSM.II.25–26.

⁵⁶ AT.VII.37/CSM.II.26.

⁵⁷ AT.VII.43/CSM.II.30.

Meditations and elsewhere. In the *Fourth Meditation* he invokes this rule in the midst of the discussion of error:

If, however, I simply refrain from making a judgement in cases where I do not perceive the truth with sufficient clarity and distinctness, then it is clear that I am behaving correctly and avoiding error. But if in such cases I either affirm or deny, then I am not using my free will correctly. (AT.VII.59/CSM.II.41)

Here Descartes advises to refrain from making a judgment and to not 'affirm or deny' when one does not perceive the truth with clarity and distinctness.

In the *Fifth Meditation*, Descartes tells us that:

I have already amply demonstrated that everything of which I am clearly aware is true. And even if I had not demonstrated this, the nature of my mind is such that I cannot but assent to these things, at least so long as I clearly perceive them. (AT.VII.65/CSM.II.45)

Similarly, in the *Discourse on Method*:

After this I considered in general what is required of a proposition in order for it to be true and certain; for since I had just found one that I knew to be such, I thought that I ought also to know what this certainty consists in. I observed that there is nothing at all in the proposition '*I am thinking, therefore I exist*' to assure me that I am speaking the truth, except that I see very clearly that in order to think it is necessary to exist. So I decided that I could take it as a general rule that the things we conceive very clearly and very distinctly are all true. (AT.VI.33/CSM.I.127)

In these passages, Descartes suggests not only that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true, but also that we can assent to what we clearly and distinctly perceive; that we 'perceive the truth with sufficient clarity and distinctness'; and that I can clearly see that, in order to think, it is necessary to exist.

So, it is not simply Descartes claiming that clear and distinct perceptions are true that suggests that the relevant clear and distinct perception has propositional content, but also the way he uses his principle. As Bernard Williams notes, although "that to which I give assent is an idea," it is the case that "I can assent only to something of the nature of a proposition: one believes, or refuses to believe, *that such-and-such is the case*."⁵⁸ Similarly, Margaret Wilson claims that "but clearly, what we affirm or

⁵⁸ Williams (1978: 182). See also Rosenthal (1997: 147–148).

deny are not ‘images of things,’ but propositions or propositional contents.”⁵⁹ So, for Descartes’s account to work, it must be the case that the ideas on which we make judgments – clear and distinct ideas – are either propositions, or have propositional content.

Russell Wahl argues that it is not propositions that are the object of the truth rule, but rather true and immutable natures (which have propositional contents). In Wahl’s words: “when Descartes says that we perceive that a proposition is true, we should understand this perception to be parasitic on perceptions of essences or natures.” Wahl offers several reasons against treating Descartes as holding that it is propositions which are the object of clear and distinct ideas. If this were the case, Descartes would be committed to the claim that we can clearly perceive only true propositions and that there would be nothing left for the faculty of judgment to do. As Wahl suggests, it is not ‘I think, therefore I am’ that is perceived clearly and distinctly, but ‘*that in order to think it is necessary to exist.*’⁶⁰ Lex Newman has plausibly suggested that the relevant mental contents for Descartes are sometimes referred to as ideas and sometimes as propositions, but these are simply different ways of expressing the same point – namely, that ideas for Descartes cover many types of perceptual content and that the contents of ideas can be very complex.⁶¹ For Descartes, there does not seem to be a strong distinction between perceiving an essence and perceiving that essence’s propositional contents.

While there is of course more to be said about Descartes’s account of the truth rule, Descartes’s view entails that what we clearly and distinctly perceive in the truth rule are *either* propositions *or* ideas with propositional contents (or both). Descartes does not make a strict distinction between, for example, clearly and distinctly perceiving the nature of a triangle and clearly and distinctly perceiving that the angles of a triangle add up to two right angles. What is most important for the contrast I want to draw, however, is simply that the clear and distinct ideas provide the mental content (including propositional content) for the will, and the will then assents to that content.

Arnauld’s truth rule is importantly different from Descartes’s in this respect. Arnauld’s version of the principle makes clear that the content of the clear and distinct perception is not itself propositional. As noted above, Arnauld and Nicole’s wording of the principle itself suggests that the bearer of the truth value or propositional content does not appear to be the idea, but rather the ‘affirming’ of that which is contained in the idea of

⁵⁹ Wilson (1978: 141).

⁶⁰ Wahl (1995: 191).

⁶¹ Newman (2007: 337).

the thing. In other words, from the principle alone, it seems that the idea provides the basis for the finite mind to *create* propositional content by affirming some property of the thing that the idea represents. Arnauld and Nicole seem to hold that the clear and distinct idea of a thing is not propositional and does not have propositional content. Rather, clear ideas are what allow us to affirm a property of a thing if that property is contained in the idea. So, the understanding is not providing us with propositional content.

The Port-Royalists' short example of the principle from the *Logic* further supports this view:

So, because animal is included in the idea human, I can affirm of human beings that they are animals. Because having all the diameters equal is included in the idea of a circle, I can affirm of every circle that all its diameters are equal. Because having all its angles equal to two right angles is included in the idea of a triangle, I can affirm it of every triangle. (OA.41.378/B.247/CG.317–318)

One does not *affirm* that 'human beings are animals.' Rather one affirms of human beings that they are animals. The finite mind is actively forming the propositional content that is judged.

In *VFI*, Arnauld invokes the principle in the context of a larger disagreement with Malebranche over the nature of ideas and perception. Arnauld offers a clarification of CIP by giving an example:

Thales had two perceptions, one directly of twenty men and one directly of twenty drachmas . . . given those two *perceptions*, which I call *ideas*, it cannot be denied that our mind has the faculty of doing everything that I have made that philosopher do . . . that is what is properly called *seeing the properties of things in their ideas*: seeing, in the idea of extension that it must be divisible and mobile; seeing, in the idea of mind, that it must be a substance really distinct from extended substance; seeing, in the idea of God, i.e., in the idea of a perfect being, that he must necessarily exist; seeing, in the idea of a triangle, that its three angles must necessarily be equal to two right angles. To account for that, we need only understand that our mind has the power of reflecting upon its thoughts and, when it once has the perception of an object, of considering it with more attention.

That is beyond doubt, and on it depend all the sciences, especially the abstract sciences such as metaphysics, geometry, arithmetic and algebra, for in them we do nothing but conceive, clearly and distinctly, the simplest objects, for which definitions are used. . . . Thence by simple reflection on these primary cognitions . . . we draw that admirable chain of conclusions which by its evidence forces the agreement of all reasonable minds, by virtue of this single principle: *that whatever is contained in the true idea of a*

thing (i.e., in the clear perception which we have [of] it) can be affirmed of it with truth. It must be God who gave us an invincible inclination to accept it and to take it as the foundation of all human certainty. (OA.38.209–210/K.30–31)

The distinction is subtle, but when Arnauld considers CIP, he claims to see in ideas of various things that those things have various properties. In so doing, we are drawing conclusions and making judgments, not simply assenting to the idea. Earlier in *VFI*, Arnauld claims that “if I consult the idea which I have of a triangle (by a reflection upon the perception which I have of it) and I find that the equality of its three angles to two right angles is included [*enfermée*] in that idea or perception, I can affirm with truth that every triangle has three angles equal to two right angles.”⁶²

We can sharpen this point by considering Descartes’s and Arnauld’s accounts of judgment. In an illuminating paper, Jill Vance Buroker argues that Descartes offers a “transitive model” and Arnauld offers a “constructivist model.” On Buroker’s reading, which I think is correct, Descartes holds a model of judgment according to which the understanding presents a claim to the will and the will assents, dissents, or suspends judgment.⁶³ In other words, propositions, or propositional contents, are presented to the will and the will assents to them. In addition to some of the passages cited above, Buroker notes a passage in the *Fourth Meditation* where Descartes claims: “the will simply consists in our ability to do or not do something (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid).”⁶⁴

Arnauld offers a constructivist model of judgment, according to which “joining ideas to form a proposition is an act of the will rather than of the understanding.”⁶⁵ Buroker offers this textual evidence:

After conceiving things by our ideas, we compare these ideas and, finding that some belong together and others do not, we unite or separate them. This is called *affirming* or *denying*, and in general *judging*.

This judgment is also called a *proposition*, and it is easy to see that it must have two terms. One term, of which one affirms or denies something, is called the *subject*; the other term, which is affirmed or denied, is called the *attribute* or *Praedicatum*. (OA 41.197/B.82/CG.113)

Buroker writes: “I call Arnauld’s theory a ‘constructivist’ model because for him the act of judging creates the propositional content being judged . . .

⁶² OA.38.206/K.27.

⁶³ See also Rosenthal (1997); and Newman (2007).

⁶⁴ AT.VII.57/CSM.II.40.

⁶⁵ Buroker (1996a: 8).

the propositions cannot be passively apprehended by the understanding.”⁶⁶ So, the differences in Arnauld’s CIP and Descartes’s truth rule correlate with their different views on the nature of judgment.

One might argue that this amounts to a distinction without much of a difference. Both Descartes and Arnauld hold that knowledge is ultimately grounded in our clear and distinct ideas. Whether I clearly and distinctly perceive that a triangle’s angles add up to 180 degrees, or I clearly and distinctly perceive a triangle and can affirm of it based on that clear and distinct understanding that its angles add up to 180 degrees might seem to have little import. And perhaps with things like triangles, such a distinction will not have much weight. But, as we will see throughout the book, I think Arnauld uses this account of CIP and judgment to allow for a more mitigated scope of rational knowledge for certain types of questions. For example, this distinction, I argue, allows Arnauld to embrace a clear and distinct idea of God sufficient for proving God’s existence, while allowing Arnauld to still remain relatively agnostic about many features of God. In brief, if the clear and distinct idea of God includes the propositional content that God is good, for example, then all the finite will needs to do is to assent to the content of the clear and distinct idea (which ultimately is given to us by God). If, however, the clear and distinct idea of God is simply the content from which the finite mind actively forms propositions, then in matters like God’s infinite power, even though we have an innate idea of God, Arnauld thinks there is an extra step between the innate idea of God given by God and the assenting to the idea, namely the forming of the propositional content. If they are not careful, finite minds can go wrong in forming that propositional content, especially about topics like infinity (see the third type of supposed object of knowledge above). Arnauld employs this to allow for a divide between knowing that God exists (which we can do from our innate idea) and knowing many things about God. Even though the innate idea of God is trustworthy, the finite mind’s ability to form propositions about infinite things needs to be treated with restraint.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined Arnauld’s basic method and epistemology. Arnauld employs an important distinction between intelligence, reason, and faith. Intelligence encompasses first principles and instances where one

⁶⁶ Ibid., 9–10.

need not go outside the proposition itself to know it is true. Reason concerns things known through reason and the senses. Faith is knowledge through authority. Each of these sources has its own respective methods for proper use. Arnauld endorses a broadly rationalist epistemology grounded in innate ideas. Central to Arnauld's rationalist epistemology is CIP. This principle is reminiscent of Descartes's truth rule, but is subtly different in a way that must be appreciated to best understand Arnauld's philosophical project. Now that Arnauld's generally consistent and distinctive method is established, we can move on to and fully appreciate the other parts of Arnauld's philosophical project.

CHAPTER 3

Ontology *Arnauld's Dual Dualisms*

Arnauld never offers a systematic treatment of his ontology.¹ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Arnauld's basic ontology is fundamentally Cartesian. The foundation of Arnauld's ontology is what I shall call his dual dualisms: a substance–mode ontology and a mind–body substance dualism. In brief, Arnauld thinks that only particular substances and their modes exist and there are only two types of finite substances: minds/souls and bodies. Arnauld shares these basic commitments with Descartes as well as a commitment to the view that the mind and body, while really distinct, form a robust union.

Arnauld's ontology shares a lot with that of Descartes. Nevertheless, there is much of interest, both historically and philosophically, in Arnauld's various treatments of ontological issues. Arnauld is rightly remembered for his insightful objection to Descartes's famous argument for the real distinction between mind and body. In the *Fourth Objections*, Arnauld offers this criticism of Descartes's argument, focusing specifically on Descartes's move from the conceivability of a state of affairs to its genuine possibility (or perhaps even its actuality). In the introduction to their seminal collection on conceivability and possibility, Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne discuss his objection and note that "Arnauld's worry is widely echoed in contemporary discussions," and Anand Vaidya, in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, notes that "Arnauld may be the source of ... 'the standard objection' to conceivability-based accounts" of the epistemology of modality.² Contemporary scholars often rely on the controversial principle that conceivability entails possibility, often in arguments for dualism.³ And

¹ See Buroker (1994: 5–6); and Nadler (1989: 42–43).

² Gendler and Hawthorne (2002: 24); and Vaidya (2013).

³ See, for example, Yablo (1990, 1993); Chalmers (1996); Brueckner (2001); the papers collected in Gendler and Hawthorne (2002); Worley (2003); Kirk (2021).

yet, Arnauld then goes on later in his career to appear to endorse Descartes's argument. Arnauld's account of the union is interesting as well. He initially, in the *Fourth Objections*, claims that Descartes's account "takes us back to the Platonic view . . . that man is merely a rational soul and the body merely a vehicle for the soul."⁴ Years later, he explicitly defends a Cartesian account of the union in part IV of his *Examen* from the very worry that this view entails a type of Platonism.⁵ And, in his various writings, he seems to defend several different accounts of the precise relationship between the mind and body, occasionally offering an occasionalist account of their relation while at other times defending a more interactionist account.

In this chapter, I begin to develop my account of Arnauld's ontology. In Section 3.1, I offer a more thorough treatment of Arnauld's dual dualisms, namely a substance–mode ontology and mind–body substance dualism. In Section 3.2, I consider Arnauld's famous objection to Descartes's argument for mind–body substance dualism and Descartes's response. In Section 3.3, I consider Arnauld's later texts where he embraces an argument that is at least similar to the real distinction argument. I then offer some brief concluding remarks.

3.1 Dual Dualisms

Arnauld holds a substance–mode ontology. In the *Grammar*, for example, Arnauld and Lancelot explain:

The objects of our thoughts are either things, like the earth, the sun, water, wood, what is ordinarily called *substance*, or else are the manner or modification of things, like being round, being red, being hard, being learned, what is called *accident*. (OA.41.18/RR.69)⁶

They continue:

There is this difference between things or substances and the manner of things or accidents: substances exist by themselves, whereas accidents depend for their existence on substances. (OA.41.18/RR.69)

In these two passages, the basic ontological picture is relatively clear. Substances – things like the sun and water – exist "by themselves."⁷

⁴ OA.38.17/AT.VII.203/CSM.II.143.

⁵ OA.38.139/E.89.

⁶ See also OA.41.188/B.74/CG.104.

⁷ While not mentioned here, Arnauld's view is that created substances depend on God for their existence, but no other created things.

Accidents, like being round and being red, are the manner or modification of things and depend for their existence on substances.

This account of ontology is developed in the *Logic*. Arnauld and Nicole claim:

Everything we conceive is represented to the mind either as a thing, a manner of a thing, or a modified thing.

I call whatever is conceived as subsisting by itself and as the subject of everything conceived about it, a thing. It is otherwise called a substance.

I call a manner of a thing, or mode, or attribute, or quality, that which, conceived as in the thing and not able to subsist without it, determines it to be a certain way and causes it to be so named.

I call a modified thing whatever is considered a substance determined by a certain manner or mode. (OA.4I.134/B.30/CG.46–47)

Substances are again said to subsist by themselves. The second category, no longer called accidents, but “modes, attributes, or qualities,” are unable to subsist without the substance. As in the *Grammar*, one key differentiator between substances and modes for Arnauld is this: Substances depend on nothing else to exist whereas modes depend on substances for their existence.

Arnauld and Nicole offer another distinguishing mark between substances and modes: Substances are the subjects of everything conceived about them whereas modes, qualities, or in this passage, attributes are conceived in a substance and determine the substance to be a certain way.⁸ Although Arnauld sometimes seems to treat modes, attributes, and qualities more or less interchangeably, at other times he makes important distinctions between them.

The most important distinction is between modes and attributes. Later in the *Logic*, the authors note:

A mode is that which can exist naturally only through a substance, and which is in no way necessarily connected to the idea of a thing, so that one can easily conceive the thing without conceiving the mode. (OA.4I.150/B.43–44/CG.64)

Earlier in the *Logic*, Arnauld and Nicole explain (hereafter the “true mode passage”):

It is the nature of a true mode that one can clearly and distinctly conceive the substance of which it is a mode without it, while not being able,

⁸ This dual distinction between definitions of substance and mode is reminiscent of the account found in Descartes's *Principles*.

conversely, to conceive the mode clearly without conceiving at the same time its relation to the substance. (OA.41.135/B.31/CG.48)

Arnauld and Nicole's account of true modes here is similar to Descartes's account of a modal distinction in the *Principles*:

A modal distinction can be taken in two ways: firstly, as a distinction between a mode, properly so called, and the substance of which it is a mode; and secondly, as a distinction between two modes of the same substance. The first kind of modal distinction can be recognized from the fact that we can clearly perceive a substance apart from the mode which we say differs from it, whereas we cannot, conversely, understand the mode apart from the substance. (AT.VIIIa.29/CSM.I.213–214)⁹

For Arnauld, like Descartes, true modes are in a substance and depend on that substance for their existence and we can conceive the substance without the mode, but not the mode without the substance. In fact, when describing modes, Arnauld emphasizes that it is a way of being for a substance – for example, being red or being round – and modes exist through the substance. Modes depend on substances to exist and the relevant type of dependence is an ontological dependence. There are many notions of ontological dependence, but what seems central to Arnauld's account is this: To be a mode just is to be a way of being a substance. The substance explains the existence of the mode.

There are two types of attribute for Arnauld: attributes and essential attributes. The essential attribute of a substance just is the substance conceived of as an essence. As the Port-Royalists tell us: Sometimes our mind “divides the essence of the substance itself into two ideas” and treats one as the subject and one as the property, viewing one as subject and the other as mode. By means of abstraction, “in these cases the essential attribute, which is the thing itself, is taken for a mode because it is conceived as in a subject.”¹⁰ In addition, there are generic attributes that are dependent on the essential attribute. So, for example, the essential attribute of body is extension. In fact, a body just is its extension. Arnauld gives the example of divisibility as an attribute of body. Being divisible is not the essence of body, but divisibility also fails the true mode test –

⁹ Descartes adds: “The second kind of modal distinction is recognized from the fact that we are able to arrive at knowledge of one mode apart from another, and *vice versa*, whereas we cannot know either mode apart from the substance in which they both inhere” (AT.VIIIa.29/CSM.I.214). I take Arnauld to endorse this account as well.

¹⁰ OA.41.134–135/B.31/CG.47–48. Attributes, for Arnauld, are only conceptually distinct from substances. I take Arnauld to follow Descartes's account of conceptual distinctions in the *Principles*. I address this at length in Part II of the book, so shall pass over it here.

namely, one cannot conceive extension without conceiving divisibility. Being square is a true mode of that extended body since one can conceive of an extended body that is not square.¹¹ I'll return to this several times throughout the book, but I think it is instructive to think of the substance–mode relation as a determinable–determinate relation.¹² Each attribute of body (including the essential attribute) can be thought of as a determinable entity and each mode a determinate of that determinable. Each body, insofar as it is a body, has the attribute of having shape. Any particular shape the body has – for example, being spherical – is one determinate way of having shape. Arnauld's account of attributes is crucial to my treatment of his actualist theory of possibility in Chapter 7 and I develop the account more there.

It follows from all of this that modes are contingent features of substances, and attributes are necessary features of substances. An extended body is necessarily divisible and only contingently square. However, it is important for Arnauld that these facts follow from and are not constitutive of the account of substance, mode, and attribute. He does talk about modes in no way being necessarily connected to the idea of a thing, but the account is grounded in the ontological relations between substances and modes.

Before moving on, two potential issues need to be addressed. First, the above passages from the *Logic* might seem to complicate the substance–mode ontology as they seem to introduce a third type of thing – namely, a 'modified thing.' However, as Arnauld and Nicole explain, something is called a modified thing when it is a "substance determined by a certain manner or mode." Arnauld and Nicole give the example of a round body. A round body is not a new ontological category, but simply a body perceived as being attached to roundness. When we conceive something represented as a "modified thing," we are conceiving of a substance presented in a certain way, which is not a new ontologically basic category.

Second, in both texts, Arnauld claims that substances and modes are all of those things which we "conceive," or which are "the objects of our thoughts." One might worry about this from two fronts. First, one might worry that Arnauld holds that these categories apply to our conception of the world and not the world itself, or one might worry that Arnauld holds

¹¹ OA.41.147/B.41/CG.61. Essential attributes are also referred to, as in this passage, as primary attributes.

¹² See, for example, Nolan (1997a: 129) and Ott (2009: 44–49), who make this suggestion for Descartes.

that there are things that exist of which we do not have ideas. Concerning the former, there is no reason to think that Arnauld would take our ideas to be systematically errant. As we saw in the last chapter, skepticism is one of the views treated most harshly by Arnauld. The definitions given in the *Logic* of 'substance' and 'mode' are about the things which are conceived as subsisting in themselves. We can be assured Arnauld treats these as genuine categories of the world.

The other worry – namely, that there may be categories that we do not have access to – needs to be addressed with more finesse. The Port-Royalists begin the first part of the *Logic*: "we can have no knowledge of what is outside us except by means of the ideas in us."¹³ Arnauld seems open to the possibility of some types of things existing beyond the scope of human knowledge, but if there are such things, they are beyond philosophical examination. I think Arnauld is firmly committed to the substance–mode ontology as exhaustive, but would suggest that it goes beyond our rational means to firmly reject out of hand any other possible type or category of being. Given the general restraint Arnauld shows in his method, I think he is intentionally careful to not explicitly deny any other sort of metaphysical category. All told, the best reading of these passages and of the *Logic* and the *Grammar* is as Arnauld endorsing a substance–mode ontology, and endorsing it as exhaustive, while acknowledging our general limits on knowledge.

This methodological restraint is explicitly on display in his substance dualism. He tells Leibniz: "I am acquainted with only two kinds of substances, bodies and minds; and it is up to those who would claim that there are others to prove it to us."¹⁴ This passage, I think, captures the spirit of Arnauld's position and leads nicely to the next section where I begin to consider his mind–body dualism.

3.2 The Real Distinction Argument and the Trilemma Objection

There is no question that Arnauld enthusiastically embraced Descartes's dualism. In one of his 1648 letters to Descartes, Arnauld writes: "What you have taught about the distinction of the mind from the body seems to me quite clear, perspicuous and divine."¹⁵ Arnauld's considered position is mind–body substance dualism. Arnauld holds that only two types of finite substances exist: minds and bodies. Minds are thinking things and bodies

¹³ OA.41.127/B.25/CG.39.

¹⁴ G.II.107/M.134.

¹⁵ OA.38.67/AT.V.186/K.185.

are extended things.¹⁶ In the *Examen*, he claims: “if there is anything for which M. Descartes is to be commended, it is for having so well separated our soul from our body, and having so well established that they are two totally distinct substances only one of which is material.”¹⁷ Arnauld cites as a rule of method in *VFI*: “Take care not to think of minds as being like bodies or bodies as being like minds, attributing to one what pertains to the other.”¹⁸

There is no doubt that Descartes’s dualism is one of the aspects of Descartes’s system Arnauld finds most appealing, and he thinks this dualism offers the only solid foundation for the immortality of the soul.¹⁹ However, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, Arnauld’s most famous contribution to the philosophy of mind (and perhaps, second most famous overall, only the Cartesian circle being more well-known) involves his objection to Descartes’s real distinction argument for substance dualism. Given the historical and philosophical significance of this issue, in this section, I shall go over Descartes’s real distinction argument from the *Sixth Meditation*, Arnauld’s response in the *Fourth Objections*, and Descartes’s response to Arnauld in the *Fourth Replies*.

3.2.1 *The Meditations*

The relevant argument for dualism is the real distinction argument in the *Sixth Meditation*. In the *Second Meditation*, Descartes offers an important precursor to the main argument (hereafter: the inseparability passage):

But what shall I now say that I am . . . Thinking? At last I have discovered it – thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist. At present I am not admitting anything except what is necessarily true. I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks. (AT.VII.26–27/CSM.II.18)

Though Descartes is sometimes read as defending substance dualism here in the *Meditations*, I do not think that is the purpose of this passage.²⁰ Rather, Descartes wants to assert that his essence is thinking while not yet taking himself to have established that thinking is itself a substance, non-extended, or capable of existing without a body. In the next paragraph

¹⁶ See, for example, OA.38.137/E.86–87. See also OA.38.198/K.19.

¹⁷ OA.38.138/E.87. See Nadler (1989: 44). ¹⁸ OA.38.182/K.4.

¹⁹ OA.38.138/E.87. See also Nadler (2011a: 89).

²⁰ For discussion of this passage, see Willson (1978: 71–72) and Carriero (2009: 67, 83–84).

Descartes acknowledges that the human body might be “identical with the ‘I’ of which” he is aware, but notes that he will “for the moment . . . not argue the point.”²¹

Descartes returns to this issue and offers the real distinction argument for mind–body dualism in the *Sixth Meditations*:

First, I know that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it. Hence the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God. The question of what kind of power is required to bring about such a separation does not affect the judgment that the two things are distinct. Thus, simply by knowing that I exist and at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing. . . . On the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it. (AT.VII.78/CSM.II.54)

This argument from Descartes has been widely studied and there is little consensus on the correct interpretation.²² In fact, there is even disagreement about how best to understand the conclusion of the argument.²³ Since our main purpose here is to illuminate Arnauld’s response to Descartes, it will be best to stick close to the text. With that in mind we can reconstruct the argument as follows:

1. Everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it.

Therefore,

2. The fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God. (1)

²¹ AT.VII.27/CSM.II.18.

²² For various treatments, see Kenny (1968); Curley (1978); Wilson (1978: 185–200); Williams (1978: 115–116); Van Cleve (1983); Gueroult (1984–1985: vol. 2, 47–57); Hoffman (1986); Rozemond (1998); Clarke (2003); Skirry (2005); and Carrierio (2009: 384–386).

²³ See the discussion in Rozemond (1998: ch. 1); and Cunning (2022: section 5).

3. I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, insofar as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand, I have a distinct idea of body, insofar as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing.

Therefore,

4. It is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it. (2 and 3)

In 1, Descartes claims that anything we can conceive clearly and distinctly can be created by God accordingly, and in 2 he claims that our ability to clearly and distinctly understand two things as existing apart is evidence that they could (or perhaps do) exist apart. The first two premises of Descartes's argument, or at least the principle underlying them, are often considered to be a version of the conceivability–possibility principle.²⁴ There are many variations of the principle, but the essence of the principle is: Some state of affairs being conceivable entails that that state of affairs is possible. I shall reconsider Descartes's argument after considering his response to Arnauld, but for now, the key to the argument is the move from Descartes's ability to conceive of himself as a thinking non-extended thing to the conclusion that his mind and body are distinct.

3.2.2 *Fourth Objections*

In the *Fourth Objections*, Arnauld offers a serious criticism of this argument, focusing on challenging the role the conceivability–possibility principle plays in it.²⁵ Arnauld claims that “if the major premiss of this syllogism is to be true [premise 2 above], it must be taken to apply not to any kind of knowledge of a thing, nor even to clear and distinct knowledge; it must apply solely to knowledge which is adequate.”²⁶ Arnauld argues that simply having clear and distinct ideas (in Descartes's sense) is not sufficient for this principle – one needs adequate knowledge.

Arnauld offers some examples to illustrate his point and declares that it “remains to be proved that the mind can be completely and adequately understood apart from the body,” and:

²⁴ Indeed, the exchange between Descartes and Arnauld on this issue is given pride of place in Gendler and Hawthorne's introduction to their seminal volume on this issue (2002: 22–26).

²⁵ It is this argument that Anand Vaidya has suggested is “the standard objection” to the view that our ability to conceive of something entails that that thing is possible (Vaidya 2013).

²⁶ OA.38.12/AT.VII.200/CSM.II.140.

I cannot see anywhere in the entire work an argument which could serve to prove this claim [that the mind can be completely and adequately understood apart from the body], apart from what is suggested at the beginning: "I can deny that any body exists, or that there is any extended thing at all, yet it remains certain to me that I exist, so long as I am making this denial or thinking it. Hence I am a thinking thing, not a body, and the body does not belong to the knowledge I have of myself." (OA.38.14/AT.VII.201/CSM.II.141)

Arnauld does not define adequate knowledge nor what it means to understand the mind completely and adequately apart from the body. It is natural to take Arnauld to mean knowledge that is complete or exhaustive. This is how Descartes sometimes seems to understand an adequate idea or perception, and how Arnauld uses the concept in his later works.²⁷ As pointed out by Stephen Yablo, if this is what Arnauld means by adequate idea, and if Arnauld is correct "then an enormous part of our *de re* modal thinking falls under suspicion."²⁸ Yablo (I think correctly) notes that one need not read Arnauld as holding adequate knowledge means complete knowledge to make his objection work. The objection would work just as well if adequate knowledge includes knowledge of all essential properties of the object in question. All in all, I think the context of the *Fourth Objections* suggests that Arnauld does not intend adequate knowledge to be complete or total knowledge.

In the *First Objections* (which Arnauld cites in the *Fourth Objections*), Johannes Caterus claims that something is conceived inadequately when it is conceived of in a "piecemeal" way as a result of the imperfection of our intellect.²⁹ Descartes responds to Caterus:

But in the case of the thing itself which is infinite, although our understanding is positive, it is not adequate, that is to say, we do not have a complete grasp of everything in it that is capable of being understood. (AT.VII.113/CSM.II.81)

Here Descartes considers an adequate conception a complete grasp of everything capable of being understood, which intuitively would not include all properties something has, as this would be a potentially infinite set of properties and beyond our ability to perceive. I think Arnauld means something like Caterus does when he demands adequacy. If we are abstracting and conceiving of a thing in a piecemeal fashion, we are conceiving of it inadequately. When Arnauld says that a mind has not

²⁷ See AT.VII.152/CSM.II.108 and Boyle (2009: 155, n. 32).

²⁸ Yablo (1990: 159).

²⁹ AT.VII.93/CSM.II.67.

been completely and adequately understood apart from a body, he may well mean that the mind has not been understood as a complete thing independent of the body.

Whatever one thinks of the above suggestion and what Arnauld means by complete and adequate, the example he uses requires only the weaker reading. He claims:

Suppose someone knows for certain that the angle in a semi-circle is a right angle, and hence the triangle formed by this angle and the diameter of the circle is right-angled. In spite of this, he may doubt, or not yet have grasped for certain, that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other two sides; indeed he may even deny this if he is misled by some fallacy. (OA 38.15/AT.VII.201/CSM.II.141–142)

Arnauld applies this to Descartes's argument:

But now, if he uses the same argument as that proposed by our illustrious author, he may appear to have confirmation of his false belief, as follows: "I clearly and distinctly perceive", he may say, "that the triangle is right-angled; but I doubt that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other two sides; therefore it does not belong to the essence of the triangle that the square on its hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other sides."

Again, even if I deny that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the square on the other two sides, I still remain sure that the triangle is right-angled, and my mind retains the clear and distinct knowledge that one of its angles is a right angle. And given that this is so, not even God could bring it about that the triangle is not right-angled.

I might argue from this that the property which I doubt, or which can be removed while leaving my idea intact, does not belong to the essence of the triangle. (OA.38.15/AT.VII.201–202/CSM.II.142)

He continues:

Moreover, "I know", says M. Descartes, "that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it. And hence the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated by God." Yet I clearly and distinctly understand that this triangle is right-angled, without understanding that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other sides. It follows on this reasoning that God, at least, could create a right-angled triangle with the square on its hypotenuse not equal to the squares on the other sides. (OA.38.15–16/AT.VII.202/CSM.II.142)

In these passages, Arnauld introduces a potential counter-example to Descartes's argument.

Arnauld asks us to suppose someone has a clear and distinct perception of a right triangle. However, this individual does not realize, or even doubts, that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides (what I'll call the "Pythagorean proportion"). Arnauld suggests that one could use Descartes's argument to show that it is possible that there is a right triangle that does not have the Pythagorean proportion.

- A1. Everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it.

Therefore,

- A2. The fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated by God. (A1)
- A3. I clearly and distinctly understand that this triangle is right-angled, without understanding that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other sides.

Therefore,

- A4. It is certain that a right triangle can exist for which Pythagoras' theorem does not hold; that is, God at least could create a right-angled triangle without the Pythagorean proportion. (A2, A3)

Arnauld takes A4 to be an untenable conclusion and thus there must be something wrong with the argument. Arnauld explicitly suggest a dilemma here for Descartes, but following Vaidya, I think we can see that Arnauld is really suggesting a trilemma.³⁰ Faced with Arnauld's argument, Descartes must either:

- i. Reject the conceivability–possibility principle (reject A1 and/or A2);
- ii. Deny that in Arnauld's argument we have a clear and distinct idea of the right triangle (reject A3);

or,

- iii. Accept that it is certain that a right triangle can exist that does not instantiate the Pythagorean proportion (accept A4).

³⁰ Vaidya (2013).

The first option above would undermine Descartes's original argument. A₁ and A₂ are the exact same premises as in Descartes's argument. Arnauld seems to think A₄ is simply untenable and does not treat option iii as plausible. So, Arnauld suggests the only real option is ii. However, before moving on to consider ii, Descartes could simply accept the conclusion of Arnauld's argument. In fact, given Descartes's endorsement of the creation doctrine (see Part II of this book), one might think he would simply accept that God could make a right triangle that does not instantiate the Pythagorean proportion. Descartes could acknowledge that the sort of possibility that conceivability–possibility relates to is one where mathematical claims are not necessary. That being said, Descartes surely seems to treat the real distinction between mind and body as stronger than merely a possibility that God could have made it such that the mind and body could be separate. As we shall see, Descartes does reject A₄, though it may not be an option to entirely discount in this context.

To Arnauld's mind, the only plausible reply that Descartes could offer is option ii – reject A₃ while maintaining 3 in the original version. Arnauld anticipates this potential response:

I do not see any possible reply here, except that the person in this example does not clearly and distinctly perceive that the triangle is right-angled. But how is my perception of the nature of my mind any clearer than his perception of the nature of the triangle? He is just as certain that the triangle in the semi-circle has one right angle (which is the criterion of a right-angled triangle) as I am certain that I exist because I am thinking. (OA.38.16/AT.VII.202/CSM.II.142)

He sums up his findings:

Now although the man in the example clearly and distinctly knows that the triangle is right-angled, he is wrong in thinking that the aforesaid relationship between the squares on the sides does not belong to the nature of the triangle. Similarly, although I clearly and distinctly know my nature to be something that thinks, may I, too, not perhaps be wrong in thinking that nothing else belongs to my nature apart from the fact that I am a thinking thing? Perhaps the fact that I am an extended thing may also belong to my nature. (OA.38.16/AT.VII.202–203/CSM.II.142–143)

All told, Arnauld offers a serious objection to Descartes's real distinction argument by challenging the conceivability–possibility move, especially premise 2. The essence of the worry is finding a type of conceivability that we can identify introspectively that allows us to say we can clearly and distinctly conceive of the mind without the body that does not admit of counter-examples.

3.2.3 Fourth Replies

Descartes offers Arnauld a plausible and informative response that has two key components. First, he claims:

I do not, as M. Arnauld assumes, think that adequate knowledge of a thing is required here . . . if a piece of knowledge is to be *adequate* it must contain absolutely all the properties which are in the thing which is the object of knowledge. Hence only God can know that he has adequate knowledge of all things. (AT.VII.220/CSM.II.155)

It is at this stage of the back and forth that I think adequate ideas begin to mean complete and total ideas. Descartes adds a bit later:

In order for us to recognize a real distinction between two things it cannot be required that our knowledge of them be adequate . . . All I meant was that we need the sort of knowledge that we have not ourselves made *inadequate* by an abstraction of the intellect. There is a great difference between, on the one hand, some item of knowledge being wholly adequate . . . and on the other hand, its being adequate enough to enable us to perceive that we have not rendered it inadequate by an abstraction of the intellect. (AT.VII.220–222/CSM.II.155–156)

In these passages, Descartes explicitly denies that, in order for us to recognize a real distinction between mind and body, we need complete knowledge. Instead, we only need knowledge that we have not rendered *inadequate* by an abstraction of the intellect. Descartes claims that, as long as our knowledge is not rendered inadequate, our ideas are sufficient to show the real distinction between mind and body; clear and distinct perception is enough.³¹

Descartes then offers an explanation of premise 4:

Although we can clearly and distinctly understand that a triangle in a semi-circle is right-angled without being aware that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the squares on the other two sides, we cannot have a clear understanding of a triangle having the square on its hypotenuse equal to the squares on the other sides without at the same time being aware that it is right-angled. And yet we can clearly and distinctly perceive the mind without the body and the body without the mind. (AT.VII.224–225/CSM.II.158)

And a bit later, he adds:

It is true that the triangle is intelligible even though we do not think of the ratio which obtains between the square on the hypotenuse and the squares

³¹ See also AT.III.473–480/CSMK.III.201–204.

on the other sides; but it is not intelligible that this ratio should be denied of the triangle. In the case of the mind, by contrast, not only do we understand it to exist without the body, but, what is more, all the attributes which belong to a body can be denied of it. For it is of the nature of substances that they should mutually exclude one another. (AT.VII.226–227/CSM.II.159)

Descartes points to an important disanalogy. Descartes claims that he can positively conceive the mind and body as separable whereas, in Arnauld's case, one cannot positively conceive of a right triangle that does not instantiate the correct ratio between sides. A helpful way of explaining this distinction is offered by James Van Cleve. He suggests that Descartes is distinguishing between (the text between the " is the content of the clear and distinct perception):

- (a): Clearly and distinctly perceiving 'A' without clearly and distinctly perceiving 'B'
- (b): Clearly and distinctly perceiving 'A without B.'³²

In a, one is simply clearly and distinctly perceiving A without clearly and distinctly perceiving B. In b, the content of the clear and distinct perception is 'A without B.' Indeed, Descartes insists in the case of the mind and body that the content of the clear and distinct perception is 'A without B and B without A.' Descartes claims to have a clear and distinct perception of a thinking non-extended thing and an extended non-thinking thing which is necessary to establish a real distinction. Descartes tells Arnauld that, in the triangle case, one does not have a clear and distinct perception of 'a right triangle that does not instantiate the Pythagorean proportion,' but only that one can have a clear and distinct idea of 'a right triangle' without clearly and distinctly conceiving that it has the Pythagorean proportion.

With Descartes's response in hand, we can now return to Descartes's argument. In the *Second Meditation*, Descartes recognizes that his entire essence is thinking. In the *Sixth Meditation*, Descartes moves from simply having a clear and distinct perception that 'I am only a thinking thing,' to a clear and distinct perception that 'I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing' as well as 'my body is an extended non-thinking thing.' Descartes needs both clear and distinct perceptions, or rather, a clear and distinct perception including both of these components in order to have mutual separability.

³² Van Cleve (1983: 39). See also Yablo (1990).

Given the response to Arnauld, Descartes's argument is:

- D1. Everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it.

Therefore,

- D2. The fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand 'one thing apart from another' is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God. (D1)
- D3. I can clearly and distinctly perceive that 'I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing' and that 'my body is an extended, non-thinking thing,' that is, I conceive clearly and distinctly that 'my mind and body are mutually separable.'

Therefore,

- D4. It is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it. (D2, D3)

With Descartes's clarified version of the argument, Arnauld's objection would need premise 3 to be:

- A3. I clearly and distinctly understand a 'right-angled triangle in which the square of the hypotenuse does not equal the squares of the other two sides.'

This premise is far less intuitive than the original A3.

So, Descartes does not accept Arnauld's objection, but it does lead him to clarify his argument. Rather than accept that adequate ideas are necessary for such an argument, or pointing to a difference in conception between right triangles and minds, Descartes clarifies the content of the relevant idea. The clear and distinct idea must include the active exclusion of body from mind.

In the *Principles* (written after the *Meditations*), Descartes offers a further clarification of what constitutes a real distinction. He explains:

Strictly speaking, a *real* distinction exists only between two or more substances; and we can perceive that two substances are really distinct simply from the fact that we can clearly and distinctly understand one apart from the other. (AT.VIIIa.28/CSM.I.213)

Real distinctions obtain between two distinct substances, and the test for this distinction is whether we can clearly and distinctly understand each apart from the other.

While a full examination of the adequacy of the argument is beyond the scope of this chapter, all in all, I think Arnauld's trilemma objection to Descartes still has teeth. Descartes's response does show that Arnauld's particular example may not be a counter-example to the argument – it is quite plausible that one cannot clearly and distinctly conceive 'a right triangle that does not instantiate the Pythagorean proportion' – but it also seems to simply push the worry to another location. The worry now becomes how to introspectively determine whether one is clearly and distinctly perceiving 'A without B' as opposed to 'A' without 'B.'³³ Arnauld's trilemma forces Descartes to clarify the conceivability–possibility move in the argument, and the type of conceivability needed to make the argument work. With this clarified, the true problem in Descartes's argument emerges. Descartes has failed to show that D₃ is true. That is, he still has not given us an introspectively detectable criterion to discern when we are having the right sort of conception for use in such an argument.

3.3 Arnauld's Later Writings on Dualism

While I suggested above that Descartes's response did not adequately meet Arnauld's objection, there is good reason to suppose that Arnauld was generally satisfied with it. In the *New Objections*, Arnauld does not bring up this argument in his series of questions concerning Cartesian philosophy. And, as we saw in Chapter 1, he expresses his general agreement with Descartes on many issues.³⁴ And as already noted, Arnauld praises Descartes in the *Examen* for having separated the mind and the body.³⁵

While the above is mostly circumstantial, Arnauld goes on to explicitly defend the view that clear and distinct rather than comprehensive ideas are sufficient to ground robust knowledge. He also defends, albeit briefly, several arguments that are similar to, if not essentially the same as, the real distinction argument.

Arnauld explicitly accepts the distinction between comprehensive ideas on the one hand and clear and distinct ideas on the other in his debate with Malebranche. In *VFI*, Arnauld objects to a claim he attributes to Malebranche: "*The only ideas I call clear are those which produce light and*

³³ See Worley (2003) for an argument against zombie-style arguments for dualism like this.

³⁴ OA.38.67/AT.V.186/K.185. ³⁵ See also OA.38.612–613.

evidence, and through which we have comprehension of the object (so to speak).”³⁶ Arnauld responds:

Certainly Descartes at least does not agree, since he teaches in many places that we can have a clear and distinct idea of an object without knowing everything that is compatible with it. That is why he everywhere maintains that we have a clear and distinct idea of God even though it is not such as could be called *adaequatam* (that is the word he uses for an idea which makes known all the properties of an object) . . . In the reply to the *Fourth Objections*, he says that our ideas of the soul and the body can be clear and distinct without either of them being *adequate*, i.e., being such as to make us know everything that agrees with either of those two substances. Therefore he certainly did not think that in order for an idea to be clear it must include all the properties of the object. (OA.38.306/K.129)

Arnauld begins by explaining that for Descartes clear ideas need not be comprehensive. He goes on to defend the claim that one can have a clear idea of a right triangle without knowing the Pythagorean proportion: “Can it really be doubted that people before Pythagoras had the clear idea of a rectangular triangle, although he is thought to be the first to discover the precise property *that the square of its base is equal to the squares of its two sides*.”³⁷ Later, Arnauld describes Malebranche as having the prejudice that:

The idea of an object cannot be clear if it does not give us a way of knowing clearly all the modifications of which the object is capable. That is to confound a *clear idea* with a *comprehensive idea*, and to revive Pyrrhonism, because there would be nothing of which we could be sure to have a clear idea, as Descartes has pointed out very well, if the only clear ideas were those which give us such a complete knowledge of an object that none of its essential attributes, or even of its simple modifications, is hidden from us. (OA.38.323–324/K.145)

There are many more passages in *VFI* along those lines. As Arnauld claims, if one were to require comprehensive ideas in the doing of philosophy, we would be led to skepticism. He even uses the example of right triangles and Pythagoras’ theorem to make his point.

Not only does Arnauld explicitly accept that clear and distinct ideas are sufficient for metaphysical speculations, he also goes on in later works to defend the real distinction argument (or something near enough). In the *Logic*, a bit after the true mode passage, Arnauld and Nicole claim: “when

³⁶ OA.38.305/K.128. See also OC.III.43/LO.561 and Schmaltz (1996: 143–145).

³⁷ OA.38.306/K.129.

we conceive two things, or two substances, we can deny one of the other without destroying either idea.”³⁸ They add:

When I have considered everything that pertains to an extended substance called body, such as extension, shape, mobility, and divisibility, and, on the other hand, everything pertaining to mind or thinking substance, such as thinking, doubting, remembering, willing, and reasoning, I can deny of extended substance everything I conceive of thinking substance without thereby ceasing to conceive distinctly extended substance and all the other attributes joined to it. And conversely, I can deny of thinking substance everything I have conceived about extended substance without thereby ceasing to conceive quite distinctly everything I conceive in thinking substance.

This also shows that thought is not a mode of extended substance, because we can deny extension and all the properties depending on it of thought without ceasing to conceive thought clearly. (OA.4I.135/B.32/CG.48)

Combining this passage and the true mode passage, we get something like the following argument for the conclusion that thought is not a mode of extended substance:

1. When we conceive a mode, we can clearly and distinctly conceive the substance of which it is a mode without it, while not being able to conceive the mode clearly without conceiving the substance. (the true mode passage)
2. I can deny of thinking substance everything I have conceived about extended substance without thereby ceasing to conceive quite distinctly everything I conceive in thinking substance.

Therefore,

3. Thought is not a mode of extended substance (because we can deny extension and all the properties depending on it of thought without ceasing to conceive thought clearly). (1, 2)

While not identical to the real distinction argument, it is reminiscent of it.

Elsewhere in the *Logic*, Arnauld offers something very similar to the real distinction argument:

Suppose we . . . set out to consider the nature of the soul. First we would notice that it is distinctive of the soul to think, and that it could doubt everything without being able to doubt whether it is thinking, since doubting is itself a thought. Next we would ask what thinking is. Since

³⁸ OA.4I.135/B.31/CG.48.

we would see nothing contained in the idea of thought that is contained in the idea of the extended substance called body, and since we could even deny of thought everything belonging to body – such as having length, width, and depth, having different parts, having a certain shape, being divisible, etc. – without thereby destroying the idea we have of thought, from this we would conclude that thought is not at all a mode of extended substance, because it is the nature of a mode not to be able to be conceived while the thing of which it is a mode is denied. From this we infer, in addition, that since thought is not a mode of extended substance, it must be the attribute of another substance. Hence thinking substance and extended substance are two really distinct substances. (OA.4I.241/B.237/CG.304)

Arnauld begins by claiming we can doubt everything about the nature of the soul except that it thinks, and we can show that “it is distinctive” of the soul to think. This is very similar to the inseparability passage. Arnauld continues to claim that we can deny everything extended of thought and thought of extension “without thereby destroying the idea of thought,” and we can determine that thought is not a mode of extended substance. Since thought is not a mode of extension, and can exist without anything else, it must be an attribute of another substance, and so minds and bodies are different substances.³⁹

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have investigated Arnauld's basic Cartesian ontology and argued that it is grounded in his dual dualisms: a substance–mode ontology and a mind–body substance dualism. I then considered his famous objection to Descartes's real distinction argument from the *Fourth Objections* as well as Descartes's response. I concluded the chapter with a look at Arnauld's endorsement of the real distinction argument in his later texts. The discussion of this chapter leads nicely to the next chapter, where I consider Arnauld's accounts of the mind–body union and of causation.

³⁹ See also OA.38.137/E.86–87; PF.1.494; and Pécharman (1995: 310–311).

CHAPTER 4

The Mind–Body Union *Sensation, Causation, and Occasionalism*

In the last chapter, I discussed Arnauld's commitment to a broadly Cartesian ontology, especially his substance–mode ontology and mind–body substance dualism. Arnauld also follows Descartes in claiming that a human being is composed of both a body and a mind. In this chapter, I turn to Arnauld's account of the mind–body union and his closely related account of causation. Much like Descartes's, the correct interpretation of Arnauld's account of the mind–body union is controversial. Some scholars suggest that Arnauld is an interactionist, holding that the mind and body causally interact to form a union (and this type of interaction is seemingly efficient causation).¹ Other scholars have suggested Arnauld holds an account of the union in which the mind and body stand in genuine, though non-efficient, causal relations.² Still other scholars have argued that Arnauld holds an occasionalist account of the union, according to which God is the only (true) cause with respect to any mind–body causal relations.³

As with many of the issues addressed in this book, Arnauld's view is complicated by the fact that he changes his view at least once (or at minimum treats the issue differently in different texts). There is scholarly disagreement not only over what Arnauld's view is but also over when he holds various views. For example, among scholars who hold that Arnauld ultimately endorses a mitigated version of occasionalism, some see this view in texts as early as the *Logic* (1662), while others think Arnauld's occasionalism is first on display in the later *Examen* (1680).⁴ In addition, even among those who see Arnauld as holding an occasionalist account, there is disagreement about the precise nature of the mitigated occasionalism.

¹ Watson (1987: 101) lists Arnauld, among others, as holding that “causal interaction takes place between these two substances [mind and matter], resulting in ideas and sensations.”

² Nadler (2011a: ch. 2).

³ Nadler (2011a: ch. 5). See also Sleight (1990: 37–39) and Kremer (1996a: 83–84).

⁴ See Martin (2020: 14) for the former and Nadler (2011a: chs. 2 and 5) for the latter.

In this chapter, I consider Arnauld's views on the mind–body union and causation in three sets of texts. I begin, in Section 4.1, with a short discussion of several different types of causal relations and views about causation important to understanding Arnauld's account – namely, efficient causation, occasional causation, and occasionalism. In Section 4.2, I briefly consider Arnauld's early objections to Descartes's account of the union and Descartes's replies. In Section 4.3, I consider the *Logic* and the account of sensation defended therein, as this account seems unique in Arnauld's writings. I conclude that the best reading of Arnauld in this text is that he holds an occasional cause account of body-to-mind causal relations though the texts are perhaps too vague to confirm this reading. In Section 4.4, I consider Arnauld's later writings on the union in which his view shifts to an occasionalist account. I conclude by suggesting that a proper understanding of his view in the *Logic* in conjunction with some claims he made to Leibniz offers evidence that this change from an occasional to an occasionalist account is not as drastic as it might seem. Finally, I summarize the conclusions from this chapter.

4.1 Efficient Causation, Occasional Causation, and Occasionalism

In this section, I briefly canvass two types of causal relations, both of which were actively defended by some philosophers in Arnauld's milieu, as well as an important theory of causation prevalent in the period.⁵ I begin with the most common account of causal relations in seventeenth-century European philosophy: efficient causation. It has been compellingly argued that, in some sense at least, this century is the culmination of a shift from Aristotle's four causes/because (formal, material, efficient, and final) to a priority (though not exclusivity) of efficient causation.⁶ The specifics and nuances of efficient causation are controversial and hard to define and there are many subvarieties of efficient causation that are quite distinct. In a seminal paper contrasting efficient causation with occasional causation, Steven Nadler offers a definition of efficient causation that will serve as a working definition for this chapter:

⁵ This entire section is very much indebted to Nadler's insightful paper, originally published in 1994 and reprinted as chapter 2 of Nadler (2011a). On causation in early modern philosophy, see also the papers collected in Nadler (1993); Clatterbaugh (1999); and Ott (2009).

⁶ See, for example, Schmalz (2014b). See also the papers collected in Schmalz (2014a).

Efficient cause: one substance, event, or state of affairs, *A*, is the efficient cause of another substance, event, or state of affairs, *B*, if

- (i) *A* is the immediate and direct (or proximate) primary agent of change with respect to *B*,

and

- (ii) *A* is responsible for bringing about *B* through its own inherent efficacy or power.⁷

Nothing in this chapter turns on the exact definition here, but central to an efficient cause is being a primary agent of change with respect to some thing or event. Indeed, in the *Logic*, Arnauld and Nicole claim “the efficient cause is that which produces something else (*une autre chose*).”⁸ The second clause in Nadler’s account is, in my judgment, potentially problematic. Cartesian bodies, for example, are inert and yet it might well be that they are considered to have efficient causal power to move other bodies in virtue of efficacy or power that is not inherent to them (e.g., from finite minds, God, or laws). At the least, it seems that we might think this should not be ruled out by definition.⁹ But, this worry aside, Nadler’s definition will serve as a strong working definition for the chapter.

As noted above, there were several different types of efficient causation prevalent in seventeenth-century Europe. One key distinction for the discussion in this chapter is between transeunt and non-transeunt causation. In transeunt efficient causation something produces a change in something else and there is a literal transfer of some property from cause to effect – for example, motion or force.¹⁰ Non-transeunt efficient causation, on the other hand, is a type of efficient causation where there is no literal transfer of some property from cause to effect. Another type of efficient causation is immanent causation. In immanent efficient causation, something produces a change in itself.

A second type of causal relation is occasional causation. In Nadler’s words: “a relationship of occasional causation exists when one thing or state of affairs brings about an effect by inducing (but *not* through efficient

⁷ Almost verbatim from Nadler (2011a: 30–31).

⁸ OA.41.307/B.186/CG.239.

⁹ In fact, Nadler cites the Cartesian philosopher Pierre-Sylvain Régis, and Book II, Part I, Ch. 12 of *Cours entier de philosophie, ou Système général selon les principes de M. Descartes* (written 1680, published 1690), as an example of someone offering this account of efficient cause. And Régis immediately qualifies this second aspect, and goes on to explain different types of efficient causes (PSG.I.180).

¹⁰ It is tempting to here employ the terminology of ‘influx,’ but not all uses of influx involve property transfer. See O’Neil (1993) for a seminal discussion and Chignell (2009) for more discussion.

causation . . .) another thing to exercise its own efficient causal power.”¹¹ This account of causation involves a three-place relation, whereby some substance, event, or state of affairs *A*, *occasions* a second substance, event, or state of affairs *B* to cause *e* (a third substance, event, or state of affairs). In this instance, *A* is the *occasional cause* of *e* (and not *B*). *B* also stands in an efficient causal relation to *e*. However, in occasional causation *A* does not stand in an efficient causal relation to either *B* or *e*.¹² We can work with the following schema of this type of cause:

Occasional Cause: one substance, event, or state of affairs, *A*, is the occasional cause of another substance, event, or state of affairs, *e*, iff:

- i. *A* occasions *B* (a second substance, event, or state of affairs) to bring about *e*.
- ii. *B* is an efficient cause of *e*.
- iii. *A* does *not* stand in an efficient causal relation to *either B or e*.

If Nadler is correct, and I believe he is, occasional causation represents a unique type of real causal relation endorsed in the seventeenth century by numerous thinkers. Nadler offers Descartes’s later account of sensory ideas, and similar accounts in Louis de la Forge and the *Logic*, as further examples of instances of occasional causation.¹³ Other scholars have found this account of causation in Francisco Suárez,¹⁴ Johannes Clauberg,¹⁵ Anton Wilhelm Amo,¹⁶ and Margaret Cavendish.¹⁷

With these two types of causal relations in hand, we can move on to consider the causal system of occasionalism. While occasionalism is often associated with Cartesianism, the theory has a long history dating back to tenth-century Arabic philosophers and theologians and the Ash’arite school of thought in particular.¹⁸ One especially key figure here is al-Ghazâlî, and a key text is Problem 17 of his *Tahâfut al-falâsifa*.¹⁹ While this history has often, and problematically, been overlooked, there is no doubt that occasionalism was revived in the seventeenth century by

¹¹ Nadler (2011a: 33). ¹² Ibid., 35–36. ¹³ Ibid., 38–47. ¹⁴ Perler (2019).

¹⁵ O’Neil (2013: 325) and Schmaltz (2017: 172–173). ¹⁶ Walsh (2019).

¹⁷ O’Neil (2013). In an illuminating account, O’Neil ties the concept of occasional cause to the Stoics’ use of ‘antecedent cause’ (319). Of special note is O’Neil’s discussion of Galen. The fourteenth-century Latin translation of Galen’s work on antecedent causes (the only surviving version of the text) done by Niccolò da Reggio translates ‘*prophasis*’ as ‘*occasio*.’ O’Neil attributes this point to Stephen Menn. See CP.48–49 and CP.72–73.

¹⁸ For discussions of occasionalism, see Fakhry (1958); Freddoso (1994); Pyle (2003: 39–46); Bardout (2002); Lee (2008); Schmaltz (2008: 1.1); Nadler (2011a: 74–164); Adams (2013); Downing (2014); Schmaltz (2017: ch. 4); the papers collected in Muhtaroglu (2017); and Stencil (forthcoming a).

¹⁹ MM.166–177.

Cartesians and Malebranche in particular. A full-fledged, global occasionalism holds:

- i. Only God is a true cause.
- ii. Finite things have no true causal power.

While the above seems to accurately capture Malebranche's complete occasionalism, it is more accurate to treat occasionalism as a family of positions that come in various degrees. Three more mitigated occasionalist positions are:

Body-to-mind occasionalism:

- i. Only God is a true cause with respect to body-to-mind causal relations.
- ii. Finite bodies have no true causal power with respect to minds.

Mind-to-body occasionalism:

- i. Only God is a true cause with respect to mind-to-body causal relations.
- ii. Finite minds have no true causal power with respect to bodies.

Body-to-body occasionalism:

- i. Only God is a true cause with respect to body-to-body causal relations.
- ii. Finite bodies have no true causal power with respect to other bodies.

Let us now turn to Arnauld's varied writings on the issue.

4.2 Arnauld's Objections to Descartes and Descartes's Replies

In both the *Fourth Objections* and the *New Objections*, Arnauld initially offers objections to, or at least concerns about, Descartes's account of the mind–body union. While Descartes's account of the union is also controversial, the most common account – and the one I think generally correct – is that Descartes held – at least in the *Meditations* – an interactionist account in which the mind and the body stand in a genuine efficient causal relationship to one another. There is strong evidence to suggest that Descartes's account of the union shifts from this efficient cause account (as in the *Meditations*) to an occasional cause account in later texts (and perhaps even in the French translation of the *Meditations*).²⁰ And, while this is also controversial, on my reading of Descartes, what it is to be

²⁰ On Descartes's account of sensation, see Broughton (1986); Rozemond (1999); Gorham (2002); and Chignell (2009). Gorham's paper includes an extended critical engagement with Nadler's reading of occasional cause in Descartes. Descartes uses the language of 'occasion' in his description of sensation as early as July 1641 in a letter to Mersenne (AT.III.418/CSMK.III.187).

united to a body just is to stand in these special causal relations with the body.²¹ We need not adjudicate these debates here, however, as our main interest is in how Arnauld read Descartes, and he seems to hold this interpretation of Descartes. So, for the purposes of understanding Arnauld's objections here, we can treat Descartes's view as just described. In the *Fourth Objections*, just after his prolonged objection to the real distinction argument (covered in Chapter 3), Arnauld adds another worry:

It seems, moreover, that the argument [the real distinction argument] proves too much, and takes us back to the Platonic view (which M. Descartes nonetheless rejects) that nothing corporeal belongs to our essence, so that man is merely a rational soul and the body merely a vehicle for the soul – a view which gives rise to the definition of man as ‘a soul which makes use of a body’. (OA.38.17/AT.VII.203/CSM.II.143)

After a discussion linking this worry to the real distinction argument,²² Arnauld claims:

The difficulty is increased by the fact that the power of thought appears to be attached to bodily organs [*cogitandi vis corporeis organis affixa videatur*], since it can be regarded as dormant in infants and extinguished in the case of madmen. And this is an objection strongly pressed by those impious people who try to do away with the soul. (OA.38.18/AT.VII.204/CSM.II.143)

In these passages from the *Fourth Objections*, Arnauld introduces two concerns about Descartes's view that are both philosophically important and central for understanding Arnauld's later positions. In the first passage, Arnauld offers the worry that Descartes's account proves too much and fails to do justice to the unity of a human being. Arnauld relates this view to Plato and suggests that it leads to the view that man is an *animus utentem corpore* or “a soul making use of a body.” While Arnauld will eventually defend Descartes from this explicit worry (at least ostensibly), he notes here that there must be more to the unity of the human being than that of a soul making use of a body.

Arnauld then offers a related worry – namely, that the power of thought seems to be attached to the bodily organs – at least to the extent that thought can be “regarded as dormant” or “extinguished” in certain cases. Arnauld is clearly not sympathetic to the view that this is a problem for

²¹ See Wilson (1978) for a key argument that Descartes is not consistent in this view. See also Cottingham (2008: ch. 9); Hoffman (2009); and Simmons (2017).

²² This objection, which occurs at OA.38.17/AT.VII.203/CSM.II.143, has escaped much attention. See Stencil (2026) for a more thorough treatment.

believing in a soul, but he does seem to take it seriously as a problem for Descartes's dualism.

Descartes responds to the worries in the *Fourth Objections* by denying that his argument proves too much. He begins by noting: "For the fact that one thing can be separated from another by the power of God is the very least that can be asserted in order to establish that there is a real distinction between the two." He continues: "in the *Sixth Meditation*, where I dealt with the distinction between the mind and the body, I also proved at the same time that the mind is substantially united with the body. And the arguments which I used to prove this are as strong as any I can remember ever having read."²³ Descartes holds that the account of unity of mind and body offered in the *Meditations* suffices to ground a substantial unity. He offers an example to clarify:

Now someone who says that a man's arm is a substance that is really distinct from the rest of his body does not thereby deny that the arm belongs to the nature of the whole man. And saying that the arm belongs to the nature of the whole man does not give rise to the suspicion that it cannot subsist in its own right. In the same way, I do not think I proved too much in showing that the mind can exist apart from the body. Nor do I think I proved too little in saying that the mind is substantially united with the body, since that substantial union does not prevent our having a clear and distinct concept of the mind on its own, as a complete thing. (OA.38.46/AT.VII.228/CSM.II.160)

Descartes claims that his account has shown that the mind and body are substantially united. He responds to Arnauld's second worry:

Finally the fact that "the power of thought is dormant in infants and extinguished in madmen" (I should say not "extinguished" but "disturbed"), does not show that we should regard it as so attached to bodily organs that it cannot exist without them. The fact that thought is often impeded by bodily organs, as we know from our own frequent experience, does not at all entail that it is produced by those organs. This latter view is one for which not even the slightest proof can be adduced. (OA.38.47/AT.VII.228–229/CSM.II.160)

In the *New Objections* Arnauld returns to the mind–body union and offers a new worry to Descartes:

You write that our mind has the power to direct animal spirits into the nerves and in this way to move our members. Elsewhere you write that

²³ AT.VII.227–228/CSM.II.160.

there is nothing in our mind of which we are not conscious, either actually or potentially. But the human mind does not seem to be conscious of that power, which directs the animal spirits, since many do not even know whether they have nerves, unless perhaps only nominally, and many fewer whether they have animal spirits, and what animal spirits are. In a word, as far as I can gather from your principles, only that belongs to our mind, whose nature is thought, which belongs to us insofar as we are thinking and aware. But that the animal spirits are directed into the nerves in this or that way does not belong to us insofar as we are thinking and aware. Therefore it does not seem to belong to our mind. In addition, it can scarcely be understood how an incorporeal thing can move a corporeal one. (OA.38.82–83/K.192)

Arnauld raises the problem of interaction. In general, the problem of interaction involves an objection to Cartesian dualism that revolves around whether the mind and body can causally interact. While this sort of problem is sometimes treated as a single problem, there are in fact many “problems of interaction.”²⁴ While the nuances need not concern us now, Arnauld offers two distinct worries about minds and bodies causally interacting. The first worry, and the one that seems to bother Arnauld more, is specific to particular features of our experience of interaction. How is it, Arnauld asks, that our minds can have the power to direct our animal spirits in such a way as to move our arms and legs, and so on, if we are not conscious of that power? Following Arnauld’s line of thought, one might suggest that I will ‘to move my arm’; I do not will ‘to move the animal spirits in such a way that my arm moves.’ In fact, many people are not aware that they have animal spirits and yet they can move their arms and legs. And Arnauld presses that, according to Descartes, we are conscious of everything in our minds, at least potentially. This appears to be an empirical or contingent problem of interaction, not a metaphysical one. Once more, this does not seem to be a worry about the compatibility of minds and bodies interacting, simply that our experience does not support their interacting.

Arnauld then adds a general worry – namely, about understanding how an incorporeal thing could move a corporeal thing. However, this more encompassing worry seems to be more of an afterthought (I shall return to this in the conclusion of this chapter).

²⁴ See Stencil (2023) for discussion of Elisabeth of Bohemia’s objection to Descartes concerning interaction.

4.3 Mind–Body Union in the *Logic*

In the *Logic*, Arnauld and Nicole do not explicitly offer an account of the union, but they do offer an account of sensation. So, we can get some sense of Arnauld's thinking of the union, especially body-to-mind causal relations from this text. There is disagreement among scholars about how to understand the account in the *Logic*. Three views have emerged; each more or less involves attributing a different sort of causal relation to body-to-mind interactions. Nadler has argued that the *Logic* defends an occasional cause account of body-to-mind causal relations, according to which bodily motions are the occasional cause of mental states (with the bodily motion occasioning the soul to form its own mental state through immanent causation).²⁵ Tad Schmaltz has responded directly to Nadler to argue that the *Logic* is unclear "whether the talk of occasioning . . . indicates that the [bodily] motions are not genuine efficient causes . . . or whether it allows for the motions to have some causal effect on the mind, as in Descartes." Schmaltz argues that the *Logic* does rule out bodily motions as the sole source of sensory ideas.²⁶ Schmaltz does not positively claim that bodily states are efficient causes of mental states in the *Logic* but resists the interpretation where this is ruled out by the text. Finally, some scholars, notably John Martin, have suggested that the account in the *Logic* is occasionalist in nature.²⁷

There are several key passages in the *Logic* related to body-to-mind causation. In part I, the Port-Royalists claim:

It is thus false that all our ideas come from our senses. But in another sense, one can say that no idea in the mind originates in the senses, except by occasion [*sinon par occasion*], when the motions in the brain, which is all the senses can bring about, give occasion [*donnent occasion*] for the soul to form various ideas that it would not have formed without them. (OA.4I.133/B.30/CG.46)²⁸

This passage occurs in the context of an argument that not all ideas come from the senses (see Chapters 2 and 9 for more discussion of this argument). Arnauld and Nicole claim, in fact, that no idea in the mind comes from the senses. The purpose of this passage is not to discuss the union and Arnauld and Nicole do not elaborate on what they mean by the term 'occasion.' But I do think this passage suggests an occasional cause account

²⁵ Nadler (2011a: ch. 2). ²⁶ Schmaltz (2017: 185). ²⁷ Martin (2020: 14).

²⁸ Translation amended. The Buroker translation, while excellent, seems to me to minimize the hints of occasional causation in the *Logic*.

of body-to-mind causal relations. The account suggested is that sensory interactions with the external world cause motions in the brain (presumably via efficient causation). These motions in the brain are the occasional causes of ideas in the mind by means of their “giving occasion” for the soul to form its own ideas, here presumably by imminent efficient causation. The French, I think, makes the soul’s active role come through clearly: “occasion à l’âme de *se former* diverses idées” (emphasis mine).

The Port-Royalists return to an ambiguity about sensation later in the *Logic*:

The words “senses” and “sensations” are also highly equivocal, even when they are applied only to one of the five bodily senses. For three things usually take place in us when we use our senses, for example, when we see something. The first consists of certain motions in the bodily organs such as the eye and the brain. (OA.41.168/B.58–59/CG.84)

Arnauld and Nicole claim that, when we discuss sensation, we often conflate three distinct things. The first step is a purely bodily process and consists of bodily motion. They continue:

The second is that these motions give occasion to the soul to conceive something, as when following the motion produced in the eye by the reflection of light in raindrops facing the sun, the soul has the ideas of red, blue, and orange. (OA.41.168–169/B.59/CG.84)²⁹

Again, we have Arnauld and Nicole using the language of occasion (*que ces mouvements donnent occasion à notre âme de concevoir quelque chose*). In this passage Arnauld and Nicole simply note that the soul ‘has the ideas of red . . .’ (*elle a des idées du rouge . . .*). This seems less clear about what is causing the ideas than the previous passage, but certainly gives us no positive reason to suppose this is an efficient causal relation. Finally, they add:

The third is the judgment we make about what we see, such as the rainbow to which we attribute these colors, and which we conceive as having a certain size, a certain shape, and being at a certain distance. (OA 41.169/B.59/CG.84)

The third step in the sensory process is a judgment about the content provided to the mind by the senses. This is clearly a contribution of the active mind. They continue:

The first of these three things exists uniquely in the body. The other two exist only in the soul, although on the occasion of what happens in the body (*quoiqu’à l’occasion de ce qui se passe dans notre corps*). And yet we include all

²⁹ Translation amended.

three, albeit so different, under the same name “sense” or “sensation,” or “sight,” “hearing,” etc. For when we say that the eye sees or the ear hears, that can be understood only in terms of the motion of the bodily organ, since it is clear that the eye has no perception of objects striking it and does not judge them. (OA.4I.169/B.59/CG.84)

The Port-Royalists sum up their worries about the ambiguity in the terms sense and sensation. Again, the text is perhaps a bit thin, but confirms that conceptions and judgments are exclusively of the soul, though on the occasion of things that happen in the body.³⁰

All in all, in my judgment the *Logic* is most likely treating body-to-mind causal relations as one of occasional causation.³¹ One might push back on this claim from two directions. One might suggest that there is still room for an efficient causal role for bodily motions in the production of sensations, or one might argue that bodily sensations do no causal work, not even what we have called occasional causation. Schmaltz has suggested the former as a possibility, or at least offered some hesitation to deny any efficient causal role to the body in this process. On the other hand, one might develop some of Geoffrey Gorham’s arguments that this ‘by occasion’ language is not a causal relationship in any sense, and the soul is the full and only cause of sensations.³²

While both of these concerns are warranted and the *Logic* is vague on these issues, I think there are two (non-decisive) reasons to prefer the occasional cause account. First, the larger intellectual context seems to me to support this idea. While this is all controversial, it seems to me that occasional causation is a prominent type of causal relation among Cartesians, and Arnauld and Nicole would not have used this language unless they meant to invoke this type of causal relation. This reason is, of course, entirely dependent on one accepting that this type of causal relation was in fact prevalent among seventeenth-century Cartesians. If one does not accept this claim, which is well beyond the scope of this chapter, then one could suggest that the occasion language is simply taken from Descartes and does not indicate a special type of causation. Second, it seems to me that there is no question that the motions in the brain clearly play an important role in the formation of sensory experience. Arnauld and Nicole acknowledge what seems like a counterfactual dependency of

³⁰ See also OA.4I.157/B.49–50/CG.71–72; OA.4I.158/B.50/CG.72; and OA.4I.159/B.51/CG.74 for more uses of ‘occasion’ in the *Logic*.

³¹ Arnauld and Nicole’s account in the *Logic* seems to have much in common with Descartes’s account in *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet*, AT.VIIIb.359/CSM.1.304.

³² Gorham (2002). Gorham’s account is focused exclusively on Descartes.

sensory ideas on certainly bodily processes. The Port-Royalists claim that the soul forms ideas in this process that it would not otherwise form. I think the former consideration suggests that the occasional cause is meant to be a causal relation in lieu of an efficient causal relation, not in addition to it. And I think the latter shows that there is enough here to warrant claiming that it is a legitimate causal relation. In terms of the occasionalism reading of the *Logic*, it seems to me there is no text in the *Logic* that suggests that God is doing the causal work and a strong suggestion that the soul is. So, I do not see an occasionalism in this text. For that, we need to turn to the *Examen*.

4.4 Mitigated Occasionalism in the *Examen* and Later Texts

Arnauld's most thorough and explicit treatment of body-to-mind causal relations occurs in the *Examen*, and in this text Arnauld offers an occasionalist account. The account there defended is such that, on the occasion of certain bodily motions, God directly and immediately causes in the soul certain modes. Unlike in the *Logic*, the soul does not seem to have a causal role in the production of its own sensory perceptions. In fact, as we shall see, Arnauld appears to argue explicitly against that view.³³

The key discussion in the *Examen* occurs in part IV, which focuses on the "union of the mind with the body."³⁴ Arnauld's goal is to defend the Cartesian philosophy from the accusation that it does not do justice to the mind–body union or human person. In fact, Arnauld addresses the very objection he had levied at Descartes forty years earlier – namely, that on the Cartesian picture, our soul is related to our body as a pilot to a ship.³⁵ He proceeds to defend the Cartesian position:

By drawing our attention to the mutual and natural correspondence of the thoughts of the soul with traces in the brain, and emotions in the soul with movements of the spirits, the philosophy of M. Descartes suffices to convince us that our soul is not to our body as a pilot is to his ship; but that these two parts are united together in a union so great and so intimate, that they together make a single whole, which is all that reason and Christian doctrine require us to believe about the union of soul and body. (OA.38.141/E.91–92)³⁶

All that is needed, Arnauld claims, to satisfy both Christian doctrine and reason with respect to the mind–body union is that the mind and body are

³³ See Nadler (2011a: ch. 5). See also Ndiaye (1991: 300–310) and Schmaltz (2017: section 4.2).

³⁴ OA.38.136/E.85. ³⁵ OA.38.141/E.92. ³⁶ Translation: Nadler (1995: 131).

united together to make a single whole, which in turn requires only the natural correspondence of movements of the body with certain thoughts in the soul.³⁷ So long as, generally, my soul feels pain when my body is harmed (and presumably that the mind does not have a similar relationship with other bodies), then the mind–body union is a genuine whole.

Arnauld goes on to elaborate on his account of the union and to try to explain this correspondence between bodily and mental states. During this discussion, he favors the occasionalist account of their causal relation (citing Malebranche's *Search*).

While the text Arnauld is responding to is lost, based on Arnauld's comments, Le Moine had apparently argued that the occasionalist account of the mind–body union that the Cartesians “invented,” according to which God immediately causes impressions in us on the occasion of movements of the body, is “violent and contrary to the order of nature.”³⁸ So, while I think the totality of evidence suggests that Arnauld has shifted here to an occasionalist account, the dialectic is worth noting – namely, Arnauld is directly responding to an attack on Cartesian occasionalism.

Arnauld moves on to his main argument. He notes that the mind has sensory perceptions on the occasion of certain bodily motions and suggests that these perceptions in the mind can have only three possible causes: Corporeal motions cause these perceptions, the soul causes these perceptions on the occasion of certain bodily motions, or God causes these perceptions.³⁹ There are only two types of finite substances (minds and bodies) and one infinite substance (God) and these are the only substances that might have causal power. Arnauld goes on to consider each of these options individually.

Arnauld first discusses the possibility that bodies or corporeal motions cause our mental perceptions. Arnauld claims that this is quite “easily resolved,” for the movement of a body cannot have any effect other than to move another body. Here is this passage in full:

The first is very easy to resolve. For the movement of a body can have at most no other real effect than to move another body, I say *at most*, for possibly it cannot even do that, for who does not see that a body cannot have any causal relations with a spiritual soul [*qui ne voit qu'il n'en peut causer aucun sur une âme spirituelle*] which is incapable, by its nature, of being pushed or moved? This is also something that Saint Augustine thinks we ought not doubt in L. 6 of the *Music*. *Whenever corporeal things come at or are cast at this body, they do not act on the soul but on the body itself to some degree.*

³⁷ OA.38.144–145/E.97.

³⁸ OA.38.142/E.94.

³⁹ OA.38.145/E.97.

To that one can add, that all effects must have a relation to their cause, from which it follows that even if corporeal substances could act on the spiritual substance, which they cannot, the corporeal movements which occur in our eye, in our ear, in our nose, could at most only cause in our soul the perception of these movements, and not the perception of colors, scents, sounds, of which the idea has nothing in common with the idea of the soul and the corporeal movement. (OA.38 146/E.99–100)

Arnauld quite clearly claims that a body cannot causally affect a mind, as bodies can *at most* causally affect other bodies, citing Augustine in the process.⁴⁰ Some scholars have suggested that, in this passage, Arnauld is committing to bodies having efficient causal power over other bodies, though this claim misses the very important ‘at most/*au plus*’ qualification.⁴¹ Arnauld seems to be hedging on this fact in this passage. Arnauld invokes both the specifics about why a body could not have causal power over a soul (souls cannot be pushed or moved) and general causal principles (all effects must have a relation to their cause).⁴²

Arnauld continues to consider whether the soul forms its own perceptions on the occasion of certain bodily motions (the very view he defends in the *Logic*). Arnauld notes that this is a rather more difficult question. He claims that one should not have recourse to “the first cause” without necessity. That is, we should not invoke God’s causal power to explain a causal relation that can otherwise be explained. Arnauld suggests that it is quite natural to think that God gave our souls the power to cause our own mental perceptions on the occasion of certain bodily motions. He continues:

If one should suppose that the soul has such a power to give itself all the perceptions of sensible objects, it would be impossible for it to produce them so properly and with so marvelous a promptitude, since it would not know when it ought to give them to itself, not knowing the corporeal motions that take place in the sense organs that these sense perceptions must follow. (OA.38.147/E.100–101)⁴³

Arnauld clearly denies that minds cause their own perceptions on the occasion of some bodily motions. Arnauld points to two features. First, if minds had control to bring about their own perceptions on the occasion of certain bodily states, then it would seem that souls should be able to

⁴⁰ For a discussion of Augustine’s views on this issue, see Nawar (2022).

⁴¹ See, for example, Ndiaye (1991: 309) who seems to suggest this. See also Nadler (1995: 132).

⁴² See Schmaltz (2017: 181–182) for additional reasons for attributing body-to-body causal relations to Arnauld.

⁴³ Translation: Nadler (1995: 135).

bring about these perceptions whenever they please. A related second point, which is similar to the point Arnauld offered to Descartes in 1648, is that the soul does not have the requisite understanding as the soul would need to know which corporeal movements give rise to which perceptions and it is implausible that the soul would be able to produce them so quickly and with such a regularity.

Having argued that the perceptions of our soul must have a relation to certain bodily motions, that bodies do not cause these perceptions in our soul, and that our soul does not cause its own perceptions, Arnauld concludes that it is God who causes them.

It is not a case of having unnecessary recourse to the first cause when, an effect being certain, one sees that it cannot have any cause in nature. Now, it is certain, on the one hand, that our soul never fails, at least ordinarily, to have perceptions of light, colors, sounds, and odors when certain corporeal objects strike our senses; that is to say, as we are informed by anatomy, when they cause motions that travel to the brain. And it is clear, on the other hand, that things being thus, no other natural causes could be assigned to these perceptions that our soul has of sensible objects than either these disturbances that occur in our sense organs, or our soul itself. Now I am able to say that it can be neither the one nor the other, as we have just shown. It only remains for us to understand that it must be that God desired to oblige himself to cause in our soul all the perceptions of sensible qualities every time certain motions occur in the sense organs, according to the laws that he himself has established in nature. (OA.38.147–148/E.101–102)⁴⁴

Arnauld's account here is occasionalist. It is not the case that God has set up the mind and body to work together, but rather that God has committed to causing each perception "every time certain motions occur." Arnauld is describing divine activity at a particular level. That is, Arnauld's description suggests God's causal activity is involved in each particular body-to-mind causal relation. On the occasion of a certain brain state, God directly and immediately causes the soul that is united to that body to have a certain mental state.⁴⁵

Thus, in the *Examen*, Arnauld endorses body-to-mind occasionalism. As described above, the *Examen* is a defense of Cartesianism from a

⁴⁴ Translation: Nadler (1995: 135–136).

⁴⁵ Arnauld acknowledges that we can allow that bodies are 'moral causes.' He notes that, although it is clear that the body does not act on the soul as a physical cause, "to be a certain and infallible occasion of what happens in our soul, is to be its moral cause." His interest here is not something akin to secondary causality, though, but rather in being able to ground moral judgments based on interactions with bodies (OA.38.150/E.105).

particular attack. Although the work to which Arnauld is responding is lost, one can reasonably conclude that Arnauld was not here interested in developing a full-fledged account and defense of Cartesianism, but merely a defense from the particular objections levied by Le Moine.

The nature of the *Examen* might raise some questions about Arnauld's deep commitment to the occasionalist account. However, other later texts also suggest that he held (or perhaps had a preference for) a body-to-mind occasionalism. In *VFI*, Arnauld writes: "The question is, whether all our ideas or perceptions come to us from God, or whether some of them can come from ourselves."⁴⁶ During the ensuing discussion, Arnauld adds:

It is almost beyond doubt that God gives us the perceptions of light, sounds and the other sensible qualities, as well as of pain, hunger and thirst, either on the occasion of what happens in our sense organs or in the constitution of our body. (OA.38.349/K.171)

Arnauld reiterates that the soul has some causal power: "It seems likely that our soul gives itself the ideas or perceptions of things that it can know only by means of reasoning, such as almost all curved lines."⁴⁷ So in *VFI*, Arnauld suggests a body-to-mind occasionalism, but not a total occasionalism, just as in the *Examen*.

Arnauld's account of the mind-to-body causal relation is more subtle than his account of the body-to-mind relation. Unlike with body-to-mind causal relations, which Arnauld seems to deny on metaphysical grounds or at least principled grounds, mind-to-body causal relations seem to be denied primarily on empirical grounds, and once more he explicitly notes that some minds can causally impact bodies. Arnauld does not address this issue in the *Examen*, but there is another work in which he does, namely the *Dissertation*.⁴⁸ In the relevant chapter of the *Dissertation*, Arnauld argues against Malebranche's claim that angels do not have the power to move bodies. Returning to the fundamental distinction we covered in Chapter 2, Arnauld does not use reason here, but tradition and scripture. Arnauld notes that all the theologians and Christian and Jewish philosophers have believed that "Angels can act on bodies and move them."⁴⁹ Arnauld further presses that God has given intelligent beings the power to "determine their will toward particular goods."⁵⁰

Arnauld continues to discuss whether finite minds can cause bodily motions. He notes that we cannot deny that God could give to angels a

⁴⁶ OA.38.340/K.162. ⁴⁷ OA.38.349/K.171. Nadler (1995: 136) points to this passage.

⁴⁸ As noted by Sleight (1990: 39). ⁴⁹ OA.38.683. ⁵⁰ OA.38.687.

real power to move a body and indeed must accept the opposite.⁵¹ He continues, in an important passage:

A spiritual modification, such as a free act of the will, is a much more noble thing than a corporeal modification, such as the motion or rest of a body. How, then, can one admit that God has given *all* intelligent natures a real power to form a modification as noble and as excellent as the determination of the will and, at the same time, claim that it is not possible for him to have given angels a real power to do something as base and contemptible by comparison as change the place of some part of matter? . . . It is not as certain as the author imagines that God has not given to our soul a real power to determine the course of the spirits toward the parts of the body that we want to move; and it seems that M. Descartes believed it, and that perhaps it is not so easy to prove the contrary. (OA.38.690)⁵²

It is noteworthy that Arnauld does not read Descartes as being a mind-to-body occasionalist, or even as holding an occasional cause account, but seems to see Descartes as holding an efficient causal relation in the mind-to-body direction. More important in this passage is that Arnauld argues that it is hard to accept that God could give finite souls the power to will without acknowledging that God could give souls the ability to causally impact something less noble. Arnauld seems committed to the claim that finite souls at least could have causal power over bodies (that is, it is metaphysically possible that they have this power).

Arnauld adds that, if one is to argue that finite minds have no causal power over bodies, one could not do so, as Malebranche does, by arguing that “God is the only efficient cause,” but only by arguing that “Our soul does not know what needs to be done to move our arm by means of the animal spirits. It is properly only this reason . . . that can lead one to believe that it is not our soul that moves our arm.”⁵³ Arnauld suggests that the only reason to argue that the soul cannot cause things in the body is a lack of awareness of how to do so. This is short of a full-fledged endorsement of mind-to-body occasionalism. But the totality of the evidence, and the fact that this very worry – namely, about finite minds not knowing how to move the animal spirits and/or being aware of the power to do so – is present

⁵¹ OA.38.690. ⁵² Translation: Nadler (1995: 138).

⁵³ OA.38.690. Translation: Nadler (1995: 138–139). This passage might suggest that Arnauld is inclined to the Geulinx-style principle that, in order to cause something, one needs to know how to bring it about (*quod nescis quomodo fiat, id non facis*). It does not seem to me that Arnauld is endorsing anything so strong here, and his worry is also tied to the transparency of the mental. For more discussion on this principle, see Nadler (2011a: ch. 4). Cf., OC.X.62 and Ott (2008: 97–101).

throughout his whole career suggests an occasionalist account. All told, Arnauld seems to hold a mind-to-body occasionalism in these later texts.

4.5 Conclusion

In the *Examen*, after discussing Le Moine’s comparing the mind–body union to the hypostatic union, Arnauld notes:

Since faith tells us nothing of this, we are then entirely free to think what we want, or rather, what all things considered seems to us to most conform to the light of reason. Because since we are no longer dealing with faith, but of science, it is only reason that ought to be listened to, according to what I have already reported from S. Augustine: what we know, we owe to reason, what we believe, to authority. (OA.38.158/E.117)

The mind–body union might be another instance in which Arnauld seems to waver on a view, be uninterested, or even be plainly inconsistent. Once again, however, I think that this is mistaken and Arnauld is simply following his method closely. And while his position changes throughout his life, the core aspects of his view remain intact.

As early as 1648, Arnauld voiced a concern to Descartes about mind-to-body interaction. This concern focused on mind-to-body causation, was primarily a posteriori, and was based on experiential evidence. He asks: How can the mind direct animal spirits to move the body when the human mind is not conscious of this power? He does note in 1648 that it can be scarcely understood how a mind can move a body, but this worry, as I suggested earlier, seems to be a bit of an afterthought. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 2, not being able to conceive of something is not a reason to reject it for Arnauld if there are compelling reasons to think it is true. Arnauld’s primary worry as early as 1648 in the mind-to-body direction is experiential and a posteriori. Indeed, the objection occurs after a discussion of Descartes’s view that “the nature of thought is that we are always conscious of it” and it is this perspective that prompts his worry.⁵⁴

This issue is still present in Arnauld’s work in the 1680s, not least in *VFI* and the *Dissertation*. There Arnauld still seems bothered by the empirical fact that finite beings do not seem to know how to control the animal spirits nor are they aware of any power to move the body. Arnauld is committed to the metaphysical possibility that finite minds have the causal

⁵⁴ OA.38.82/K.192.

power to move bodies, and probably that non-human finite minds (i.e., angels) do in fact have causal power to move bodies.

Arnauld's account of body-to-mind causal interaction changes between the *Logic* and his later works. Arnauld and Nicole seem to defend an account of body-to-mind causation according to which the body is the occasional cause of the soul to form its own perceptions. Then in the *Examen* Arnauld defends a body-to-mind occasionalism. The body-to-mind dimension is also motivated by a posteriori worries, though perhaps with a faith-based principled worry about bodies impacting minds on account of the Augustinian idea that something less noble cannot act on something more noble.⁵⁵

While the move from occasional causation to occasionalism for body-to-mind causal relations may appear to be a rather robust change, there are several reasons to think that this shift is plausible and for Arnauld less significant than it might otherwise seem. In the time between the first edition of the *Logic* (1662) and the *Examen* (1680), numerous defenses of assorted versions of occasionalism were published. Key examples include La Forge's *Traité de l'esprit de l'homme*, published in 1666;⁵⁶ and Géraud de Cordemoy's *Six discours sur la distinction et l'union du corps et de l'âme*, also published in 1666;⁵⁷ and, most significant of all, the first edition of the *Search*, published in two parts in 1674 and 1675.⁵⁸ The fact that occasionalism became relatively popular among Cartesians surely contributed to Arnauld's change in view.

Second, the shift from occasional causation to occasionalism does not represent a shift on any of the points that are of central importance to Arnauld. Arnauld seems inclined throughout his career to the following: the claim that bodies do not act directly on minds; the claim that minds have causal power; and the claim that the mind and body stand in strong enough relation to form a single human person. All of these are true on both views. To be sure, the mind has less causal power on the body-mind occasionalist account than on the occasional cause account, but in both cases it has the causal power to form volitions and make judgments and the

⁵⁵ See Schmaltz (2017: 184–185).

⁵⁶ See, for example, chapter 16, T.235–246/THM.143–152; Bardout (2002); Nadler (2011a: chs. 6 and 7); and Sangiacomo (2014).

⁵⁷ See especially the *fourth* and *fifth discourses*, OP.135–151/N.93–107; Bardout (2002); Ablondi (2005); and Nadler (2011a: ch. 8).

⁵⁸ The defense of occasionalism occurs in the part published in 1675. See, for example, OC.3.309–320/LO.446–452; and Stencil (forthcoming a).

mind and body stand in a robust relation where the soul feels things because of what happens in the body.

A passage from Arnauld's correspondence with Leibniz adds some context to this issue. Arnauld writes to Leibniz in 1687:

As for your statement that although my arm rises when I wish to raise it, it is not that my soul causes this movement in my arm, but that, "when I wish to raise it, it is precisely at that moment when everything is arranged in the body so as to carry this out; in such a manner that the body moves in virtue of its own laws . . ." It seems to me that this is saying the same thing in other words as those who claim that my will is the occasional cause (*cause occasionnelle*) of the movement of my arm and that God is the real cause (*cause réelle*) of it. For they do not claim that God does that in time through a new act of will which he exercises each time I wish to raise my arm; but by that single act of eternal will, whereby he has wished to do everything which he has foreseen it would be necessary to do. (G.II.84/M.105–106)

Arnauld suggests that the occasional cause account of mind-to-body causal relations in which God is a real cause (i.e., mind-to-body occasionalism) does not hold that God is acting through a new act of will each time God acts to bring something about. Rather, God brings things about from a single eternal volition. I suggest that Arnauld thinks the same thing about the shift from an occasional cause to an occasionalist account of body-to-mind causation. Arnauld, through his whole career, denies that bodies act directly on minds, but also has misgivings about whether the soul knows enough to coordinate this. However, in the *Logic*, the mind–body union is not a key issue for Arnauld and Nicole and they endorse the occasional cause account / occasional cause language they find in Descartes and others. I see no reason to think that the Port-Royalists thought this was voluntary or deliberate causing on the soul's part, but simply a nomological relation set up by God. And, Arnauld seems to have been bothered by the mind's lack of awareness of such relations in 1648. Arnauld then finds in the intervening years the mitigated occasionalism account that preserves the soul's power over its own volitions, and denies that bodies act on the mind, without the obscure consequence of the soul having a power it is unaware of. Once more, this new account does not cause any fundamental change in how God acts in the world, in the sense that it does not require God to continually will at each moment each effect by a new volition. So, Arnauld embraces body-to-mind and mind-to-body occasionalism. The mind maintains its causal power of judgment and volition, which are necessary for freedom and responsibility.

In this chapter, I have argued that Arnauld's worries about the Cartesian account of the mind–body union trace all the way back to the *Fourth*

Objections, at which time he was likely not yet committed to Cartesianism. Once more, the same concerns are relevant to him throughout his life, though he starts by making objections and ends by defending Cartesianism from similar objections. I take Arnauld's thought process to be roughly as follows. Faith demands that we accept that the soul lives on after the body. Descartes's philosophy gives us good reason-based arguments for the real distinction and these arguments support the idea that the soul can live on after the body. Once more, Arnauld denies that bodies can act on minds and is committed to the view that souls have the causal power to form volitions and make judgments. The causal connection between minds and bodies is a bit obscure and Arnauld shifts from an occasional cause to an occasionalist account due to the empirical limitations of the occasional cause account, but in the end the exact relation between bodies and minds is far less important to him than that the soul has causal power and that bodies do not act on minds.

CHAPTER 5

Ideas

Perception and the Polemic with Malebranche

Arnauld's view on ideas and perception has been the focus of much scholarship. In particular, much of this attention focuses on Arnauld's debate with Malebranche. And for good reason: Arnauld's most sophisticated discussion of ideas comes in his criticisms of Malebranche's account in the *Search*. It is not always clear what is at issue between Malebranche and Arnauld and, by extension, what Arnauld's position is. Further, there are competing interpretations of Malebranche's account and debates about whether Arnauld correctly interprets Malebranche. Things are further complicated by the fact that Malebranche's view, at least, evolves during their exchange.

The main goal of this chapter is to offer an account of Arnauld's view of ideas and perception. I begin, in Section 5.1, with an overview of some of the terminology of this chapter. In Section 5.2, I briefly consider the account of ideas and perceptions offered in Malebranche's *Search*, including his vision in God doctrine. Then, in Section 5.3, I consider what is at issue in the Malebranche–Arnauld polemic on ideas. I distinguish between two disagreements. One is methodological – namely, whether ideas are, as Arnauld has it, a phenomenon primarily to be described through introspection, or whether, as Malebranche has it, ideas are a necessary or explanatory posit in a theory of perception.¹ This second disagreement is ontological and concerns the nature of ideas and the correct account of perception. In Sections 5.4 and 5.5, I further discuss Arnauld's view of perception and ideas and offer an interpretation of his account. I suggest that Arnauld's view is subtle and eludes straightforward characterization, and in fact ultimately none of the five views considered in Section 5.1 fully capture the position. That said, I argue at least with respect to sensory perception that Arnauld is best thought of as a direct realist. I examine

¹ See especially Pearce (2021). See also Cook (1991: 188); and Pyle (2003: 84–85).

some of the reasons given by scholars for suggesting Arnauld is an indirect realist and, in considering them, outline some nuances in Arnauld's view.

Before moving on to the core of the chapter, there are two issues that merit comment. The first concerns the relationship of Arnauld's and Malebranche's respective views on ideas with Descartes's. Arnauld's account of ideas is clearly inspired by Descartes and, as aptly noted by Schmaltz, "the exchange between Malebranche and Arnauld on the issue of the nature of ideas . . . appears at times to be a battle for the soul of Descartes."² Descartes's account is also controversial along the same lines as Arnauld's and often scholars who read Arnauld as a direct realist also read Descartes as one, and the same is true for indirect realist interpreters. It does not seem to me that appeals to Descartes's view are going to clear up anything in Arnauld's view. I only introduce relevant bits of Descartes when they are explicitly mentioned by Arnauld.³

Second, as was customary in the seventeenth century, both Arnauld and Malebranche use 'perceive/*apercevoir*' to denote an activity much broader than sense perception. Arnauld's second definition in chapter V of *VFI* is instructive: "To think, to know, to perceive [*apercevoir*], are the same thing."⁴ Malebranche's account of perception has some problematic ambiguities, and he distinguishes between multiple types of perception. He notes: "the soul can perceive [*peut apercevoir*] things in three ways, by the *pure understanding*, by the *imagination*, and by the *senses*."⁵ So, we must be careful when Arnauld or Malebranche discusses perception to keep in mind that perception does not only mean sensory perception.

5.1 (In)direct Realism and Act Theories of Ideas

The debate over the correct interpretation of Arnauld's account can perhaps be traced back to Malebranche, but it can certainly be traced back to Reid's 1785 *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*. Reid defends a direct realist theory of ideas and argues against what he calls the "way of ideas," or the view that what is immediately present to the mind in perception is not an external thing, but rather an idea, sense datum, or representation.⁶ Reid takes himself to be the only philosopher of his era to

² Schmaltz (2000: 61).

³ For accounts of Descartes on ideas, see Yolton (1984: ch. 1); Jolley (1990); Nelson (1997); Nadler (2006); Newman (2009, 2011); and Smith (2024). See also Wells (1994, 1999) for discussion of Arnauld's interpretation of Descartes.

⁴ OA.38.198/K.19. ⁵ OC.1.66/LO.16; Yolton: (1984: ch. 2); and Nadler (1992: 6).

⁶ EIP.312. I here follow Van Cleve (2004, 2015: ch. 3); Nichols and Yaffe (2023).

reject this way of ideas and instead hold a direct realism. He offers some hesitation on whether Arnauld embraced the way of ideas, though he ultimately concludes that Arnauld did endorse this view.⁷

This topic saw a resurgence of interest in the 1920s with several scholars (including John Laird) offering a direct realist reading and others (including A. O. Lovejoy) offering a representationalist reading.⁸ In a key 1974 paper, Monte Cook argues that the dispute from the 1920s is “largely verbal” and both sides “misrepresent, in the same way, Arnauld’s theory of perception.”⁹ Cook argues that both views fail to recognize that Arnauld in fact offers an ‘act theory’ of ideas and that Arnauld does not hold that ideas are essentially objects of perception. Debates on Arnauld’s view are still active today, with scholars like Cook, Nadler, Daisie Radner, and Kenneth Pearce opting for a direct realist reading and Paul Hoffman, Van Cleve, Moreau, A. R. Ndiaye, and Walter Ott holding that Arnauld does not maintain direct realism, at least not consistently.¹⁰

In order to best approach understanding Arnauld’s position, I shall offer two sets of (related) distinctions. The first is between direct realism and indirect realism/representationalism. While the fundamental difference between these two views seems straightforward, it can be surprisingly elusive to differentiate the two in practice. Following Hoffman, we can offer the following “rough formulation[s]” of these views:

Direct realism: the view that when we perceive mind-independent physical objects we are directly or immediately aware of them.

Indirect realism/representationalism: the view that when we perceive mind-independent physical objects, we are not immediately aware of them. Rather, we perceive physical objects by being immediately aware of ideas that represent them.¹¹

While I address this debate later in the chapter, I want to call attention to a different taxonomy that will also be informative for understanding Arnauld’s view. Two questions must be kept distinct. The first is whether Arnauld holds that perceptions are acts of the mind and the second is whether Arnauld holds that ideas are objects of perception. Newman has suggested that many scholars wrongly treat the claim that ideas are acts to

⁷ EIP.165–170. See also Van Cleve (2015: 1 and 474).

⁸ For example Lovejoy (1923, 1924); Laird (1924). ⁹ Cook (1974: 53–54).

¹⁰ Cook (1974); Radner (1976); Nadler (1989); Ndiaye (1991: 67–70 and 128–134); Moreau (1999: ch. 5); Hoffman (2009: ch. 11); Van Cleve (2015: appendix H); Ott (2017: ch. 6); Pearce (2016, 2022). See also Newman (2018: 206).

¹¹ Hoffman (2009: 164).

entail the claim that ideas are not objects of perception. Following Newman, I shall distinguish between three views here: act theories of ideas, act-object theories of ideas, and object theories of ideas.

Act theory of ideas: Ideas are conceived as acts or operations of the mind and are not perceptual objects.

Act-object theory of ideas: Ideas are conceived as acts or operations of the mind and also function as perceptual objects.

Object theory of ideas: Ideas function as perceptual objects, and ideas are not acts of the mind, at least insofar as acts of the mind are considered to be modifications of our mind.

According to the act theory of ideas, in a normal instance, when we perceive the sun, the only object of the perception is the sun itself, and our perceiving of the sun is an act of the mind whereby one directly perceives the sun. According to the act-object theory of ideas when we perceive the sun, the idea – which is an act of the mind – functions as a mediating object in our perception of the sun, while the object of perception remains the sun.¹² On Malebranche’s position – which is a version of the object theory of ideas – when we perceive the sun, the idea of the sun is a distinct entity from the mind that (on most interpretations) represents the sun to the mind and is the immediate object of our perception of the sun.

It seems clear that Arnauld holds both that perceptions of external objects are acts and that the idea of the object and the perception of the object are “the same thing” (I’ll call this latter claim the idea-act thesis).¹³ This might seem to rule out the object theory of ideas as a viable interpretation of him. However, on one recent interpretation, Arnauld takes the perception of the mind (insofar as it is a mode) to be an act of the mind, and ‘idea’ primarily refers to the external object itself insofar as it is conceived by the mind (e.g., the idea of the sun is *the sun itself* insofar as it is conceived in a mind). So, on this view, Arnauld does hold an object theory of ideas, but he does so by claiming these ideas are “not really distinct from the external objects they represent.”¹⁴ The sun in the sky and the mental representation of the sun are clearly not the same thing, so on this reading the idea-act thesis, at least as formulated above, is false. Instead, on this account, Arnauld’s point in passages that seem to suggest the idea-act thesis is as follows. There is a single feature or mode in the world: the finite mind’s perception of the sun. We call it a perception

¹² Newman (2018: 203). ¹³ OA.38.198/K.19.

¹⁴ Pearce (2016: 376). See also Pearce (2019 and 2021).

when we are focusing on the mind's representing of the sun and an idea when we are focusing on the sun as a thing being represented, but both labels are due to the same mode.¹⁵ So, despite Arnauld's seemingly clear endorsement of the act-idea hypothesis, all three of the positions above appear open as interpretations of him. Given Arnauld's commitment to our actually perceiving objects, if Arnauld endorses the act theory of ideas then he is a direct realist and if Arnauld endorses the act-object theory of ideas, he is an indirect realist. If Arnauld accepts the object theory of ideas, as described above, he would, perhaps surprisingly, be a direct realist. As we will see, I think part of the problem is that his view does not fit neatly into any of these five categories without some nuancing, but the best interpretation, at least concerning sensory perception, is an act theory of ideas and a direct realism.

5.2 Malebranche

How to best understand Malebranche's view of ideas is a matter of scholarly dispute.¹⁶ Further, it is not always clear whether Arnauld understands Malebranche correctly. The two parties did not even seem to agree on what they were disagreeing about.¹⁷ For these reasons, in this section, I shall stay close to the texts that Arnauld is engaging with (at least initially), specifically the fourth edition of the *Search* from 1678. There Malebranche outlines his theory of ideas, especially his claim that "we see all things in God," often called the vision in God doctrine.¹⁸

As noted by many scholars, Malebranche's account of ideas has some problematic ambiguities, and Arnauld is quick to take advantage of them.¹⁹ In the fourth edition of the *Search*, Malebranche notes:

It can be said that the soul's ideas are of two kinds, if we take the term 'idea' generally to mean everything which the mind perceives immediately. Those of the first kind represent to us something external to us, such as a square, a house, etc.; and those of the second kind only represent to us that which takes place within us, such as sensations, pain, pleasure, etc. For it will be seen later on that sensations are nothing but modes of the mind, and it is for this reason that I call them modifications of the mind. (OC.1.42)²⁰

¹⁵ Pearce (2016: 384).

¹⁶ See Jolley (1990); Nadler (1992); Schmaltz (1996: part 1); Schmaltz (2000); Pyle (2003: ch. 3); Pessin (2006); and Nolan (2022).

¹⁷ See, for example, Cook (1974); Nadler (1989: 81–88); Pearce (2021).

¹⁸ E.g., at OC.1.437/LO.230. ¹⁹ See, for example, Nadler (1989: 60–61).

²⁰ Translation: Nadler (1992: 18–19). Cf., OC.1.42/LO.2.

Later, however, Malebranche offers an important distinction between sensations and (pure) ideas and makes it clear that the former are not a subset of the latter:

When we perceive something sensible, two things are found in our perception: *sensation* and pure *idea*. The sensation is a modification of our soul . . . As for the idea found in conjunction with the sensation, it is in God . . . God joins the sensation to the idea when objects are present so that we may believe them to be present and that we may have all the feelings and passions that we should have in relation to them. (OC.I.445/LO.234)

Sensations are modifications of the soul, whereas ideas are in God. This doctrine is central to Malebranche's theory of sensory perception of external objects as well as the contemplation of essences and abstract truths.²¹

Beginning with the sensory perception of external objects, Malebranche is most often read as holding a representationalist theory of sensory perception. On this view, material objects are perceived indirectly and our perception of them is mediated by ideas (in God) that represent them.²² In the *Search*, Malebranche explains:

1. *What is meant by ideas.*

I think everyone agrees that we do not perceive objects external to us by themselves. We see the sun, the stars, and an infinity of objects external to us; and it is not likely that the soul should leave the body to stroll about the heavens, as it were, in order to behold all these objects. Thus, it does not see them by themselves, and our mind's immediate object when it sees the sun, for example, is not the sun, but something that is intimately joined to our soul, and this is what I call an *idea*. Thus, by the word *idea*, I mean here nothing other than the immediate object, or the object closest to the mind, when it perceives something, i.e., that which affects and modifies the mind with the perception it has of an object. (OC.I.413–414/LO.217)

Malebranche begins by offering his claim – much maligned by Arnauld – that we do not perceive objects external to us directly because the soul does not leave the body and stroll about the heavens.²³ This suggests that, in order for us to perceive something, it must be actually present to the mind.²⁴ Malebranche also claims that ideas are the immediate objects when the mind perceives something, that ideas affect and modify the mind, and that they are necessary in order to perceive external objects.

²¹ See Pessin (2006: 36–37); and Nolan (2022). ²² Cf., Nadler (1992).

²³ See Pyle (2003: 49). ²⁴ For some discussion see Wahl (1988: 561–562).

The vision in God also plays a role in the contemplation of essences. While “God sees in Himself not only the essence of things but also their existence,” it is different for finite things:

They cannot see the essence of things within themselves since, given their own limitations, created minds cannot contain all beings as does God . . . Therefore, since the human mind can know all beings, including infinite beings, and since it does not contain them, we have a sure proof that it does not see their essence in itself . . . Consequently, being neither actually infinite nor capable of infinite modifications simultaneously, it is absolutely impossible for the mind to see in itself what is not there. It does not see the essence of things, therefore, by considering its own perfections or by modifying itself in different ways. (OC.I.435/LO.229)

On account of the limitations of the human mind, we think of essences by means of ideas in God.²⁵

Malebranche offers a famous eliminative argument for his vision in God doctrine:

We assert the absolute necessity, then, of the following: either (a) the ideas we have of bodies and of all other objects we do not perceive by themselves come from these bodies or objects; or (b) our soul has the power of producing these ideas; or (c) God has produced them in us while creating the soul or produces them every time we think about a given object; or (d) the soul has in itself all the perfections it sees in bodies; or else (e) the soul is joined to a completely perfect being that contains all intelligible perfections, or all the ideas of created beings. (OC.I.417/LO.219)

The nuances of the argument – the eliminative argument for the vision in God – are not of special importance here, but the fact that Malebranche makes this argument will prove important in the following section.²⁶

5.3 Malebranche–Arnauld Polemic

As with much of the Malebranche–Arnauld debate, while they clearly disagree on their accounts of the relevant phenomenon (in this case, their accounts of perception), there is also a fundamental methodological debate between the two that is at least as important.²⁷

²⁵ See Nadler (1992: 40–44); and Phemister (2011: 146).

²⁶ For detailed treatments of the argument, see Rodis-Lewis (1963: 56–72); Nadler (1992: 108–140); Schmaltz (2000); Pyle (2003: 50–57); Moreau (2004: 64–68); and Priarolo (2017).

²⁷ See Moreau (1999: chs. 1 and 2, especially pp. 76–77); Walsh and Stencil (2019); and Stencil and Walsh (forthcoming) for discussions of other methodological dimensions of their various disputes.

5.3.1 *The Methodological Dispute*

In a recent paper, Pearce has argued (I think convincingly) that a fundamental methodological dispute between Malebranche and Arnauld concerns how we should “justify claims about the existence and nature of ideas,” and by extension the role they play in perception. Malebranche holds that ideas should be “understood as posits in an explanatory theory,” while Arnauld thinks “talk about ideas [is] not explanatory but instead merely descriptive.”²⁸ According to the latter view – descriptivism – idea talk is used to describe phenomena that we experience in our minds. On the former view – an explanatory approach to ideas – ideas serve an explanatory purpose, and at least in Malebranche’s case, our evidence for them is not introspection but arguments that ideas must exist in order to explain certain phenomena.

That Malebranche held an explanatory account of ideas is clear from his argument for the doctrine that we briefly discussed at the end of the last section. Malebranche begins the argument by noting we see objects external to us, despite the fact that these objects are not “intimately joined to our soul.” This is a fundamental phenomenon that Malebranche thinks we need a theory of ideas in order to explain. Malebranche offers five possible explanations and rejects all but the vision in God. For Malebranche, then, ideas are explanatory posits in his account of how we perceive external things and our understanding of ideas is grounded in arguments that such ideas are necessary in order to explain perception.

Pearce calls attention to several more “puzzles about perception” that Malebranche uses ideas to explain. For example:

it often happens that we perceive things that do not exist, and that even have never existed . . . When a madman or someone asleep or in a high fever sees some animal before his eyes, it is certain that what he sees is not nothing . . . though . . . the animal [has] never existed. (OC.I.414/LO.217)

Malebranche notes that ideas are necessary in order to explain how we perceive things when the supposed object of perception does not exist.²⁹ Malebranche again takes ideas to be a posit in a theory to explain how this phenomenon is possible.

Arnauld, on the other hand, holds a descriptivism about ideas. Indeed, the first few chapters of *VFI* are devoted to explaining this methodological

²⁸ Pearce (2021: 252–253).

²⁹ Such concerns are still relevant in discussions of perception. Crane (2001: ch. 5).

disagreement with Malebranche. Arnauld notes in chapter I several “rules which we ought to keep in mind in order to seek the truth in this matter of ideas,” including:³⁰

The third is not to seek for reasons *ad infinitum*; but to stop when we know what belongs to the nature of a thing, or at least to be a certain quality of it. Thus we ought not ask for a reason why extension is divisible, or why mind is capable of thinking, because it is the nature of extension to be divisible and of mind to think. (OA.38.181/K.3)

And:

The fifth is not to confuse the questions which ought to be answered by giving the formal cause, with those which ought to be answered by giving the efficient cause, and not to seek the formal cause of the formal cause, which is a source of many errors, but rather to reply at that point by giving the efficient cause. This will be better understood through an example. I am asked why this piece of lead is round. I can reply with the definition of roundness (which is to reply with the formal cause) . . . But suppose I continue to be asked whence it arises that the exterior surface of the lead is such as I have just said, and is not disposed so as to form a cube. A peripatetic will look for another formal cause, saying, that it is because the lead has received a new quality, called roundness, drawn from the breast of its matter in order to make it round, and has not received another quality which would have determined it to be a cube. But good sense requires an answer in terms of the efficient cause, namely, that the exterior surface of this piece of lead is such as was just said because the lead was melted and poured into a hollow mold whose concave surface was such as to make the convex surface of the lead such that from arbitrarily chosen points, etc. (OA.38.182/K.4)

In rule three, Arnauld claims we should not seek reasons *ad infinitum*, and this includes not asking why minds think or why bodies are extended beyond that it is their nature. In rule five, he distinguishes between formal causes and efficient causes and asserts that it is of central importance to know when each cause is appropriate to give in specific circumstances. He uses a case to illustrate. If you ask why a piece of lead is round, you can offer a definition of roundness, which Arnauld claims is to give the formal cause. There are, however, no more formal causes after this one. We ought not to ask why that is what makes something count as round; that is just the nature of roundness. We can ask what made it the case that this piece

³⁰ OA.38.181/K.3.

of lead is round if we are seeking an efficient cause answer – namely, what process led to this piece of lead being so shaped.³¹

Arnauld applies these rules directly to ideas. Chapter II of *VFI* is titled “The principal things each person can know about his soul, by consulting it himself with a little attention.”³² While the title does not entail that there are no explanatory roles for ideas, it does imply that through introspection we can know all of the things included in chapter II. And, in that chapter, Arnauld adds:

But when our mind . . . has arrived at the point of knowing its nature is to think, it easily recognizes that it would be as unreasonable to ask why it thinks as it would be to ask why extension is divisible and capable of different shapes and movements; as the fifth rule says, when we have arrived at the point of knowing the nature of a thing, there is nothing more to look for or ask for regarding the formal cause. So I can only inquire why my mind exists, and why extension exists, and in that case I ought to respond by giving the efficient cause. (OA.30.183–184/K.5–6)

He continues:

Therefore since it is clear *that I think*, it is also clear that I think of something, because thought is essentially thus. So, since there can be no thought or knowledge without an object known, I can no more ask what is the reason why I think of something, than why I think, since it is impossible to think without thinking of something. But I can very well ask why I think of one thing rather than another. (OA.38.184/K.6)

Arnauld denies that the question “why does the soul think?” requires an explanation in the formal cause sense over and above the answer that it is the nature of a soul to think. Further, to think is to think of something, so there is no explanation (in the formal cause sense) for why a soul thinks of something. The efficient cause explanation for why a soul thinks of Odessa the dog instead of Marvin the cat, is a question that requires examination.

Later in that chapter, Arnauld adds:

No matter how carefully we consult ourselves, we find nothing in those of our soul’s thoughts which are changeable and which we therefore judge to be its modifications, that we do not find in those which do not change. In each sort of thought, we see nothing except the perception and knowledge of an object. Therefore we would only confuse and bedazzle ourselves if we tried to discover how the perception of an object can be in us, or what is understood by perception, for, as we will find if we consider it carefully, that is the same as asking how matter can be divisible and figured, or what is

³¹ See Pearce (2021: 258–259).

³² OA.38.183/K.5.

understood by being divisible and figured. Since it is the nature of mind to perceive objects, some necessarily, so to speak, and others contingently, it is ridiculous to ask when it arises that our mind perceives objects. As for those who refuse to see what it is to perceive objects by consulting themselves, I do not know how to make them understand it better. (OA.38.185/K.6–7)

He continues:

So, with regard to the formal cause of the perception of objects, there is nothing to seek, because nothing can be clearer, provided that we stick to what we see clearly in ourselves, and do not mix it with other things we do not see there at all . . . the only reasonable question we can raise about the matter has to do with the efficient cause of our contingent perceptions, i.e., that which causes us to think sometimes of one thing and sometimes of another. (OA.38.185/K.7)

There is no answer to the question how the soul thinks of something over and above that it is its nature to think and to think is to think of something. Our access to the nature and existence of ideas comes through introspection.

In chapter V, Arnauld tries to “prove geometrically” that Malebranche’s account of ideas is false. In that chapter, Arnauld also suggests that the best way to acquire information about ideas is through introspection. He begins his section outlining “postulates” he will use in his rejection:

I ask that everyone reflect seriously upon what happens in his mind when he knows diverse things, that he consider everything that he notices by simple vision, without reasoning and without seeking elsewhere for comparisons taken from corporeal things, and that he accept only what he sees to be so certain that he cannot doubt it. (OA.38.201/K.22)

Arnauld thinks the best way to examine ideas is through introspection and the project is fundamentally descriptive, rather than explanatory. This amounts to a descriptivism about ideas.³³

5.3.2 *The Debate over Perception*

Arnauld and Malebranche disagree about more than just methodology. The component of their debate that has received the most attention concerns their respective accounts of perception. As noted above,

³³ To be sure, there are times where Arnauld seems to make explanatory points about ideas, e.g., suggesting that we do not need Malebranchian ideas in order to perceive objects (see especially the end of chapter IV of *VFI*). In my judgment, Arnauld is intending to reject the need for explanation in general, not merely Malebranche’s specific explanation.

Malebranche seems to hold a representationalist indirect realism, according to which in the perception of an ordinary object there is a sensation (which is a mode of the soul), an idea (which is in God), and the external object. On this view, the direct and immediate object of perception is the idea in God, which represents the external object, and the external object is the mediate or indirect object.

While it is clear that Arnauld is objecting to Malebranche's vision in God doctrine, there is debate over exactly which parts of Malebranche's account Arnauld rejects. In chapter IV of *VFI*, Arnauld offers some criticisms of Malebranche that are informative of his own view. After noting the ambiguity in Malebranche discussed above between uses of the word 'idea,' he adds:

No longer is it *the perception of bodies* which he calls their *idea*, rather it is a certain *being representative* of bodies, which he claims is needed to make up for the absence of bodies because they cannot be intimately united to the soul in the same way as *the representative being*, which, for that reason, is *the immediate object and the object closest to the mind when it perceives something*. He does not say that it is in the mind, and that it is a modification of the mind, as he ought to say if by it he meant only the perception of the object; but only that it is *the closest to the mind*, because he regards that *representative being* as something really distinct from our mind as well as from the object. (OA.38.195–196/K.17)

Arnauld is engaging with representative beings that are distinct from our mind and from the object perceived that are the immediate objects of perception. In the beginning of the next chapter, Arnauld declares: "I believe, Sir, that I can demonstrate to our friend the falsity of *those representative beings*."³⁴ So, it is clear that Arnauld is rejecting the existence of an idea that is a third entity (or *tertium quid*) that is really distinct from the external object and the finite mind that is the immediate object of perception. The question remains whether he is arguing against any immediate objects of perception other than the external objects, or only those distinct from the finite mind and the external object.

It is also clear that Arnauld is not rejecting representative beings in general. In definition 7 of chapter V he notes:

When I attack *representative beings* as superfluous, I am referring to those which are assumed to be really distinct from ideas taken in the sense of perceptions. I am careful not to attack every kind of *representative being* or modality, since I hold that it is clear to whoever reflects on what takes place

³⁴ OA.38.197/K.19.

in his own mind, that all our perceptions are modalities which are essentially *representative*. (OA.38.199/K.20)

Arnauld has no issue with the role of representative beings in perception, as long as those representative beings are the perceptions of the mind.

In keeping with Arnauld's rejection of the *tertium quid* account of ideas, it is also clear that he and Malebranche disagree about the ontological status of ideas. For Malebranche, ideas are ontologically distinct from both the external object and the finite mind, and they are in (or perhaps identical with) God.³⁵ Arnauld, on the other hand, holds that ideas are acts of the mind. A central aspect of Arnauld's positive view is his claim that the idea of an object and the perception of an object are the same thing.³⁶ He elaborates in definition 6:

I have said that I take *the perception and the idea* to be the same thing. Nevertheless it must be noted that this thing, although only one, has two relations: one to the soul which it modifies, the other to the thing perceived insofar as it is objectively in the soul; and that the word *perception* indicates more directly the first relation and the word *idea* the second. So *the perception* of a square indicates more directly my soul as perceiving a square and *the idea* of a square indicates more directly the square insofar as it is *objectively* in my mind. This remark is very important for the solution of many difficulties which are based only on the fact that it is not well enough understood that these are not two different entities but one and the same modification of our soul which includes essentially the two relations, because I cannot have a perception which is not at the same time the perception of my mind as perceiving, and the perception of some thing, as perceived, and nothing can be objectively in my mind (which is what I call the *idea*) unless my mind perceives it. (OA.38.198/K.20)

Arnauld takes ideas and perceptions to be the same thing. However, he notes a reason for the different terminology based on the two relations idea-perceptions have. A perception is related to the mind as it is a mode or act of the mind. When focusing on that relation it is appropriate to call it a 'perception.' The idea-perception also relates to objects which it represents, and when focusing on that relation we call it an 'idea.' In fact, as he notes, the 'idea of the square' primarily refers to the square insofar as it is in the mind. It is clear that Arnauld's use of the term 'objectively/*objectivement*' in the mind and later 'objective reality/*réalité objective/realitas objectiva*' is a direct reference to Descartes's use of the concept in the *Meditations* and *Objections and Replies*.

³⁵ See Nadler (1992); Cook (1998); Reid (2003); and Pessin (2006).

³⁶ OA.38.198/K.20.

Summing up what is clear from the Malebranche–Arnauld debate, there is a fundamental methodological dispute between the two. Malebranche offers an explanatory account where ideas play a necessary role in an explanation of various phenomena. Arnauld defends a descriptivist account, according to which our access to ideas is through introspection and the project is fundamentally descriptive. Arnauld defends the views that ideas are, in some sense at least, acts of the finite mind, whereas Malebranche holds that they have an ontological status independent of finite minds and external objects. While they do agree that ideas are representative beings, Arnauld objects to Malebranche’s position that representative beings, distinct from perceptions, exist.

The remaining question is whether Arnauld rejects all representative intermediaries between external things and our perceptions of them, or whether he is rejecting only representative intermediaries that are distinct from perceptions.³⁷ If the former, then Arnauld would seemingly be defending a direct realism (either an act or object theory). If the latter, that leaves open the possibility of an indirect realism and act-object theory of ideas.

5.4 Direct Realism or Indirect Realism

In this section, I consider the debate about whether Arnauld is best understood as a direct or an indirect realist. While I ultimately land on the direct realist side, some of the points made by the indirect realist interpreters lead to some finessing in how we ought to understand and categorize his position. While this issue has been thoroughly discussed, one novel contribution in this section is connecting the debate to the account of the substance–mode relation from Chapter 3. This relation pushes against the view that, in ordinary sense perception, the soul is in any sense directly perceiving its own mode rather than the external object. Rather, the mode itself is the direct sensory perception of the object. This account allows Arnauld to hold that ideas can be the direct objects of our thoughts in reflection, both virtual and explicit.

I begin by outlining the most developed direct realist account of Arnauld, namely the one offered by Nadler. Nadler suggests that the “two essential ingredients in Arnauld’s direct realism” are his general rejection of the object theory of ideas and his identification of representative idea and act of perception.³⁸ The most compelling evidence that

³⁷ See Cook (1974: 54) for the former and Ott (2017: 151) for the latter.

³⁸ Nadler (1989: 107–108).

Arnauld rejects the object theory of ideas is textual evidence, both taking his arguments against Malebranche to be rejecting the object theory of ideas in general, and his own account of perception which (at least sometimes) seems to preclude such an object. As discussed in the previous section, Arnauld rejects the existence of representative beings that are really distinct from perceptions and external objects and holds that perceptions are acts of the mind. On Nadler's account, there are perceptions of the mind and the external objects and the mind directly perceives the external object by means of an act of perception.³⁹

The second component of Arnauld's direct realist account according to Nadler is his identification of representative idea and act of perception. As we saw above, Arnauld explicitly claims that ideas and perceptions are the same thing. Arnauld's claim that ideas and perceptions are the same thing does not in itself entail a strict identity (a sweater and the cotton that makes up the sweater may well be the same thing in some sense, though not identical).⁴⁰ Whatever their sameness relation entails, Arnauld repeatedly claims they are the same thing. Consider another example, in definition 3 of chapter V:

I also take the *idea* of an object and the perception of the object to be the same thing. I set aside the question of whether there are other things which can be called *ideas*. But it is certain that there are *ideas* in my sense and that these ideas are attributes or modifications of our soul. (OA.38.198/K.19)

The picture that emerges on this direct realist reading is as follows. In perceiving an external object, say the sun, there are two things involved, the finite mind and the external object. In normal sense perception, the mind, via an act of perception, directly perceives the sun. The idea of the sun and the perception of the sun are the same thing (a mode of the mind), but when focusing on the perception of the mind insofar as it is a representation of the sun, we call it an 'idea,' and when the focus is on the fact that the perception of the sun is a mode or act of the mind, we call it a 'perception.'

Scholars have offered numerous reasons for denying that Arnauld (consistently) held direct realism. I shall consider three main reasons (some of which overlap). They are: textual evidence, especially chapter VI of

³⁹ It is worth emphasizing here that the act-object view as described above does not posit a *tertium quid* and is consistent with there being only perceptions of the mind and the external objects. On this view, Arnauld is rejecting only representations *distinct from perceptions* that are the immediate object of perceptions. I shall consider this account a bit later.

⁴⁰ For this example, see Sidelle (1998).

VFI,⁴¹ Arnauld's use of objective reality;⁴² and what I'll call taxonomical issues associated with the debate over indirect and direct realism.⁴³

We shall begin with chapter VI of *VFI*. Arnauld begins that chapter:

It looks at first as if we cannot accept the following expressions as true, without being forced to accept the philosophy of false ideas: *We do not see things immediately; their ideas are the immediate object of our thought; and it is in the idea of each thing that we see its properties*: it is hard to see how these expressions could be true unless, beside the objects that we know, there is something else in our mind which represents them.

I do not reject these expressions. I believe that they are true if properly understood. (OA.38.203/K.25)

In this chapter, Arnauld claims explicitly that he does not reject the expression that 'we do not see things immediately' if we understand that expression correctly. This passage presents the direct realist interpreter with two questions. First, if Arnauld is a direct realist, why would Arnauld care to uphold this language? The indirect realist has a simple answer: because we perceive external things indirectly by means of ideas. If the direct realist cannot answer this question, then this passage seems to be decisive for the indirect realist. Second, does Arnauld's account commit him to indirect realism?

Concerning the former question, some scholars have suggested that Arnauld did so, in one way or another, to uphold Cartesian orthodoxy or to connect his own view with that of Descartes.⁴⁴ Some evidence for this fact is that he ties his account to Descartes's in the chapter.⁴⁵ Whatever the merits of this suggestion, there is another reason that is more compelling – namely, Arnauld needs to be able to talk about ideas as objects of thought for other aspects of his philosophical and theological projects. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Arnauld bases his epistemology on CIP: Everything contained in the clear and distinct idea of a thing can truthfully be affirmed of that thing. Applying this principle requires not just thinking about the sun, but examining the idea of the sun, and in order to examine the idea of the sun, one needs to be able to think about the idea of the sun. And, the third expression noted at the beginning of chapter VI that Arnauld wants to explain is: 'it is in the idea of each thing that we see its properties.' Arnauld specifically brings CIP into the

⁴¹ E.g., Moreau (1999: ch. 5); and Van Cleve (2015: 474–475).

⁴² E.g., Ndiaye (1991: 131); Van Cleve (2015: 475–477); and Ott (2017: 152–153).

⁴³ E.g., Hoffman (2009): ch. 11. ⁴⁴ Cook (1974: 58); and Nadler (1989: 117–118).

⁴⁵ OA.38.205/K.26.

discussion of chapter VI.⁴⁶ Arnauld needs us to be able to reflect on our ideas and unpack their contents for his methodology.

Similarly, Denis Kambouchner and Pearce have connected, in different ways, this discussion from *VFI* to central aspects of Arnauld's philosophical project in the *Logic* and the *Grammar*.⁴⁷ Both texts require that one make a distinction between ideas or objects in the mind and mental actions performed on those ideas.⁴⁸ While Arnauld does not explicitly connect these projects to *VFI*, he notes of his account: "That is beyond doubt, and on it depend all the sciences, especially the abstract sciences such as metaphysics, geometry, arithmetic and algebra."⁴⁹ In order to pursue subjects like metaphysics and geometry, we need to be able to do more than just think of souls and triangles, we need to be able to examine our ideas of souls and triangles and this requires that ideas be the objects of thought and that we see properties of things in those ideas. So, I think the direct realist has a compelling account of the reason for the project of chapter VI.

The second question remains, however: Does the account in the chapter commit Arnauld to an indirect realist account of perception? Arnauld begins the chapter by making an important distinction between virtual reflection and explicit reflection and then brings up the objective reality of an idea. He describes virtual reflection:

The first is that our *thought or perception* is essentially reflexive upon itself; as it is expressed more happily in Latin, *est conscia sui*, for I never think without knowing that I think. I do not know a square without knowing that I know it; I do not see the sun, or to put the point beyond doubt, I do not imagine that I see the sun, unless I am certain that I imagine I see it. It is possible that I should fail to remember, some time later, that I conceived such and such a thing, but, at the time that I conceive it, I know that I conceive it. (OA.38.204/K.25)⁵⁰

And he compares this with explicit reflection:

The second is that in addition to the reflection which can be called *virtual* and which is found in all our perceptions, there is another, more *explicit*, in which we examine our perception by another perception, as everyone can easily verify. This occurs especially in the sciences which are formed only by the reflections that men make upon their own *perceptions*, as when a geometer, having conceived a triangle as a figure bounded by three straight

⁴⁶ OA.38.206/K.27. ⁴⁷ Kambouchner (1995); and Pearce (2016).

⁴⁸ See Pearce (2016) for a full defense. ⁴⁹ OA.38.209/K.30.

⁵⁰ Translation slightly amended.

lines, has found, by examining his perception of that figure, that it had to have three angles and that the three angles had to be equal to two right angles. (OA.38.204/K.25–26)

Virtual and explicit reflection are key to understanding chapter VI of *VFI*.⁵¹ Nadler aptly describes virtual reflection: “every mental act is reflective on itself and, thus, accompanied by self-awareness. Every perception, in addition to being the perception of some object, also has itself (an idea-perception) as its own object.”⁵² Every perception of an external object also involves a perception of the idea-perception itself. In addition, explicit reflection is when we actively examine our perception with an additional perception.

Arnauld continues to explain the importance of this distinction in a long passage that I consider in a few stages:

But if we add to them [the above remarks] what we have said in definitions 3, 6, & 7, it follows that since every perception is essentially representative of something, and since it is in this respect called an *idea*, it can be essentially reflexive upon itself only if its immediate object is that *idea*, i.e., *the objective reality* of the thing which my mind is said to perceive. (OA.38.204/K.26)

Arnauld combines the distinction between explicit and virtual reflection with three definitions from the previous chapter. We have discussed these definitions already. In definition 3, Arnauld claims perceptions and ideas are the same thing; in definition 6, he focuses on the two relations of idea-perceptions; and in definition 7, he clarifies what representative beings are superfluous. Arnauld also mentions objective reality in this passage. He describes being objectively in the mind in definition 5:

I say that a thing is *objectively* in my mind when I conceive of it. When I conceive of the sun, of a square or of a sound, then the sun, the square or that sound is objectively in my mind whether or not it exists outside of my mind. (OA.38.198/K.19–20)

His account will be developed through the section, but here Arnauld says a thing is objectively in the mind when one conceives of it.

Arnauld notes that every perception is essentially representative of something and in this regard is called an ‘idea.’ Given that the mind is

⁵¹ For more, see Nadler (1989: 118–122); Pearce (2016); Nadler (2018); and Schmal (2020). The account of virtual and explicit reflection given here is an explanation for how a direct realist reading of Arnauld allows for ideas as objects of perception. In and of itself it does not give us reason to prefer the reading to an indirect realist reading.

⁵² Nadler (1989: 119).

essentially reflective on itself, in order to so reflect, it must be the idea that is the immediate object of the reflective perception. As I read this, Arnauld is telling us that, when we have a sensory perception of the sun, the immediate object of that perception is the sun which is represented *by* the mind (not *to* the mind) in an act of perception. When I reflect on this perception, whether virtually or explicitly, then the immediate object of my perception is not the sun anymore, but my previous perception(s) of the sun. And, in thinking about the sun by means of my prior perception of the sun, or my idea of the sun, what I am focusing on is not the sun itself per se, but the sun as it was in my mind, and this is to reflect on the objective reality of my idea of the sun.

Arnauld goes on to offer an example which supports the above interpretation:

Thus, if I think of the sun, the objective reality of the sun, which is present to my mind, is the immediate object of that perception, and the possible or existing sun, which is outside my mind, is its mediate object, so to speak. So we see that, without having recourse to *representative beings* distinct from perception, it is very true in this sense that, not only with regard to material things, but generally with regard to all things, it is our ideas that we see *immediately* and which are the *immediate object of our thought*: which does not rule out that we also see by means of these ideas the object, which formally contains what is only *objectively* in the idea, that is, for example, my conceiving the formal being of a square, which is *objectively* in the idea or perception that I have of a square. (OA.38.204–205/K.26)⁵³

Arnauld gives an example of thinking of the sun. Here I take Arnauld not to mean that we are having a sensory perception of the sun, but rather that we are thinking about the sun [Arnauld's French is *je pense au soleil*]. So, in this example, I am considering something about the sun – for example, how large the sun is. This does not require at that moment having a sensory perception of the sun. Rather, I am reflecting on something that I have previously had sensory awareness of. When pondering the sun, I reflect on my idea of the sun – that is, my previous act of perceiving the sun insofar as that act represented the sun. In this case, the immediate object of my thought is the idea of the sun – that is, the previous representation of the sun by my mind. So, the sun is the mediate object, as he says, so to speak. He is not claiming that in our ordinary sensory perception of the sun, our perception of the sun is mediated by an idea of the sun distinct from the sun itself that is the object of perception. In fact,

⁵³ Translation amended. Cf., SG.72.

he seems to specifically limit the sense in which ideas are the immediate object of thought to these reflective instances. But the question remains: What is it that I am reflecting on when I reflect on the objective reality of the sun?

Arnauld proceeds in the chapter to cite Descartes's account of idea and objective reality from the *Second Replies*. He offers the Latin and then a French translation:⁵⁴

By the name *idea*, I mean that form of each of our thoughts by the *immediate* perception of which we know the same thoughts, in such a way that I can express nothing in words, while understanding what I am saying, unless it is certain, by that very fact, that I have in me the idea of the thing signified by my words.

By the *objective reality of an idea*, I mean the entity or being of the thing represented by that idea, insofar as that entity is in the idea; and in the same way we can speak of *an objective perfection*, *an objective artifice*, etc. For everything we conceive as being in the objects of ideas, is objectively or by representation in the ideas themselves. (OA.38.205/K.26–27)

Based on these quotations, Arnauld is drawing attention to the fact that ideas are the form of thoughts. And, this passage notes that the immediate perception of our thoughts is what allows us to know our thoughts; the passage Arnauld cites does not say the immediate perception of ideas allows us to know things or external objects. He continues by quoting the account of the objective reality of an idea as the being of the thing represented insofar as that entity is in the idea.

Arnauld's account of objective being is also used as a reason for doubting his credentials as a direct realist. How to understand Arnauld's account of objective being is controversial, even among scholars who agree on whether Arnauld is a direct realist.⁵⁵ Van Cleve's account offers a nice starting point for an account of objective being that pushes against direct realism. Van Cleve argues that Descartes's account of objective reality requires a *tertium quid* and notes that Descartes identifies the "sun itself existing in the mind" with the idea of the sun, and that "'the sun itself existing in the mind' is not an act, for it is a represented, not a representer."⁵⁶ Van Cleve cites Arnauld's claim that "*the idea of an object* must not be confused with *the object conceived*, unless one adds, *insofar as it is*

⁵⁴ This fact is relevant especially insofar as Arnauld's French translation lacks some ambiguities found in Descartes's Latin. See Van Cleve (2015: 478, note 17).

⁵⁵ See Yolton (1984: 38–39); Nadler (1989: 172); and Pearce (2016). Cf., Kremer (1994a).

⁵⁶ Van Cleve (2015: 477).

objectively in the mind . . . the idea of the sun is the sun itself, insofar as it is objectively in my mind" and adds that "a represented item other than the sun in the sky can only be a second sun in my mind" and so "Arnauld falls into a tripartite theory, if only implicitly and in spite of his best intentions."⁵⁷

I think that Van Cleve is correct that the idea of the sun is a represented item in the mind, and he is correct, in a sense, that this is a second sun in my mind. However, this does not commit Arnauld to a tripartite theory, nor does it commit him to an indirect realism about sensory perception of any type.⁵⁸ One consideration that has not, so far as I know, been considered in this context is Arnauld's understanding of the substance–mode relation. As argued in Chapter 3, for Arnauld a substance and its attribute are identical and the substance–mode relation can be thought of as a determinable–determinate relationship. A mind just is its thinking, and all the modes of the mind are determinate ways of thinking. When one has a sensory perception of the sun, for Arnauld, the mind's essential attribute which just is the mind itself – thinking – is existing in a certain determinate way: thinking of the sun (as well as any number of things). I take Arnauld's view of the relation between the mind and the sensory perception of the sun to be comparable to a mouth and a smile.⁵⁹ Smiling just is a way of being a mouth. The smile is not an additional entity (whether substance or property) over and above the mouth. What it is to have a mode is to exist in a certain determinate way. For Arnauld, thinking is always about something. In having a sensory perception of the sun, the act of the mind by which the mind represents the sun has a form. The act by which we have a sensory perception of the sun is itself a representation of the sun. The soul does not have the thought in the sense that there is a soul and a thought, and some additional entity (or aspect of an entity) that the soul immediately perceives, nor is the mode in the relevant sense the object of the perception. The perception of the sun itself is the mode of the mind, and this mode is an act of thinking that has a specific form.⁶⁰ The represented sun in (not to) my mind is the act of perception of the sun. Bodies are passive beings, so determinate ways of existing are being round or being in motion. Souls are active, and determinate ways of being are all

⁵⁷ Ibid., 477–478.

⁵⁸ As noted above, many of the indirect realist interpretations of Arnauld do not commit Arnauld to a tripartite theory.

⁵⁹ See Koslicki (2013) for this helpful example.

⁶⁰ For a different account of the mode–perception relation, see García-Gómez (1988). For a response, see Pearce (2016: 379, note 14).

actions. But the act of the mind is not only something the mind does, it is a determinate way of being a mind.

When it comes to reflection, Arnauld does hold a type of tripartite theory. When I am having a sensory perception of the sun, the immediate object of the thought is the sun, and the sun is objectively in my mind. In virtual reflection, in addition to having a sensory perception of the sun, I am also conscious of my own thoughts and aware of my perception of the sun, so in this sense my perception of the sun is the immediate object of perception. In this case, I am not thinking about the sun by thinking about my perception of the sun, *per se*, but am thinking about how I am thinking about the sun. Once more, when I later think “the sun seems brighter today,” I am now explicitly reflecting on the sun by reflecting on my thoughts of the sun. In this case, the mediate object of my perception is the sun and thinking of the sun is mediated by my idea of the sun, but only because I think about the sun by examining my idea of the sun. I am reflecting on my direct perception of the sun in order to think about the sun. When I explicitly reflect on the sun (as opposed to sensorily perceive the sun) I reflect on my ideas.

In chapter VI of *VFI*, Arnauld cites Descartes’s claims that the idea is the form of each thought and the objective reality of an idea is the entity or being of the thing represented and claims that “a thing is *objectively* in my mind when I conceive of it.” I take what it is for an object to be in the mind to be the fundamental thing that Arnauld does not think we can explain. We think, and to think is to think of something. When we think of something that thing becomes in the mind objectively – that is to say, the form of our thought represents that thing in (not to) the mind. In this sense, the objective reality of the sun is being actively conceived by the mind as a representation of the sun, but this is because I am reflecting on the form of my act of directly perceiving the sun. There is no representation of the sun mediating my sensory perception of the sun.⁶¹ The representational content of the sun does play a distinct role in reflection. In reflecting on our sensory perception of the sun, the perception of the

⁶¹ Moreau (1999: ch. 5) also offers an indirect realist account of Arnauld. Moreau notes Arnauld’s seemingly contradictory accounts of whether ideas are the immediate objects of thoughts can be reconciled by distinguishing between a substantial and modal account. There is no third substance or ontological being in perception (as Malebranche holds), but there is a mediation between the mind and the external thing in the modal sense (an idea) which mediates the mind’s perception of the external object (149–153). The ontological picture sketched in this chapter pushes against this reading. The soul does not relate to a mode in such a way that it perceives the mode (in sensory perception). The seeming contradictoriness Moreau notes concerns, in my view, whether we are talking about sensory perception or reflection.

sun (that is the mode of the mind) is perceived by the mind, but not in the sense that there is an intermediary, but in the sense that the idea of the sun becomes the object of thought.

Ott has also suggested that objective reality is an issue for Arnauld's direct realism. He notes "what little Arnauld does say about objective reality should give the direct realist pause. A direct realist should hope that, on Arnauld's account, for *x* to be 'objectively' in the mind is just for *x* to be the thing one is thinking about."⁶² He adds that this is not what Arnauld tells us. Ott calls attention to the following passage:

There is another ambiguity to clear up. *The idea of an object* must not be confused with *the object conceived*, unless one adds, *insofar as it is objectively in the mind*. For to be *conceived*, with regard to *the sun* which is in the sky, is only an extrinsic denomination [*dénomination extrinsèque*], which is only a relation to the perception that I have of it. But this is not what should be understood when one says that *the idea of the sun is the sun itself, insofar as it is objectively in my mind*. What is called *being objectively in the mind*, is not only being the object, at which my thought terminates, but it is being in my mind *intelligibly*, in the specific way in which objects are in the mind. The idea of the sun *is the sun, insofar as it is in my mind, not formally as it is in the sky, but objectively*, i.e., in the way that objects are in our thought, which is a way of being much more imperfect than that by which the sun is really existent, but which nevertheless we cannot say is nothing and does not need a cause. (OA.38.200/K.21)

Ott suggests that Arnauld here claims that to be objectively in the mind is not only to be the object that my thought is about, but also to be in my mind *intelligibly*, and this pushes against the direct realist reading.⁶³ I agree that there is more to objectively being in the mind than being the object that my thought is about, but not that this pushes against direct realism. Arnauld begins this passage by noting that he is introducing a new ambiguity to clear up. Arnauld notes early in the passage that to be conceived is an 'extrinsic denomination.'⁶⁴ In the *Logic*, in a passage added

⁶² Ott (2017: 153).

⁶³ Ott is careful to note that his reading of this passage, combined with his reading of the passage already cited that begins "Thus, if I think of the sun," pushes against direct realism. Ott reads the latter passage as Arnauld noting that ideas are what we see immediately. I argued above that, in that passage, Arnauld is discussing virtual and/or explicit reflection, not normal sensory experience.

⁶⁴ Pearce (2016) highlights the importance of extrinsic denominations for Arnauld's theory of ideas and Pearce (2022) convincingly argues that the account of extrinsic denominations is central to several of Arnauld's philosophical positions. The following discussion is indebted to Pearce's insights. I depart from Pearce's interpretation, I take it, by focusing on the idea-perception as the main use of 'idea of the sun' (as a true mode of the mind) and secondarily as an extrinsic denomination of the sun.

in the second edition, Arnauld and Nicole describe an extrinsic (or external) denomination:

On this subject of modes, we should note that some may be called internal because they are conceived in the substance, such as “round” and “square.” Others may be called external [*extérieurs*] because they are taken from something that is not in the substance, such as “loved,” “seen,” and “desired,” names derived from the actions of something else. In the Schools these are called *external denominations* [*dénomination externe*]. (OA 41.136/B.32/CG.48–49)

So, extrinsic denominations are external modes of substances (in fact they are not “real modes” but ways of speaking and thinking about things). For example, ‘Wilford is loved’ would be an example in which we truly claim that Wilford is loved and in so doing are attributing the external mode ‘loved’ to Wilford, though this is not a true mode of him. Earlier in *VFI*, Arnauld offered his verbal distinction between the idea and the perception. In this passage, he introduces a new ambiguity – namely, between two ideas of the sun: the idea of the sun (the external mode of the sun in the sky) and the idea of the sun (the internal mode of the mind which is an idea-perception of the sun). According to the former, when I discuss the ‘idea of the sun,’ I am referring to the sun (the one in the sky) insofar as it is perceived. In the latter, I am referring to the idea in the mind, insofar as it is a perception of the sun. Here, as Ott notes, Arnauld tells us that there is more to an idea than just the fact that my idea of the sun terminates in the sun. However, as I read this, this means that the sun is in my mind in that special (and inexplicable) way that my mind is capable of representing things. This does not undermine Arnauld’s direct realism, I argued above, because the representation is not represented to the mind, but the representation is the act of perception by the mind. The purpose of this passage is to distinguish between the *sun* in so far as it is perceived and the *idea* insofar as it is a representation of the sun.

So ultimately for Arnauld there is a single state of affairs – namely, an act of the mind whereby the mind represents the sun – and three legitimate ways of describing it. We can talk about the ‘perception of the sun,’ which is focusing on the act being a mode of the mind; we can talk about the ‘idea of the sun,’ which is focusing on the representation of the sun as a true mode of the finite mind; and we can talk about the ‘idea of the sun’ as an extrinsic denomination of the sun which is to treat it as an adjective to describe the sun insofar as it is perceived.

5.5 Conclusion and Some Taxonomical Considerations

The third set of reasons that have been offered to question whether Arnauld is a direct realist are taxonomical considerations. More specifically, there seems to be some disagreement or at least vagueness associated with what constitutes direct realism. Hoffman specifically makes this point while suggesting that Nadler uses six distinct definitions or tests for determining whether Arnauld is a direct realist.⁶⁵ Newman notes four different senses of perceptual directness relevant to categorizing the direct and indirect realist positions. One of those is ‘causal directness.’ In this sense, Arnauld does not think we immediately perceive external objects as our sensory perception of the sun is causally mediated by our body.⁶⁶ Similarly, the physical world lacks sensory properties for Arnauld and so the sensory perception of the sun involves sensory properties which the sun, strictly speaking, does not possess (here again the extrinsic denomination account plays a key role in Arnauld’s view).⁶⁷

To my mind, part of the problem is that none of the views fit Arnauld’s account exactly. Let’s revisit the gloss of the positions that I took from Hoffman in Section 5.1:

Direct realism: the view that when we perceive mind-independent physical objects we are directly or immediately aware of them.

Indirect realism/representationalism: the view that when we perceive mind-independent physical objects, we are not immediately aware of them. Rather, we perceive physical objects by being immediately aware of ideas that represent them.

If we are to understand these as universal claims and we take perception to be as broad as Arnauld does, neither of these positions accurately describes Arnauld’s view. Arnauld holds that for some types of perception – for example, sensory perception – we are immediately aware of external physical objects. For other types of perception – for example, reflection on the nature of the sun – we perceive the sun, but that perception is mediated by our idea of the sun (that is, we reflect on the sun by reflecting on our perceptions of the sun). Once more, all perceptions of the mind are accompanied by virtual reflection and so become the object of thought. All told, I think we should treat Arnauld as a direct realist, at least in ordinary sensory perception, since there are no perceptual intermediaries that are

⁶⁵ See also Cook (1974: 56); and Ott (2017: 153–154).

⁶⁶ Newman (2009).

⁶⁷ See Pearce (2022).

the objects of perception. But, there are many important ways in which Arnauld thinks we perceive mind-independent objects by reflecting on our ideas that represent them.

The same ambiguities arise in the act theory, the act-object theory, and object theory taxonomy. The act theory of ideas accurately describes Arnauld's view, but only if we restrict it to sensory perception. The act-object theory does not describe Arnauld's view of sensory perception since in this type of perception ideas are not mediating objects, but it is true for Arnauld that ideas are perceptual objects. And, the object theory of ideas accurately describes Arnauld's view, at least in a sense, insofar as Arnauld acknowledges that there is a valid sense in which the 'idea of the sun' refers to the sun (the sun in the sky) and it is a perceptual object.

It seems to me that, in order to understand Arnauld's position, we must first distinguish between normal sensory perception on the one hand and reflection on the other. In ordinary sense perception, Arnauld's view fits with direct realism and primarily the act theory of ideas (since on my view the idea-perception is the primary use of 'idea'). The representation of the sun by the mind just is the sensory perception of the sun. The representation of the sun is not an intermediary between the sun and the perception of the sun, nor is it the immediate object of perception. However, in reflection, ideas become the objects of perception. We can both think about an idea, and we can think about external objects by examining the form of previous perceptions of those external objects. All in all, I think the direct realist and act theory of ideas accounts are the best category to group Arnauld's view under, but only with the above caveats and only when discussing normal sensory perception, and it may well be that his view is best described without referencing the above terminology. In sum: When I have a sensory perception of the sun, there are two things involved – the sun and my act of representing the sun which just is the direct sensory perception of the sun. Subsequently, upon reflection (whether virtual or explicit), ideas (that is, acts of perception considered insofar as they are representations of some external thing) do become the immediate objects of perception. And, the sun in the sky is validly called (as an extrinsic denomination) an 'idea' and in this sense as well ideas are the objects of perception.

I shall end the chapter with a metaphor that I think helps make sense of Arnauld's view. Ndiaye suggests, in a passage endorsed by Ott, that for Arnauld: "in the perception of body, everything happens as if the idea is a window through which I perceive things. In a sense, I can say I perceive nothing directly, since I only perceive through this

window.”⁶⁸ On Ndiaye’s metaphor, there is a perceiver (the soul), an object perceived (the sun), and a window through which we perceive the sun (the idea). To be sure, such a reading is not committed to the idea and the soul being really distinct, so these three things need not amount to a tripartite theory in that sense. Nevertheless, it seems to me the account of the soul and window does not work for Arnauld, at least not for sensory experience. For Arnauld, the idea of the sun just is the soul thinking in a certain way. Rather than thinking of the account as a soul looking through a window, I think we should think of the soul itself as a dynamic painting.⁶⁹ The nature of the soul is to think and for Arnauld what it is to think is to think of something, so at any given point the soul is thinking of some determinate set of things. When I am having direct sensory experience of the sun, part of the painting (which is my mind) is a representation of the sun. I am not perceiving that representation; the representation is the perception. At a future time, when I reflect on the sun, there are any number of things in the painting that is the mind, including a representation of the previous perception (so on this metaphor, the painting that is my mind includes a representation of part of another painting which is the previous state of my mind). The mind is an entity that is fundamentally a thinking thing. To think is to think of something. Modes of the mind are the acts of perceiving various things, and these acts have representational content. In ordinary sense perception, modes of the mind are not the immediate objects of thought, but the representative acts of perception themselves.

⁶⁸ Ndiaye (1991: 70); translation: Ott (2017: 153).

⁶⁹ Cf., Newman (2018: 204–205).

CHAPTER 6

Human Freedom

Jansenism, Thomism, and the Power to Do the Opposite

If the Jansenist movement had a single doctrinal commitment, it was the doctrine of efficacious grace. In essence, this doctrine amounts to the claims that salvation is dependent on grace given by God, that such grace is never resisted, that no meritorious act can be performed without such grace, and that grace is always intrinsically efficacious, or as Arnauld often puts it, efficacious “*par elle-même*.”¹ On Jansen’s view, God psychologically determines the agent in question to perform a meritorious act through pre-deliberative ‘delectationes’ (pleasures). And since only free acts are meritorious and efficacious grace is never resisted, the account of freedom defended is a type of compatibilism. Arnauld explicitly defends Jansen’s view in early works like the *Première Apologie* (1644) and *Seconde Apologie* (1645). Later in life, however, Arnauld’s views on the topic change. Arnauld remains firm in his commitment to efficacious grace, but he moves away from Jansen on several other key issues. Indeed, he suggests he may not have ever been fully on board with all the aspects of Jansen’s view, even early in his career.² Arnauld’s later view is, according to Arnauld himself, more Thomist in nature and he even claims that his later Thomistic view is better able to reconcile efficacious grace with human freedom than his earlier Jansenist view.³

Arnauld’s later account is far from clear, and a central goal of this chapter is to elucidate it. Central to Arnauld’s later view is that freedom requires the power to do or choose otherwise (though the nature of this power is much contested). Arnauld describes this later view in numerous letters. One such letter, to fellow Port-Royalist (but anti-Cartesian) Louis-Paul Du Vaucel in 1691, introduces a number of the key issues of this chapter:

¹ One consequence of this view that was a major part of the Malebranche–Arnauld polemic is that, since many people are not saved, God does not will that all people be saved (since, if God so willed, the person in question would not resist such grace and be saved).

² OA.3.498. ³ E.g., OA.3.418 and OA.3.498.

I send you the last part of my little book on freedom, of which I sent you the first part the last time I wrote. I only wrote it after having shown in another text, by a large number of passages from Saint Thomas in his *Summa*, that the real position of this saint is: 1) that the true notion of freedom is to say that it is a *potestas, or facultas ad opposita*; which is much better than the word *indifference*, which seems to signal an equal propensity to one side and to the other, and to be contrary to *determination*; by contrast we easily understand that, no matter how determined I am not to go naked into the street, I nevertheless have the power to do it, and that I would do it if I wanted to. (OA.3.364)⁴

The “little book on freedom” Arnauld mentions is *De Libertate*, likely written around 1689.⁵ In this letter, he specifically notes that the later view is inspired by Aquinas and calls the true essence of freedom a “power or faculty to do the opposite.” Arnauld denies that freedom consists in indifference, which signifies an equal propensity to two (or more) options. While he does not define determination, Arnauld denies that freedom is at odds with it.

The account from Jansen that Arnauld endorsed in his earlier works, or at least defended in his earlier works, is compatibilist. There is much disagreement about how to best understand his later view. Elmar Kremer argues that Arnauld’s later view changes to a type of libertarianism.⁶ R. C. Sleigh and Cyrille Michon have both argued, to the contrary, that Arnauld’s later view remains a type of compatibilism.⁷ Julie Walsh and I have recently defended a libertarian interpretation of the later Arnauld.⁸ The goal of this chapter is to provide an account of Arnauld’s views on human freedom within their relevant context over the course of his life, including his later view on freedom.

In Section 6.1, I outline the Jansenist view of freedom defended by Arnauld in his earlier works and contrast it with the Molinist type of freedom, which was its main competition. I also consider a key controversy between Molina and Bañez, which is central to fully appreciating the context of Arnauld’s writings. In Section 6.2, I look more closely at some of Arnauld’s correspondence where he explicitly notes his shift of view and

⁴ Translation: Stencil and Walsh (2016: 239). Arnauld’s other text is the *Disquisitio*. For another discussion of the late texts, see Kilcullen (1988: 204–208). For more on Du Vaucel, see Lesaulnier and McKenna (2004) which has entries on many of Arnauld’s correspondents.

⁵ Most scholars follow the editor of Arnauld’s *Oeuvres* in suggesting 1689, e.g., TP.228; Michon (2013: 265); Stencil and Walsh (2016: 239). Cf., Kremer (2021: note 37). It was first published posthumously in 1699.

⁶ Kremer (1994b).

⁷ Sleigh (1990: 29); Sleigh (1996a); and Michon (2013).

⁸ Stencil and Walsh (2016). See also our companion piece, Walsh and Stencil (2019).

outlines some of its advantages. In Section 6.3, I examine the view Arnauld offers in *De Libertate*. During Sections 6.2 and 6.3, I consider the reasons in favor of both compatibilist and libertarian interpretations. In Section 6.4, I consider Arnauld's shift in view and his claim that the later Thomistic account is better able to explain efficacious grace. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks and address the various reasons Arnauld offers for preferring the later view, especially his claim that it better allows us to reconcile freedom and efficacious grace.

One of my main arguments throughout this chapter is that Arnauld is being intentionally vague in many of the cases that have been the focus of discussions of Arnauld's view. In these cases, Arnauld offers examples where persons make choices from well-engrained habits and character traits. One example occurs in a letter to Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. Arnauld describes an honest judge who is offered bribes. The judge, Arnauld notes, is "absolutely determined to not take them" but it is "certain that he freely refuses them." He continues: "does it not seem, monsieur, that it would be doing an injustice to the virtue of this incorruptible judge, if in order to say that he acted freely, we said that he was indifferent in accepting or refusing this bribe?" He continues: "since it is easy to conceive that, of two opposing things that depend on our free will, however determined we may be to do one, we could well do the other, if we wanted to."⁹ Arnauld is not particularly clear about how the cases work and whether there are genuinely open possibilities to the agent in question.

I shall argue that these cases are not meant to clarify his position on human freedom. Rather, their purpose is to try to lend plausibility to the claim that efficacious grace does not undermine freedom. Arnauld wants us to believe that, in cases like the incorruptible judge, we take the agent to be free even though the extent to which there are possibilities open to the agent is not clear. And this should alleviate some of the worry surrounding efficacious grace even though we cannot understand how it is consistent with freedom. Despite appearances, his goal in these sorts of cases is not to explain human freedom, but to help alleviate the seeming tension efficacious grace has with human freedom. I also argue that, all told, this supports a libertarian reading of Arnauld's later view.

Before moving on, I shall offer a brief note on terminology. Debates on historical figures like Arnauld often compare compatibilist readings to libertarian readings. Getting clear on this terminology is essential. This is as true for understanding Arnauld as it is for tracking the contemporary

⁹ OA.3.663.

debates about Arnauld. Sleigh, for example, articulates a few different types of compatibilism that Arnauld may have held, and Kremer, though holding the libertarian reading, in a later work notes that “Arnauld was, then, a compatibilist of sorts.”¹⁰

One important distinction to clarify the core issue of this chapter and Arnauld’s account of free actions/volitions is between two types of actions/volitions – namely, what I shall call closed-conditions and open-conditions freedom. Concerning the former:

Closed-conditions freedom: There is some human agent *a*, volition *v*, and time *t* such that: (i) *a* elicits *v* at *t*; and (ii) there are conditions *k*₁ . . . *k*_{*n*} that obtain prior to *t* and that are causally sufficient for *a*’s eliciting *v* at *t*; and (iii) *a* is free in eliciting *v* at *t*.¹¹

In offering his account of Arnauld, Sleigh suggests that the above captures a type of causal compatibilism. I argue below that free actions of this type can be consistent with libertarianism. We can contrast closed-conditions freedom with:

Open-conditions freedom: There is some human agent *a*, volition *v*, and time *t* such that: (i) *a* elicits *v* at *t*; and (ii) holding fixed all the conditions that obtain up to and prior to *t*, it was genuinely psychologically open to *a* to elicit a different volition *y*, instead of *v*; and (iii) *a* is free in eliciting *v* at *t*.

Arnauld’s later view, as I shall argue, is that free actions, at least in non-efficacious grace contexts, are all instances of open-conditions freedom. However, I think the text leaves open the possibility that, while most free actions are open-conditions free, some are closed-conditions free, and this is still best thought of as a type of libertarianism. Whatever the correct interpretation, I think we need to keep open the interpretative possibility that Arnauld’s view is that there may be free volitions of both types. All of the following three views are on the table for Arnauld (and interpretations of Arnauld):

Compatibilism: Closed-conditions freedom is the essence of human freedom and all free volitions/actions are closed-conditions free.

Incompatibilist Libertarianism: Open-conditions freedom is the essence of human freedom and all free volitions/actions require alternative possibilities open to the will at the time of the volition/action.

¹⁰ Kremer (2021: 6.3).

¹¹ Sleigh (1996a: 171). See also Newman (2023) for helpful definitions of various types of freedom.

Compatibilist Libertarianism: Open-conditions freedom is the ultimate source of human freedom, but not all free volitions/actions require alternative possibilities open to the will at the time of the volition/action (e.g., in conditions where character traits which are the result of open-conditions free volitions contribute to deterministically causing certain volitions).¹²

Based on these definitions, incompatibilist libertarians hold that you can only be free if there are alternative possibilities available to you at the time of the action, whereas compatibilist libertarians deny this. I shall argue the best reading of Arnauld is as an incompatibilist libertarian. That said, the textual basis for choosing incompatibilist libertarianism over compatibilist libertarianism is not overwhelming, and Arnauld's goal in these tough cases is not to illuminate his account of human freedom, but to defend the doctrine of efficacious grace. So, while I argue that Arnauld is an incompatibilist libertarian, the compatibilist-libertarian reading also has a lot to say in its favor and Arnauld may not ultimately have much invested in the account of human freedom in and of itself.

A few words about incompatibilist libertarianism seem in order here, especially why such a view is a version of libertarianism. Concerning closed-conditions freedom, it seems to me that if at least one of the conditions k_1, \dots, k_n that are jointly responsible for being causally sufficient for volition v is a prior open-conditions free volition, then the ultimate ground of freedom can still be a libertarian (and open-conditions) free volition. To anticipate the sorts of cases Arnauld uses when he seems his most compatibilist, they all involve persons who act from well-engrained character traits or habits. If one holds that the character traits are the consequences of prior open-conditions free volitions, then if the proximate conditions of the volition are causally sufficient for only one act being available to the agent, this can still be ultimately grounded in libertarian free will.¹³

6.1 Molina, Bañez, and Jansen

Jansen's compatibilist account can be understood in contrast with the Molinist conception of freedom and grace, which is a distinctly

¹² I shall explain what I mean by 'ultimate source' below.

¹³ There is both historical and contemporary precedent for such a view. Stump (1997) suggests that this is the best way to read Aquinas, and several contemporary libertarians seem to hold similar positions: e.g., Kane (1998: ch. 5); Ekstrom (2003); and Mele (1995: ch. 12). See Clarke, Capes, and Swenson (2021: section II) for discussion of this type of account.

incompatibilist-libertarian account.¹⁴ Luis de Molina (1535–1600) defended his account in his 1588 *The Agreement of Free Will with the Gift of Grace, Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination and Reprobation*.¹⁵ A controversy shortly followed with Domingo Bañez (1528–1604) that led to the *Congregationes de Auxiliis Divinae Gratiae*.¹⁶ I shall consider this before discussing Jansen's account.

While Molina is most often associated with the problem of reconciling divine foreknowledge with freedom and God's middle knowledge, we are interested in two related, but distinct, issues: his view of human freedom and his view on whether grace is intrinsically efficacious.¹⁷ Molina offers the following description of human freedom:

An agent is said to be free when, with all necessary conditions for acting satisfied, it can act and not act, or do one thing such that it can also do the contrary. And from this freedom by which the agent is thus able to act, the faculty is said to be free. Because it cannot operate in this way unless possessed of decision and judgment, to that extent the faculty is called free decision or free will. (Q14.A13.D2.8)¹⁸

As noted, Molina's account is an incompatibilist-libertarian account of freedom. On this view, in order to be free, it must be the case that "with all necessary conditions for acting satisfied" it is in an agent's actual power to act or not to act. Molina treats this indifference as the essence of freedom.¹⁹

Molina also denies that grace is intrinsically efficacious. As described by Alfred Fredosso, "actual grace is a supernatural influence on us that inclines and incites us to act well, it is not *in itself* efficacious or inefficacious, but is instead efficacious or inefficacious only because of our [human beings'] free cooperation with it or freely chosen lack thereof."²⁰ In other words, for Molina, the efficacy of grace depends on the free acts of human beings.

Bañez, the first chair of Theology at the University of Salamanca from 1581 to 1599 and the spiritual director of Theresa of Avila, was an early critic of Molina.²¹ Bañez holds that all grace is either intrinsically efficacious or intrinsically inefficacious. Once again in Fredosso's words:

¹⁴ In this section, I follow the helpful treatments in Fredosso (1988); Kremer (1994b); Matava (2016); Lennon (2019: ch. 5); and Kremer (2021).

¹⁵ While Jansen does not refer to Molina's work directly, it is rather clearly implied in his discussion of the Pelagian heresies. See Sedgwick (1977: 49–50).

¹⁶ See, for example, Kremer (2021). ¹⁷ See Fredosso (1988) for more on Molina.

¹⁸ Translated by Lennon (2019: 111). ¹⁹ Arnauld notes this fact at OA.3.419.

²⁰ Fredosso (1988: 37). ²¹ See Matava (2016) for more on Bañez, e.g., at p. 8.

On the Bañezian scheme God foreknows the *good* contingent effects of created agents just because He causally predetermines those effects. The *evil* effects He knows by the very fact that He has *not* efficaciously concurred with their causes to provide the corresponding good effects.²²

For Bañez, God's role in grace is a 'physical premotion.' As explained by Kremer: "According to this account, God is a cause of a creature's action by bringing about in the creature a 'premotion' that results in the creature's carrying out the action in question. For Bañez, then, the actual grace in question is a sort of supernatural beginning of volition that is produced in the human being by God and that infallibly results in a meritorious act of will."²³ Bañez's view on efficacious grace is thus quite distinct from the Jansen-style one we discuss below, which relies on pre-deliberative *delectationes*, and because for Bañez only some grace is intrinsically efficacious.

Returning to the *Congregationes de Auxiliis Divinae Gratiae*, these meetings (which took place between 1598 and 1607) were convened to assess the controversy between Molina's and Bañez's views.²⁴ The relation between grace and free will were among the topics discussed and ultimately Pope Paul V concluded the meeting and declared neither side was heretical. This left the question of whether grace was ever intrinsically efficacious, or whether it was efficacious only with the (divinely known) independent cooperation of the receiver of such grace, unsettled according to the Catholic Church.

Some thirty years later, in his posthumously published *Augustinus* (1640), Jansen offers his own account of human freedom and its relation to original sin. Jansen holds that free actions are actions that are in an agent's power and where the agent is master of the action, and that acts of the will are essentially free.²⁵ Jansen claims:

This is the root of all freedom, at least in all actions, whether external or internal, namely that they are in our power [*potestate*]. Therefore the will is free by its very nature. For it implies a contradiction to say that the will is not free, just as it does to say that in willing we do not will. (v3.b4.c4.262)²⁶

Jansen believes that the will is moved to act by cognitive and appetitive states that are not deliberative.²⁷ These states are the *delectationes* (pleasures) that I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. So, for Jansen the will is moved to act by preceding states that are not deliberative. Since

²² Fredosso (1988: 37). ²³ Kremer (2021: 6.2). See also Matava (2016: ch. 2).

²⁴ Kremer (2021). See also Matava (2016: ch. 1); and Torrijos (2022). ²⁵ Kremer (1994b: 219).

²⁶ Translation: Kremer (1994b: 219–220). ²⁷ Kremer (1994b: 220).

original sin, humans have a habitual tendency to love lower things (concupiscence). On Jansen's account of original sin, human beings cannot overcome this concupiscence without grace given by God. The resulting concupiscence, which Jansen makes clear is an involuntary impulse towards an object, not the motion of the will, is overpowering.²⁸ Jansen holds that efficacious grace is "an inspiration of affection [of love for God] given so that we should do with holy love the things we know [we ought to do]."²⁹ Jansen is clear that humans cannot act meritoriously without this grace, and grace is a special divine assistance over and above the powers of humans. In efficacious grace God creates an inspiration for the love of God and this love of God overpowers concupiscence and determines the will to the meritorious volition. Jansen denies that the will's being fully determined is sufficient for its being constrained and thus it remains free.³⁰

Jansen rejects the view that "no matter how free will is attracted by the pleasures of grace or of sin, it can always happen, in the presence of either of those dispositions, that it will the good or the bad."³¹ It is true in a sense that someone who receives grace could choose what is bad, but:

Not in the sense they call composite, but in the divided sense; that is to say, at the same time that the free choice of the will is filled with the victorious pleasure of grace, which moves it efficaciously, and even when it actually does what is good, the power [*potestas*] not to do it, and even to sin, is in the will . . . And thus, no matter how much the will is pleasantly attracted by grace, it can fail to do what grace makes it do, because it always retains a true power [*veram potestatem*] not to act, even when it is seized by grace. (v3.b8.c20)³²

Jansen also devotes a lot of attention to criticizing two doctrines: Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. Pelagianism is the doctrine that after the fall human beings can perform meritorious actions independent of grace. Semi-Pelagianism is the doctrine that, though we cannot perform meritorious action without grace, we do contribute to meritorious action through our powers independent of grace.³³

6.2 Arnould's Letters on Freedom

Arnould explicitly defends Jansen's view in multiple texts. Moreau notes an interesting aspect of these defenses of Jansen: Arnould generally avoids

²⁸ Moriarty (2006: 171). ²⁹ Translation: Kremer (1994b: 220).

³⁰ Kremer (1994b: 220–221).

³¹ Translation: Kremer (1994b: 222), cited by Arnould at OA.17.182.

³² Ibid.

³³ See Kremer (1994b: 221) and *Augustinus* v1.b4.

engaging the philosophical issues associated with freedom. Even in the *Fourth Objections*, despite Descartes's treatment in the *Fourth Meditation*, Arnauld does not address the issue.³⁴ Instead, Moreau argues that in his early treatments Arnauld thinks the philosophical question is secondary in importance to a theological defense of God's efficacious grace and omnipotence. Moreau points to an interesting passage in a letter to Charles Marie François Olier from 1671:

The best thing is not to delve into the matters of Predestination, which are impenetrable. It is certain that all that happens in the world is regulated by the Providence of God, that even sin, of which he is not the Author, falls within this order . . . It is no less certain that men are free in their actions . . . How freedom and indifference can be reconciled with the certainty of providence, we must admit that it is an incomprehensible secret, and one that surpasses the intelligence of men, of which we should not be surprised because our mind, being finite, it is not strange that we cannot understand the infinite . . . After all, nevertheless, we must always come back to this – there is something in all of this that cannot be understood. (OA.1.679–680)

This claim from Arnauld is perfectly expected, given his method outlined in Chapter 2. We know, via faith, that all things are regulated by God and we also know that humans are free creatures. These must be consistent, but it is simply beyond our capacity to understand how. While the defense of efficacious grace remains Arnauld's primary focus, he becomes more willing to engage the philosophical dimensions of the question of human freedom in the later texts.

Arnauld concisely explains his account of efficacious grace to Malebranche in 1685:

The grace that I maintain as the foundation of gratuitous predestination, and that I claim has the consequence that the merits of the Saints are the gifts of God, is not a grace of the sort that some theologians imagine it to be, which has, or lacks, effect according to whether it is agreeable to the will; rather, it is grace that is efficacious *par elle-même*; i.e., that does not rely on our willing, but that brings it about that we will. (OA.39.68)³⁵

This account remains consistent in his later works, but many other aspects of his account change. Arnauld explicitly addresses his change of view in a series of letters between 1691 and 1693, including the ones cited in the introduction to this chapter, where he directs his correspondents to his

³⁴ TP.227–228.

³⁵ Translation: Sleight (1996a: 167).

De Libertate.³⁶ I shall focus on three key themes in the letters: his description of freedom as a “power or faculty to do the opposite” and his preference for this language over that of indifference; his association of his later view with Aquinas’s later views on freedom; and his discussion of the advantages of the later account over others, including his older Jansenist one.

6.2.1 *Freedom Is a Faculty or Power To Do the Opposite, and Not Best Described as Indifference*

Throughout these letters Arnauld advocates for an account of human freedom that he describes as a *potestas*, or *facultas ad opposita*.³⁷ Arnauld does not develop much of what this power or faculty amounts to and directs his interlocutors to *De Libertate*. However, in several of the letters he emphasizes that he prefers this language to that of ‘indifference.’ Indifference, Arnauld tells Du Vaucel, seems to indicate an equal propensity to two alternatives and is contrasted with determination. Arnauld insists one need not have an equal propensity to alternatives to be free, nor is determination inconsistent with freedom. He adds that there is one case where we are not free with a power to the opposite, and this is when the will is “naturally determined to one thing; which is called natural necessity.”³⁸ This is to will to be happy. So, Arnauld takes the language of ‘indifference’ to be less beneficial than the language of ‘a faculty or power to do the opposite.’

Arnauld also recommends *De Libertate* to Bossuet in July of 1693, and offers a similar overview. He notes: “That the best (and most brief) notion of freedom we can have is to say like Aquinas that it is a *potestas*, or *facultas ad opposita*”; and he adds that, while ‘indifference’ might seem to mean the same thing, “it is more advantageous” to describe freedom as a faculty to do the opposite since “the word *indifference* seems to mark an equilibrium that is not necessary to free will and seems opposed to infallible determination, which is in no way contrary to freedom.”³⁹

There are a number of concepts that Arnauld employs, many of which are not fully defined, especially: (i) faculty or power to do the opposite; (ii) indifference; and (iii) infallible determination. A fourth concept, (iv) natural necessity, is relevant though its meaning is rather clear. There are

³⁶ To Du Vaucel: OA.3.364–366 and OA.3.581–583; to Macaire: OA.3.417–420; to Vuillaret: OA.3.497–498; and to Bossuet: OA.3.661–665. See also Kremer (2021: note 37).

³⁷ OA.3.364; OA.3.419; OA.3.582–583; OA.3.662; OA.3.664.

³⁸ OA.3.364–365. See also OA.3.582–583; OA.3.662–663. ³⁹ OA.3.662. See also OA.3.419.

at least two inconsistent possibilities on how to understand these concepts. We might think of them in an open-conditions sense or in a closed-conditions sense. On the closed-conditions reading, these terms mean the following:

- (i) faculty or power to do the opposite = a counterfactual power to do otherwise (an ability to act otherwise, conditional on having had different beliefs, desires, etc.).
- (ii) indifference = a state in which a will is not fully causally determined to one single volition.
- (iii) infallible determination = causally determined.
- (iv) natural necessity = the will is naturally (and fully) causally determined to one thing.

On the open-conditions reading:

- (i) faculty or power to do the opposite = a factual power to do otherwise (a power to do otherwise holding everything else about the situation fixed).
- (ii) indifference = a state in which a will has an equal propensity to multiple options.
- (iii) infallible determination = strongly casually influenced.
- (iv) natural necessity = the will is naturally (and fully) causally determined to one thing.

Arnauld seems to waver between both of the above schemas, depending on which term he is using. In fact, I suggest he may even be intentionally vague here.

One can see how Arnauld seems to shift back and forth between the two meanings of the assorted terms by looking at ‘indifference’ and ‘infallible determination.’ Arnauld seems to mean indifference in the open-conditions sense. Arnauld recommends against using the word ‘indifference’ when discussing freedom since it suggests an equilibrium between two options. However, he notes that freedom is not at odds with determination (even infallible determination). Arnauld does not tell us what he means by ‘determination’ or ‘infallible determination’ and whether ‘determination’ simply means causally influenced, and whether it means causally determined. That said, to call something infallibly determined certainly does suggest that it is fully caused, which is more in line with the closed-conditions schema. He offers some cases that employ the terms – which I discuss below – but they do not settle the issue.

The same is true of ‘the power to do the opposite.’ Arnauld does not give us enough in the letters (or in *De Libertate* where he does not use this phrase) to conclusively show the meaning of it, especially its relation to various sorts of determination. In our 2016 paper, Julie Walsh and I distinguished between a counterfactual reading of the relation between determination and power, and a factual reading of this relation.⁴⁰ On the counterfactual reading, Arnauld is treating freedom and the power to do the opposite as being compatible with being fully causally determined to do something. On this type of reading, then, the power to do the opposite is something like a counterfactual power predicated on something being different in the process leading up to the volition. Michon suggests this type of reading, and reads Arnauld as a compatibilist.⁴¹ On the factual power account, which we defend in that paper, ‘determination’ means ‘caused’ and not ‘fully caused.’ So, on this reading, which is an incompatibilist-libertarian reading (though we do not distinguish between the two types of libertarianism), “A has the power to will *v* at *T*₁, just in case at *T*₁, not-*v* was actually causally and psychologically available to A.”⁴² We can see the ambiguity in these letters by looking at some examples Arnauld offers.

In addition to the case of the judge cited in the introduction, Arnauld tells Du Vaucel that no matter how determined [*quelque déterminé*] he is not to go naked in the street, he nevertheless has the power to do it.⁴³ And Arnauld offers a case to R. P. Macaire of a man who “is determined to stay at home because important affairs keep him there, which does not, however, prevent him from freely staying at home.”⁴⁴ In these cases, Arnauld is not clear on the type of determination consistent with freedom. In some of these cases it seems as if the agents in question in a very real sense could not have acted otherwise. He calls the judge from the case in the introduction ‘incorruptible,’ for example, and sometimes his use of ‘determination’ suggests fully caused. However, I’ll note three reasons to prefer an open-conditions account of these passages. First, he repeatedly suggests that determination comes in degrees, qualifying determination with ‘quelque’ which I have rendered here as ‘however.’⁴⁵ This suggests that determination need not be an all or nothing affair, which further suggests that it means something closer to causally influenced.

⁴⁰ Stencil and Walsh (2016). ⁴¹ Michon (2013: 275). ⁴² Stencil and Walsh (2016: 240).

⁴³ OA.3.364. ⁴⁴ OA.3.419. See also OA.3.582 and 662–663.

⁴⁵ See Kremer (2021: 6.5) and Stencil and Walsh (2016: 243).

Second, the relation between natural necessity and determination suggests this reading.⁴⁶ Arnauld cites “the will is determined to one thing” as the reason actions done from natural necessity are not free.⁴⁷ If being determined by one thing undermines freedom of the will in the case of natural necessity, this suggests that it would do so in other cases as well.⁴⁸

A third reason to prefer the open-conditions reading is that Arnauld does not actually deny that we are indifferent when we are free; he merely claims that the term is misleading since it suggests an equal propensity to two options. In another letter, he tells Macaire: “I do not condemn the latter terms [*indifferentia ad utrumlibet*], when we understand them in the same sense as the former [*potestas ad opposita*].”⁴⁹ If Arnauld was intending to defend the closed-conditions account of free choice, one would expect him to reject indifference altogether. One can further make this case by considering how ‘indifference’ was used in the early modern era. Lennon identifies seven distinct uses of indifference employed that are often conflated.⁵⁰ Two of those uses are of special relevance here. First, the *balance-pan* model:

Balance-pan indifference: a state of indifference in which an agent cares about an outcome, but finds incompatible outcomes are equally balanced and thus cannot discern a relevant difference among them.⁵¹

Lennon finds this conception of indifference in Descartes’s February 9, 1645 letter to Denis Mesland,⁵² as well as in Pierre Charron and Locke.⁵³ A second sense of indifference is *relative libertarian indifference*:

Relative libertarian indifference: an agent *a* is *indifferent*, and thus is free, just in case *a* can act in at least two different ways under the same circumstances.

This type of indifference is one where two paths are genuinely open to the agent. Lennon associates this type of indifference with, among others, Molina. According to relative libertarian indifference, one can only be free in this situation (so this type of indifference rules out compatibilist libertarianism). With that in mind, I want to distinguish this from one other use of indifference:

Causal necessity indifference: an agent *a* is *indifferent*, if *a* can act in at least two different ways under the same circumstances.

⁴⁶ See Stencil and Walsh (2016) for a more full defense of this claim. ⁴⁷ OA.3.498.

⁴⁸ Stencil and Walsh (2016). One could, of course, claim that Arnauld specifies that it is acts done from *natural* necessity that are not free, and so the worry is not whether the will is determined to one thing per se, but what is causing the determination.

⁴⁹ OA.3.419. ⁵⁰ Lennon (2011). ⁵¹ Ibid., 582–583. ⁵² AT.IV.174/CSMK.III.245.

⁵³ Lennon (2011: 582–583).

On this account, relative libertarian indifference is a species of causal necessity indifference, as causal necessity indifference entails neither that indifference is free, nor that only indifference is free, both of which relative libertarian indifference entails. Again, while inconclusive, it seems to me that if Arnauld meant to endorse the view that we are free when fully determined to one thing, it would be an odd thing for Arnauld to say he does not object to the term ‘indifference.’ Rather, in these letters, Arnauld seems to be rejecting indifference in the *balance-pan indifference* sense, while accepting indifference in the *causal necessity* sense or even perhaps the *relative libertarian-indifference* sense, while claiming that it is best described as “a power to do the opposite.”

6.2.2 Theme 2: Aquinas

In these letters, Arnauld repeatedly connects his later view to Aquinas’s. In his letter to Vuillaret (June 1692), Arnauld notes:

I confess, moreover, that it was only seven or eight years ago that I had occasion to thoroughly examine the true opinion of S. Thomas, & that I realized that what was usually cited, from his commentaries on the Master of the Sentences, or from his other works prior to his *Summa*, did not agree with what he teaches on this subject in the latter work, which is his masterpiece. (OA.3.498)⁵⁴

He goes on to say that he based his *De Libertate* on what Aquinas wrote in the *Summa Theologica* and that “what I added to S. Thomas is the two appendixes.”⁵⁵

While Aquinas’s view is beyond the scope of the chapter, two things are worth noting. First, there is much debate about whether Aquinas’s view is best understood in a compatibilist or an incompatibilist way.⁵⁶ Thomas Williams notes, in fact: “we can now ask what Aquinas has to say about the compatibility or incompatibility of freedom and determinism. And the answer, surprisingly, is nothing.” He continues: “What Aquinas addresses instead is the compatibility or incompatibility of freedom and *necessitation*.”⁵⁷ Eleonore Stump has argued that Aquinas is a libertarian yet not

⁵⁴ OA.3.498. See also Kremer (1994b: 232) for a translation of some of this passage that I have followed.

⁵⁵ See also OA.3.662.

⁵⁶ See Pasnau (2022: section 7) for a brief overview. For other treatments, see: Gallagher (1994); Hause (1997); Stump (1997); Macdonald (1998); Stump (2003: ch. 9); Williams (2012); and Hoffmann and Michon (2017).

⁵⁷ Williams (2012: 205).

committed to the principle of alternative possibilities for free action.⁵⁸ Second, some contemporary scholarship agrees with Arnauld that Aquinas's view of freedom changes and his mature view is found in his later works, specifically the later parts of the *Summa Theologica* and also his *De malo*.⁵⁹

6.2.3 Theme 3: Advantages of His Later View

The third theme in the letters are the advantages for his new view over his earlier view. He offers Vuillaret several "great advantages in this explanation of liberty." Of special importance are:

- i. It has the backing of the authority of S. Thomas;
- ii. In following his [Aquinas's] ideas, it is easy to reconcile the efficacy of grace with freedom;
- iii. [I]t makes sense of why freedom from coercion is not enough to merit and to demerit, but also requires freedom from necessity; since this must be understood [as freedom] from natural necessity whereby the will is determined to one thing: hence it happens that it is not the case that we freely will to be happy, because we are determined to happiness by a natural will. (OA.3.498)⁶⁰

In addition to having Aquinas's backing, Arnauld notes that, following Aquinas's ideas, it is easy to reconcile grace with freedom.⁶¹ Arnauld claiming that this account of freedom makes it easy to reconcile freedom and grace is a surprising claim. He frequently and vehemently defends the claim that such questions are impenetrable to the finite mind. I'll return to this in Section 6.4, but I do not think Arnauld intends to claim that we are able *to understand* how they are reconciled, but simply *that* they are consistent. On Jansen's view the tension is between two created entities (which problematically lies in the scope of reason) whereas Aquinas's makes the supposed tension between God's omnipotent will and our free volition. While the compatibility of grace and freedom is grounded in faith, reason cannot understand the infinite and so we should not expect to understand how they fit together, only that they do. Moreover, reason

⁵⁸ Stump (1997).

⁵⁹ For example, Sleigh, Chappell, and Della Rocca (2000: 1198). As noted by Sleigh, Arnauld did not have access to *De malo* (1996a: 174).

⁶⁰ Translation: Stencil and Walsh (2016: 239). See also OA.3.419–20 and Moreau's discussion at TP.231.

⁶¹ See also OA.3.417–418.

should not show a positive contradiction in their compatibility, since faith is never at odds with reason if both are employed correctly.

6.3 *De Libertate*

Arnauld begins *De Libertate* by discussing the soul. His ontology remains thoroughly Cartesian, but with hints of Thomism. He begins by noting that the soul is that which thinks. The soul can be considered in itself or insofar as it is united to a body. Considered in itself, the soul has two faculties “which are not really distinct from the soul itself” – namely, the understanding and the will. Insofar as it is united to a body, a soul can have sensations and appetites.⁶² Moving on to consider the soul in itself, Arnauld notes that both the understanding and the will have their own proper object: The object of the understanding is the truth and the object of the will is the good. Arnauld adds that these two faculties are related: “the soul loves nothing by the will that it does not know by the understanding.” The understanding, he adds, “can only know what is true, whether really true or apparently true” and the will “can love only what the soul represents to itself as good.”⁶³

Arnauld goes on to note that there are some “objects to which the understanding is naturally determined to give its consent; and there are others which the will is naturally determined to will and love.” Some principles are “so clear and so simple” that the “understanding is naturally determined to assent to them.” Arnauld offers “I think, therefore I am” as one such example.⁶⁴

Arnauld writes that “the soul wills and loves freely all things that are not willed through themselves,” and the will to be happy is the only thing so willed.⁶⁵ He adds:

However infallible the determination by which the will determines itself with the attention of its reason, to objects to which it is not naturally determined, freedom suffers no hindrance, because it does not impede that the mind wills because it wills and by that fact itself is the master of its action. (OA.10.615–616/CA.101/TP.240)

Arnauld continues to offer cases involving sin: “there are certain sins which bad habits or a wicked disposition infallibly determine: like a desire for vengeance in a man who has been cruelly insulted or offended.”⁶⁶ Here

⁶² OA.10.614/CA.99/TP.236–237. ⁶³ OA.10.615/CA.100/TP.238–239.

⁶⁴ OA.10.615/CA.100–101/TP.238–239. ⁶⁵ OA.10.615/CA.101/TP.238–239.

⁶⁶ OA.10.616/CA.101–102/TP.240.

Arnauld offers cases similar to those in his letters. He again does not specify what he means by infallible determination, how the will determines itself, or how we can be free in these cases.

Arnauld returns to grace in *De Libertate* and notes:

Determination by God by means of grace, however efficacious, by which God works in us our volitions and actions [*qua Deus operatur in nobis velle & operari*], does not hinder our freedom. (OA.10.616/CA.102/TP.240)

He explains:

For when God works our volition in us [*operando in nobis velle*], He brings it about [*facit*] that we will in conformity with the kind of thing we are [*conformiter nostrae naturae*], that is, by determining ourselves [*determinando nos ipsos*] to what we are not determined by nature. Thus, no matter with what efficacy the mind is moved [*moveatur*] by God, it acts as master of its very own action; and it wills because it wills, determining itself to all other things by its volition to be happy; and hence it acts freely. (OA.10.616/CA.102/TP.242)⁶⁷

Later in the text, Arnauld adds that “there are two sorts of volitions and two sorts of things that we will, which are very different from one another. Some are such that we are naturally determined to will them . . . the others are those that we will because we want them.” Only in the latter case, Arnauld claims, do “we will them in such a way that at the same time we will them, we always retain the power to will the opposite.”⁶⁸

In *De Libertate*, Arnauld directly rejects Jansen’s view on the role of pre-deliberative “delectationes” in efficacious grace.⁶⁹ During his rejection of the victorious delight [*delectatio victrix*] view, Arnauld notes that on Jansen’s account (though he does not name him) in instances of efficacious grace, such as a man deciding whether to give alms to a poor man, three distinct things happen: (i) the man deliberates in his understanding; (ii) “a victorious delight in his will, which is an indeliberate movement [of the will];” and (iii) “a pious will to give alms, which is an effect of this delight.”⁷⁰ Instead, Arnauld prefers an account without the intermediate (second) event. Arnauld offers a helpful discussion to Du Vaucel:

The true opinion of St Augustine, St Bernard, and St Thomas concerning actual grace, like that of Estius, does not place anything created in the will, between the will of God that he calls uncreated grace and the free

⁶⁷ Translations: Kremer (1994b: 229). ⁶⁸ OA.10.619–620/CA.106/TP.248.

⁶⁹ See also OA.2.558–559; Kremer (1994b: 226–227); and Sleight (1996a: 169).

⁷⁰ TP.250–251. For a discussion of this objection, see Kremer (1994b: 227).

movement of the human will that the uncreated grace produces in the human will which is not to deny that this first free movement of the will produced by the uncreated grace, often serves to produce others, with the help of the same uncreated grace, as St Augustine indicates by this fine definition of grace: For it means that God inspires his love in us in order that we can do good works by means of that love . . . But in all of this we see nothing about a flowing quality or an indeliberate act [*actus indeliberatus*] which M. d'Ypres [i.e., Jansen] said his victorious pleasure consisted in, a point on which he was surely mistaken. (OA.3.635)⁷¹

Arnauld rejects Jansen's view here at least in part because it introduces a third event between a deliberation and a free volition – namely, a non-deliberative act.

6.4 Reconciliation

All told, I think the best reading of the later Arnauld is as an incompatibilist libertarian. There is, however, no text that settles the issue, and all three readings can offer plausible interpretations of the texts. In this section, I focus on a different question – namely, why does Arnauld think this later view can better explain efficacious grace? In answering that question, I think we can see that Arnauld may be being intentionally vague as to whether infallible determination leaves open multiple genuine options to the agent in question, and this in turn supports the incompatibilist-libertarian reading.

Arnauld's reconciliation of efficacious grace and freedom in the later texts is a topic that has left commentators unsatisfied. Both Kremer and Sleight consider how Arnauld's later view might allow for a reconciliation of efficacious grace and freedom and note that Arnauld does not tell us much. Kremer asks why Arnauld would think "determination by the primary cause [is] any less a threat to free will than determination by secondary causes?" He continues: "As far as I know, Arnauld does not deal with this question explicitly."⁷² Sleight claims of Arnauld's later view: "the issue is: is the state of affairs consisting in God's bringing it about that an agent freely elicits a specific choice possible? Molina thought not; Arnauld simply asserted that it is in this text . . . if Arnauld had such a rational basis" for the view, "he was a master at hiding it."⁷³

Both Kremer and Sleight note that Arnauld does not offer an answer to how grace and human freedom are supposed to coexist. I think the reason why Arnauld does not offer such an answer in the later texts is this: Despite

⁷¹ Translation: Kremer (1994b: 226–227).

⁷² Kremer (1994b: 231).

⁷³ Sleight (1996a: 170).

his proclamation that the Thomistic view allows for an easy reconciliation, he never gives up on his claim that grace and human freedom are consistent, but how this is so is beyond the scope of our knowledge. We cannot positively grasp an inconsistency between grace and freedom and we have much reason grounded in faith to suppose them consistent. When Arnauld tells his interlocutors that the Thomistic view allows us to easily reconcile efficacious grace and freedom, he does not mean that we can positively understand how they are consistent. Ultimately, in a way perfectly consistent with the method discussed in Chapter 2, what this amounts to for Arnauld is that the Thomistic view places the supposed “tension” in the correct place. In brief, on Jansen’s view, God creates a third event/entity – namely, a non-deliberative act which is a stirring of the love of God that determines an agent to act meritoriously. This tension is directly in the scope of a created being’s knowledge and the later Arnauld seems to think that we have strong positive reason to believe that this tension is problematic for freedom. On the Thomistic view, where freedom consists in the power to do the opposite, God gives efficacious grace which we know is intrinsically efficacious (and so always obtains) while the free agent maintains their power to do the opposite. Arnauld, I suggest, holds that it is beyond the scope of the human intellect to understand their relationship. However, the supposed tension is in a place where we have independent reasons (from reason) to believe the specifics of such a compatibility are beyond the scope of our knowledge – namely, between efficacious grace (or God’s power) and the free volition of a finite being.

Several aspects of the account so far warrant highlighting. First, in all the cases where Arnauld mentions infallible determination, he highlights actions done from well-established habits or character traits – for example, an incorruptible judge or a vindictive king. In Stencil and Walsh (2016), we discuss Arnauld’s account of habit formation and argue that, even in cases where we are infallibly determined, it is genuinely psychologically available to us to act otherwise, which suggests an open-conditions account of free volitions.⁷⁴ However, I am interested in a different dimension now. Specifically, when Arnauld addresses infallible determination, he does not suggest that being infallibly determined to act one way is something that is generally reflective of most free volitions of finite agents. Rather, these cases seem to represent peripheral cases.

Second, when Arnauld claims that the Thomistic view is better than the Jansenist one with respect to efficacious grace, he claims it allows us to reconcile efficacious grace with freedom, but he never claims that we can

⁷⁴ Stencil and Walsh (2016: 247–248).

understand or grasp how this is so. He tells Vuillaret, for example, “in following his [Aquinas’s] ideas, it is easy to reconcile [*concilier*] the efficacy of grace with freedom,” and he tells Bossuet “it is easy to explain the efficacy of grace and to reconcile [*concilier*] this efficacy with freedom when we define free will as a *facultas ad opposita*.”⁷⁵ In both cases, all Arnauld commits to is that we can “reconcile/*concilier*” efficacious grace and freedom on this position; he makes no commitment to it being graspable. In fact, to my knowledge, there is no passage anywhere in his corpus where he claims that this Thomistic account can illuminate to the mind how efficacious grace is consistent with human freedom. Arnauld never doubts that this remains beyond the scope of the human intellect; he thinks the Thomistic view has the advantage of not actively creating positive tensions within the scope of knowledge.

To more thoroughly summarize the position I defend in the remainder of this chapter, Arnauld comes to see that the Jansenist view places the tension between freedom and grace in a very tenuous place – namely, with a created pre-deliberative *delectatio* that causally necessitates the human will. This places the tension directly in the scope of knowledge and undermines freedom. How, one can imagine the later Arnauld asking, can a person be free if their volition is fully causally necessitated by a stirring in the body, especially one that is entirely independent of and/or posterior to any deliberation? Arnauld’s later view on grace instead has God efficaciously willing a person to will a certain way and having freedom, being a power to do the opposite. Arnauld’s reconciliation here is simply this: We maintain our power to do the opposite even when God brings it about that we freely will some thing. Arnauld does not think that we are able to comprehend how they are compatible, but tells us it is directly a result of God’s omnipotence, which is beyond the scope of human understanding. And Arnauld invokes cases of infallible determination to act from vicious habits not to explain human freedom, but to show that in cases where vindictive kings act in vindictive ways, we do not think that this undermines their freedom, despite the fact that we are quite sure of what will happen. Arnauld uses these cases to alleviate some of the concern about the compatibility of our freely willing something while God efficaciously wills that we do that thing. Arnauld’s cases are left deliberately ambiguous about the nature of infallible determination because his goal is not to illuminate human freedom, but to show that we do not generally think that it undermines human freedom when some agent’s action seems to come about through infallible determination. Calling attention to the fact

⁷⁵ OA.3.498 and OA.3.664.

that, in cases based on vicious habits, the ability to act otherwise is psychologically available to the agent, whereas in cases of efficacious grace it is unclear how this could be so, would undermine the goal of these examples.

To make my case, I look at two other texts from the later period in Arnauld's life. In his *Disquisitio*, mentioned in the letter cited in the introduction to this chapter, Arnauld cites a passage from Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*:

The preparation [man's preparation for grace] may be looked at in two ways. First, as it is from free-will, and thus there is no necessity that it should obtain grace, since the gift of grace exceeds every preparation of human power. But it may be considered, secondly, as it is from God the Mover, and thus it has a necessity – not indeed of coercion, but of infallibility – as regards what it is ordained to by God, since God's intention cannot fail . . . Hence if God intends, while moving, that the one whose heart He moves should attain to grace, he will infallibly attain to it, according to John 6:45: "Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to Me." (OA.10.633)⁷⁶

Arnauld summarizes this aspect of the view later in the text. He distinguishes between natural necessity; necessity of coercion; and conditional necessity or necessity of consequence and infallibility. The former two are inconsistent with freedom, while the latter is not. Arnauld explains:

Conditional necessity or [*sive*] necessity of consequence and of infallibility is when something follows infallibly from something else, not however from a natural determination to one thing, but as if it is moved by the intention of God, as when someone who believes in Christ, infallibly believes in Christ, because the intention of God cannot fail. (OA.10.635)

The passage again is a bit unhelpful as Arnauld uses 'infallibly' in his definition of infallibility. It is noteworthy that Arnauld uses a case of a relation between God and a person in his example.

In the *Instruction*, Arnauld offers several noteworthy discussions:

Q: All grace of Jesus Christ being efficacious, and always infallibly having its effect . . . how can this be consistent with our freedom?

A: The efficacy of grace comes from the sovereign power that God has over the wills of men . . . this truth is so clearly contained in the idea of an infinitely powerful God, that even the Pagans couldn't ignore it.
(OA.10.435)

⁷⁶ Translation IA.676.

He adds later:

What the Scriptures, Church Fathers and even reason itself say about this power of God over the wills of men, supposes that he [God] makes them [recipients of grace] will in a manner that conforms to their nature, which is to will freely. Without this, he would not be able to carry out his commands to bring about their salvation, which can only be done with free volitions.

And, consequently, when we have difficulties reconciling [*accorder*] God's power with our freedom, it is enough that we are assured of the first of these truths by the idea we have of the omnipotence of God, as well as by Scripture and the Church fathers, and [we are assured of the truth of] the other, which is our freedom, by our own experience, so that we doubt neither the one nor the other, just as we doubt neither our freedom nor God's providence, even though we also find it very difficult to fit them together [*accorder ensemble*]. (OA.10.436)

And finally:

Q: Is there nothing that can help us understand their agreement [*cet accord*]?
(OA.10.436)

A: Yes, all we have to do is understand well what it is to be free and to discard the false idea that many have, who imagine that we only freely want something when we are not at all determined to want it [*quand on n'est point déterminé à la vouloir*], no matter where that determination comes from.
(OA.10.436)

So, while we cannot positively understand and comprehend how efficacious grace and freedom fit together, we can help assuage the tension by acknowledging that it is false that we are only free when we are not at all determined to want some thing.

To bring this all together, I think the key to understanding Arnauld's later views on freedom involves reversing the order of explanation. While Arnauld comes to see the value in explicating an account of human freedom in the later texts, I do not think he changes his view on the order of importance between defending efficacious grace and explicating human freedom: The former still outranks the latter. Arnauld thinks that his later Thomistic view is better able to reconcile human freedom and efficacious grace for at least two reasons. First, Jansen's view adds a created and non-deliberative entity into the process according to which an agent deliberates, then is moved by an inspiration of the love of God, and then wills. This process puts the tension between God's role in efficacious grace and human freedom directly in the scope of human reason by making it a created entity and an intermediary between deliberation and volition. On the Thomistic view, freedom is a power to do the opposite.

As Arnauld writes in the *Instruction*, we know that God can bring it about that a human agent freely elicits a choice due to God's omnipotence. In such cases, that human agent is still free and retains the power to do the opposite (as I read him, a real and not merely counterfactual power, though how this is so is beyond the scope of finite reason).

Arnauld's cases in both his letters and *De Libertate* all involve agents acting from well-established habits. In these cases, Arnauld is not trying to illuminate the essence of human freedom, but he is following his own advice in the *Instruction*. He is trying to help alleviate the tension between efficacious grace and human freedom by showing that it is false that "we only freely want something when we are not at all determined to want it, no matter where that determination comes from." Let's take the case of the incorruptible judge. Arnauld says that the judge, due to his character, is incorruptible. Yet, we still hold that he is free even if he is infallibly determined to reject the bribe due to his character. So, if an agent is determined to will something based on their character, we still hold that they are free. Arnauld is using cases like this to help alleviate any proposed tensions between efficacious grace and human freedom. As such, I think he may very well be intentionally vague between whether the agent in question has multiple paths open to them or not. Arnauld's real motivation is not to explain instances of human freedom and then extend the discussion to efficacious grace. Instead, Arnauld thinks efficacious grace is an instance of infallible determination and tries to show that, in cases of human freedom, we do not think this undermines freedom and so should not think it does so in the case of grace. His point in these cases, as he writes in the *Instruction*, is not to illuminate the nature of freedom, but to show we are still free when we have strong determining motives.

All told, I think the argument made in Stencil and Walsh (2016) is correct and that the account we there give of habit formation suggests even in the case of well-engrained habits, we still have multiple options open to us. But, Arnauld's point in these later texts is to say that even if we are infallibly determined to do something, we are still free, and he is intentionally vague about what is open to the agent in question since in the case of efficacious grace it is a certainty that the agent acts in accordance with the grace. If Arnauld intends to endorse in these cases that we are free even though we have only one option open, it is odd he is not clearer about it. If he wanted to defend compatibilism or a compatibilist libertarianism, one would expect him to more explicitly state that there is only one option in these cases and we are still free. Since he does not and remains vague, this suggests, at least indirectly, an incompatibilist libertarianism.

Arnauld ultimately finds a view that lands somewhere between Jansen and Molina. Arnauld rejects throughout his entire life the Molinist conception of freedom because it makes the essence of freedom having multiple options open to the agent and holds that persons often reject grace. This cannot be for Arnauld. On Arnauld's later view, in cases of efficacious grace, while we maintain the power to do the opposite, such grace is never resisted. For Arnauld, in cases of efficacious grace there is a legitimate sense in which an agent could act otherwise, on my view not simply in a compatibilist sense, but how this is so is beyond the scope of the understanding. So, Arnauld is not a Molinist. Later in life, Arnauld also comes to see problems with Jansen's view. Jansen makes free volitions caused by created and non-deliberative stirrings independent of the will. In the cases of efficacious grace, this places the tension within the scope of the human intellect and the tension is genuinely problematic.

According to the later Arnauld, then, in cases of efficacious grace we maintain the power to do the opposite even though God determines us to will the way we will. How this is so is beyond the scope of human reason, but we know that God can bring it about that we will freely, due to God's omnipotence. We can help to alleviate the tension (though not grasp their compatibility) by realizing that, in other cases, we do not think it undermines freedom even if the agent in question acts from a well-established habit. However infallible the determination by which the judge refuses the bribe, we still consider the judge to be rejecting the bribe freely. Arnauld's tough cases are meant to show that we do not think it matters so much whether the well-engrained habit choices are open-conditions or closed-conditions free, as long as they are done from our characters – that is, as long as they are done in accordance with who we are. This is meant to help ease the tension in the view that efficacious grace and human freedom are compatible, as they show that even choices that seemed determined (here intentionally vague as to whether this means caused or necessitated), we still think people are free. Ultimately, I think that Arnauld is an incompatibilist libertarian, and in the case of efficacious grace, we maintain the power to do the opposite, though how this is so is beyond the scope of reason. Arnauld's main project is still the defense of efficacious grace, and the specifics of his account of human freedom remain of secondary importance.

CHAPTER 7

Modality *Arnauld's Actualism*

Thus far in Part I of the book, we have investigated Arnauld's epistemology and method, substance–mode ontology, substance dualism, account of the mind–body distinction and their union, as well as his accounts of ideas and human freedom. In this chapter – the final chapter of Part I – I focus on one final component of Arnauld's ontology – his account of modality. Specifically, I argue that Arnauld offers a sophisticated actualist theory of modality – namely, an essence-based modal actualism. This essence-based modal actualism has three key components:

1. Everything that exists is actual (*ontological* actualism).
2. The actual world is irreducibly modal; there is no reductive analysis of modality (*modal* actualism).
3. All true *de re* counterfactuals are grounded in the irreducibly modal essences of actually existing things (*essence-based* modal actualism).¹

All three of these components of Arnauld's view deserve comment. Ontological actualism is the thesis that everything that exists, actually exists. Actualism is usually contrasted with possibilism, or the view that, in addition to actual things, there also exist merely possible things.² Ontological actualism claims no pure possibilities or merely possible beings exist. Modal actualism is ontological actualism plus the thesis that modality is irreducible. Modality is irreducible just in case there is no reductive analysis of the modal to the non-modal. For example, a modal actualist might claim that a primitive feature of the world is 'instantiability.' To be instantiable is to have the capacity to be instantiated and is a modal notion. If instantiability is a primitive, then the modal cannot be reduced to the

¹ Cf., Fine (1994, 1995a,b).

² For different accounts of possibilism and what possible beings are, see Lewis (1986); Divers (2002); Bricker (2008); and Yagisawa (2023).

non-modal, at least not fully.³ Finally, Arnauld's actualism is essence-based insofar as it is actually existing essences that resist reduction and are the ground of all true *de re* counterfactuals.

I shall argue in this chapter that all that exists, for Arnauld, are actual things – namely, God and what God creates. There are no merely possible beings or states of affairs independent of God, grounded in God, or created by God (at least within our scope of knowledge). Claims about possibility, necessity, and contingency are all grounded in things actually created by God. God creates finite substances of two kinds: minds and bodies. Each individual mind's essence is thinking and each body's is extension. These essences, which are the things themselves, are what ground modal claims about them. However, essences are fundamentally modal entities for Arnauld. There are a number of ways that modal concepts are built into essences for Arnauld. For one, as we saw in Chapter 3, the tests for determining what is a substance, mode, or an attribute depend on what we can conceive. Perhaps more directly, substances are fundamentally entities which are capable of existing in any number of determinate ways; for example, part of what it is to be an extended body, for Arnauld, is to be divisible. And what it is to be divisible is to be able to be divided into any number of different parts. This is why Arnauld denies a full reductive analysis of modality – one cannot fully explain what an essence is without invoking modal notions. However, there is a partial reduction of modality to essence, since contingency and necessity are grounded in (and not constitutive of) the essences of substances.

The plan of the chapter is as follows. In Section 7.1, I set up the debate between Leibniz and Arnauld, as Arnauld's theory of modality is best on display in their correspondence. The genesis of the debate is Leibniz's defense of the complete concept theory of substance (CCS). I outline this view and then suggest that Arnauld's response to Leibniz is best understood in three steps: a discussion of Arnauld's nature (which Arnauld equates with his essence), an argument against 'purely possible' substances, and finally Arnauld's positive account. In Section 7.2, I consider the account of Arnauld's nature he offers in the debate with Leibniz. In Section 7.3, I discuss Arnauld's objection to Leibniz's way of conceiving of God's creation and modality and his argument against 'purely possible' substances. In Section 7.4, I argue that in the correspondence he articulates a sophisticated *essence-based modal actualism*. I conclude with some brief remarks.

³ For this helpful way of setting out this type of actualism, see Loux (1979a: 48–49). See also Sider (2003) and Menzel (2022). For an argument against the actualism–possibilism distinction, see Williamson (2015: 22–25) and for a defense see Menzel (2020).

7.1 The Complete Concept Theory of Substance

As noted in Chapter 1, the correspondence began when Leibniz sent Arnauld an outline of what would become the *Discourse*. Arnauld initially responds by telling Leibniz that the outline was shocking and frightening. He only offers one example of what he finds so objectionable – namely, Leibniz's claim in the summary of article 13:

Since the individual concept of each person contains once for all everything that will ever happen to him, one sees in it *a priori* proofs or reasons for the truth of each event, or why one event has occurred rather than another. (G.II.12/M.5)

In this passage, Leibniz expresses his commitment to CCS, which we can define as follows:

CCS: An entity is an individual substance if and only if its concept contains all and only the concepts of those entities that may be attributed to it.⁴

According to CCS, in order for an individual to be a substance, its concept must contain exactly all the concepts of those things that may be attributed to it. A plausible candidate for a substance on both Arnauld's and Leibniz's metaphysical system is Barack Obama. Obama's concept, according to CCS, contains all those concepts that can be attributed to him, including being a thinking thing and being the 44th president of the United States.

Arnauld offers the following objection to CCS:

If that is so, God was free to create or not create Adam; but supposing he wished to create him, everything that has happened since and will ever happen to the human race was and is obliged to happen through a necessity that is more than fatal. For the individual concept of Adam contained the consequence that he would have so many children, and the individual concept of each of these children, everything that they would do and all the children they would have: and so on. There is therefore no more liberty in God regarding all that, supposing he wished to create Adam, than in maintaining that God was free, supposing he wished to create me, not to create a nature capable of thought. (G.II.15/M.9)⁵

Arnauld's concern is that, if CCS is true, then everything that will ever happen to Adam follows with a necessity that is more than fatal. Arnauld seems to mean by a necessity that is more than fatal, a problematic

⁴ This definition of CCS is from Sleigh (1990: 10).

⁵ Translation slightly amended.

necessity that leads to, or is, a type of fatalism.⁶ It is clear that what he is most worried about is the restriction on God's freedom or omnipotence that this account requires. Given that God has decided to create Adam, everything that has happened since follows necessarily, and this is an unacceptable limitation on God's freedom. Arnauld's argument can be represented as one in which premise 1 is assumed and reduced to absurdity:

1. Necessarily, 'if Adam exists, then a certain particular posterity follows' (e.g., Adam has x number of children, who each have x number of children, etc.) (From CCS)
2. Necessarily, 'if God creates Adam, then Adam exists.'

Therefore,

3. Necessarily, 'if God creates Adam, then a certain particular posterity follows.' (1, 2)
4. Necessarily, 'if it is true that *if God creates Adam, then a certain particular posterity follows*, then God is not free with respect to Adam's posterity.'

Therefore,

5. Necessarily, God is not free with respect to Adam's posterity. (3, 4)

So, CCS leads to the claim that God is not free with respect to Adam's posterity. But we know that God is free with respect to Adam's posterity. Since 1 leads to 5 and 5 is false, we can conclude that:

6. Premise 1 (and so CCS) is false.⁷

In this letter, Arnauld makes no argument for the truth of CCS entailing 1. However, Arnauld's concern seems to be that, if CCS is true, then everything that will ever happen to Adam is contained in his concept. This includes Adam having particular children and particular experiences. If Adam's concept includes the concept of all of Adam's children, then his concept includes all of his children's children and so on. One can see that everything that ever happens in the actual world will be in Adam's concept. This is so if for no other reason than its being true of Adam that he existed

⁶ Later in the correspondence (G.II.27/M.26) Arnauld simply discusses fatal necessity, so the "more than" seems to be a rhetorical flourish. Bennett also suggests that this is simply rhetorical flourish in his *earlymoderntexts.com* edition of the correspondence. See G.II.37/M.39 for Leibniz considering what Arnauld means by a necessity more than fatal.

⁷ This interpretation of the argument is based on Sleight's (1990: 59).

in the same world as, for example, Obama's being the 44th president. Thus, Adam's complete concept includes the concepts of the United States, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden. If Adam's existence entails a certain posterity, then God's creating Adam entails a certain posterity. So Arnauld argues, given that God has decided to create Adam, everything that has happened since follows necessarily and this is an unacceptable limitation on God's freedom.

In an April 1686 letter, Leibniz defends his claim by offering an overview of his account of creation.⁸ According to Leibniz, in God's understanding there are an infinite number of possible worlds and God freely decides to create the best of all possible worlds.⁹ For example, in section VI of the *Discourse*, he notes that "in whatever manner God might have created the world, it would always have been regular . . . God has chosen the most perfect world."¹⁰ For Leibniz, possibilities are not dependent on the will of God.¹¹ Rather, God understands all of the possible universes that God could create. Adam, the actual Adam, exists in only this world. Additionally, there are "an infinite number of other Adams whose posterity would be different," and that among "these possible Adams . . . God has chosen just one who is precisely our Adam."¹² Leibniz's point is, roughly, that had God willed a different posterity for Adam, God would not have created the actual Adam. Instead, God would have created a different Adam with a different posterity. Thus, although the creation of any particular possible Adam entails a certain posterity, there are a presumably infinite number of other worlds with other possible Adams that God could have created.

Arnauld responds in the May 1686 letter and states that he still has some problems with Leibniz's account of an individual concept.¹³ In fact, Arnauld develops his argument for CCS entailing premise 1. This letter from Arnauld has not always received a warm treatment. Sleight suggests that Arnauld's argument from CCS to premise 1 is "a strange brew of premises about possible objects and concepts. Fortunately, the argument can be recast in coherent form, if we formulate it as an argument about concepts rather than possible objects."¹⁴ G. H. R. Parkinson claims that

⁸ Leibniz also argues that Arnauld has confused hypothetical necessity with absolute necessity (G.II.18–19/M.13–14/RL.29–30).

⁹ See Laerke (2007) for a discussion of the development of Leibniz's view of possibilia.

¹⁰ G.IV.431/AG.39 ¹¹ G.IV.427–428/AG.36. ¹² G.II.20/M.16/RL.31.

¹³ Arnauld agrees with Leibniz that one must distinguish absolute and hypothetical necessity, but claims that this does not resolve his difficulty (G.II.27–28/M.26–27).

¹⁴ Sleight (1990: 59). This passage is pointed to by Nelson (1993: 676).

Arnauld's "objection is involved and obscurely expressed."¹⁵ Finally, Catherine Wilson claims: "Although [Arnauld] would like a strong interpretation of counterfactuals, his wish to preserve the freedom of God leads him to deny the existence of possible individuals, so that he inadvertently aligns himself with Spinoza, showing the danger of not reading books one doesn't like."¹⁶ I shall argue in the next three sections that Arnauld's objections to Leibniz are best understood as culminating in Arnauld defending an essence-based modal actualist theory of possibility. Arnauld makes three arguments that inform his essence-based modal actualism: He argues that his nature includes "only that which is such that I should no longer be me if it were not in me"; he argues that there are no "pure possibilities" (at least relative to created substances); and he offers an account of possibility in terms of actual "natures which [God] has created."

7.2 Arnauld's Nature

Arnauld offers his own account of the nature of an individual while arguing against Leibniz's conception of many possible Adams. Arnauld begins by arguing that it is impossible to conceive of many possible Adams. He relates conceiving of many possible Adams to conceiving of many possible varieties of himself. Arnauld claims (hereafter: the singular nature passage):

Besides, Sir, I do not know how by taking Adam as the example of a singular nature one can conceive of many possible Adams. It is as though I were to conceive of many possible varieties of myself, which is certainly inconceivable. For I cannot think of myself without considering myself as a singular nature, so distinct from any other existing or possible that I can as little conceive of different varieties of myself as of a circle whose diameters are not all of equal length. The reason is that these different varieties of myself would all be distinct one from another, otherwise there would not be many of them. Thus one of these varieties of myself would necessarily not be me, which is manifestly a contradiction. (G.II.30/M.29)

While at first this passage may seem confused, considering the passage in the context of Arnauld's ontology will help. As argued in Chapter 3, his ontology is thoroughly Cartesian and is summed up in his dual dualisms. Arnauld holds a substance–mode ontology and a mind–body substance dualism. Substances subsist by themselves, and modes depend for their

¹⁵ Parkinson (1967: xix). This passage is also pointed to by Nelson (1993: 676).

¹⁶ Wilson (1989: 93).

existence on the substance. Further, Arnauld holds only two types of finite substances exist: minds and bodies.

Most important for his theory of modality is the distinction between modes and attributes. While I introduced this distinction in Chapter 3, it merits further investigation here. In what follows, I use 'mode' and 'attribute' in their technical sense, and I use 'property' in a generic sense to mean any feature, quality, and/or characteristic of a thing. Modes, for Arnauld, are ways of being a substance and are contingent properties of a substance while attributes are necessary properties or features of a substance; in fact, an attribute is merely conceptually distinct from the substance itself. Attributes can be divided into two groups for Arnauld: attributes and essential attributes. Each substance has one essential attribute that constitutes the essence of the substance and is the attribute upon which all modes and other attributes of that substance depend. The essential attribute of a mind is thinking, while the essential attribute of a body is extension. Attributes, other than the essential attribute, depend on the essential attribute of the substance, but are not the essential attribute. These 'generic attributes,' Arnauld claims, "are merely attributes dependent on the primary attribute."¹⁷ Arnauld gives the example of divisibility.¹⁸ Extension is the only essential attribute of body, for example, yet all bodies are divisible (and also have shape, etc.).

Arnauld repeatedly defines the 'essential attribute' as "the thing itself."¹⁹ For Arnauld, the essential attribute just is the thing itself; a mind just is its thought, while a body just is its extension. He offers an account in which the substance and its essential attribute are distinct only in reason. Arnauld's conception of an essential attribute is developed in Book 1, chapter 2 of the *Logic*:

We should remark, however, that the mind, accustomed to knowing most things as modified since it knows them almost always by accidents or qualities that strike the senses, often divides the essence of the substance itself into two ideas, viewing one as subject and the other as mode . . . In these cases the essential attribute, which is the thing itself, is taken for a mode because it is conceived as in a subject. This is properly speaking an abstraction of substance, such as humanity, corporeality, and reason. (OA.41.134–135/B.31/CG.47–48)

In the above passage, Arnauld discusses an abstraction from substance in which the mind divides the essence of substance into two ideas, treating

¹⁷ OA.41.147/B.41/CG.61.

¹⁸ OA.41.147/B.41/CG.61; see also OA.41.150/B.43–44/CG.64.

¹⁹ OA.41.135/B.31/CG.47; OA.41.147/B.41/CG.61.

one as the subject and the second as a mode. When we think of a body as a thing or subject which has the property of being extended or a mind as a thing that has the property of thinking in such a way that body and extension or mind and thought are distinct, we are abstracting from the substance. It is not the case that the subject and the essence of a body are distinct *in re*; rather, a body just is its extension and a mind just is its thought. So, the essential attribute is not merely a property of a substance, but the substance itself conceived of in a different way.²⁰

Arnauld and Nicole add to this account of essential attributes in a passage I shall call the 'abstractions of the mind passage':

That it is possible to consider a mode without reflecting distinctly on the substance of which it is a mode, provides an opportunity to explain what are called *abstractions of the mind* . . . The third way of conceiving things by abstraction takes place when, in the case of a single thing having different attributes, we think of one attribute without the other even though they differ only by a distinction of reason. Here is how this happens. Suppose, for example, I reflect that I am thinking, and, in consequence, that I am the I who thinks. In my idea of the I who thinks, I can consider a thinking thing without noticing that it is I, although in me the I and the one who thinks are one and the same thing. The idea I thereby conceive of a person who thinks can represent not only me but all other thinking persons. (OA.4I.141–143/B.37–38/CG.55–57)

Attributes of a substance, while identical *in re*, are nonetheless merely conceptually distinct. So, there is only a conceptual distinction between a substance, its essential attribute, and its other attributes.²¹

Finally, we are in a position to return to the singular nature passage. When Arnauld claims he is a singular nature, he is asserting his view that he is a particular substance, and being a particular substance just is being a particular nature. Given this conception of what it is to be Arnauld, if there are 'other Arnaulds' (whether actual or possible), then these other Arnaulds are distinct, both from one another and from Arnauld. This is because another Arnauld would be a different particular nature. As a particular nature, Arnauld is a distinct entity and is necessarily distinct not only from any other actual thing, but also from any alleged merely possible thing.

²⁰ This discussion of Arnauld is indebted to a series of papers by Nolan on Descartes's conception of attributes. See Nolan (1997a,b, 1998). See also Pearce (2019) and Martin (2020) for discussion of abstraction in Arnauld.

²¹ I explore conceptual distinctions more fully in Part II of the book, where I argue that conceptual distinctions, for Arnauld, are distinctions made in the mind between identicals that are grounded in our mind's conceiving of one thing in multiple ways.

Arnauld continues his argument against “many possible Adams” by applying the above line of argument about himself to what Leibniz says about Adam:

Let me, Sir, now transfer to this version of myself what you say about Adam, and judge yourself whether that could be maintained. Amongst possible beings God found in his ideas many versions of myself, one of which possesses the predicates of having several children and being a doctor, and another of living in celibacy and being a theologian. And having decided to create the latter, the version of myself which now exists contains in its individual concept the notion of living in celibacy and being a theologian, whereas the former would have contained in its individual concept that of being married and a doctor. Is it not clear that there would be no sense in this discourse: because since my self is necessarily a particular individual nature, which is the same thing as having a particular individual concept, it is as impossible to conceive of contradictory predicates in the individual concept of myself as to conceive of a variety of myself different from me. From this one must conclude, I think, that since it is impossible that I should not always have remained myself, whether I had married or lived in celibacy, the individual concept of myself contained neither of these two states; just as it is well to conclude: this square of marble is the same whether at rest or in motion; so neither rest nor motion is contained in its individual concept. (G.II.30/M.29–30)

Arnauld grants Leibniz his conception of God. God, prior to creating, surveys in God’s understanding several possible Arnaulds, one of which has the property of being celibate, while another has the property of having children, and chooses to create one.²² God chose to create the celibate Arnauld, who has celibacy in his complete concept. However, God could have chosen to create an Arnauld who married, in which case being married would be a part of his complete concept. Arnauld argues that this is incoherent. In order to do so, he identifies an individual’s particular concept with that individual’s particular nature and he claims that Arnauld is essentially a particular individual nature. Since Arnauld is essentially a particular individual nature, both possible Arnaulds must be the same actual Arnauld. Further, since Arnauld has argued that one’s complete concept is one’s nature, Arnauld now has both celibacy and being married in his complete concept. But, it is impossible to have contradictory properties in one individual concept (Arnauld seems to be treating these as contradictory properties). According to Arnauld, on Leibniz’s

²² My interpretation of this argument is similar to and indebted to Nelson’s (1993: 681–682).

suggestion, Arnauld's complete concept contains celibacy and being married. But Arnauld argues that both properties cannot be in his complete concept since they are contradictory.

Having established that both of those predicates cannot be in his complete concept, Arnauld goes on to argue that *neither* is. Since Arnauld would have remained Arnauld whether he had married or lived in celibacy, his individual concept cannot contain celibacy or being married. Arnauld then compares his properties of being married and being celibate to a square of marble being the same square of marble whether at rest or in motion; so, neither rest nor motion is contained in its individual concept. This choice of analogy is informative. A square of marble is a paradigm case of an extended substance, and motion and rest are paradigm cases of modes of extended substance – that is, of ways that squares of marble can be.²³ Arnauld is suggesting the same thing about himself – namely, that he is a substance and being married or celibate are different modes of that substance, that is, different ways that he can be. Arnauld is claiming that possibility talk about Arnauld is not talk about purely possible substances, but is talk about Arnauld himself.²⁴

Directly after arguing that neither celibacy nor being married are a part of his complete concept, he goes on to explain what is in his complete concept/individual nature:

That is why, Sir, it seems to me that I must consider as contained in the individual concept of myself only that which is such that I should no longer be me if it were not in me: and that all that is to the contrary such that it could be or not be in me without my ceasing to be me, cannot be considered as being contained in my individual concept . . . That is my idea, which I think conforms to everything which has ever been believed by all the philosophers in the world. (G.II.30–31/M.30)

In this passage, Arnauld claims that only the essential properties of Arnauld are a part of Arnauld's complete concept.²⁵

7.3 Against Purely Possible Substances

Arnauld continues his attack on the heart of Leibniz's conception of God and the existence of purely possible substances. Arnauld begins by expressing concerns about doing philosophy from the perspective of God, which

²³ In fact, Arnauld uses 'every body is in motion or at rest' as an example of opposing accidents (modes) in the *Logic*, OA.41.241/B.124/CG.161–162.

²⁴ This point is made by Nelson (1993: 682). ²⁵ Cf., Carraud (1996: 101–102).

is epistemically cut off from created beings. Arnauld also expresses some concerns about the way God is commonly understood:

For what do we know at present of God's knowledge? We are aware that he knows all things, and knows them all by a single and very simple act which is his essence. (G.II.31/M.30–31)

He adds: "Can we conceive that whereas God's knowledge is his very essence, wholly necessary and immutable, he nevertheless knows an infinite number of things he might not have known" and "the same holds true for his will, which is also his very essence."²⁶ In these passages, Arnauld is invoking his commitment to the doctrine of divine simplicity – an issue I examine in Chapter 9.²⁷ After introducing God's simplicity, Arnauld continues (hereafter: the uncertainty passage):

I also find many uncertainties in the way in which we normally represent God as acting. We imagine that before he willed the creation of the world he envisaged an infinite number of possible things amongst which he chose some and rejected others: many possible Adams, each with a great succession of people and events, with which he has an intrinsic connexion: and we suppose that the connexion of all of these other things with one of these possible Adams is quite like the connexion which we know the created Adam to have had with the whole of his posterity; which makes us think that this is one amongst all the possible Adams that God chose and that he did not want any of the others. (G.II.31/M.31)

Arnauld directly questions Leibniz's conception of God and its compatibility with what Arnauld takes to be an appropriate conception of God and God's *modus operandi*. First, Arnauld addresses treating God as envisaging an infinity of possible worlds and choosing to create one. This conception of God is hard to reconcile with Arnauld's conceptions of God's *modus operandi* and divine simplicity. Arnauld argues that, if God consults God's understanding to discover all of the possible worlds and decides to create one, then God must have distinct faculties or have attributes playing distinct roles in creation.

Arnauld then proceeds to the heart of his attack on "purely possible substances." Arnauld claims:

But without insisting upon what I have already said, that taking Adam as an example of a singular nature, it is as impossible to conceive of many Adams

²⁶ G.II.31/M.31.

²⁷ Nelson calls attention to the importance of this doctrine for understanding Arnauld's letters (1993: 685–688).

as of many varieties of myself: I confess in good faith that I have no conception of these purely possible substances, that is to say the ones that God will never create. And I am very much inclined to think that they are figments of the imagination that we create, and that what we call possible, purely possible, substances cannot be anything other than God's omnipotence, which being a pure act does not permit the existence in it of any possibility [*et que tout ce que nous appelons substances possibles, purement possibles, ne peut être autre chose que la toute-puissance de Dieu, qui étant un pur acte ne souffre point qu'il y ait en lui aucune possibilité*]. (G.II.31–32/M.31/LR.98)

And after a discussion of how Arnauld prefers to understand possible substances (cited at the beginning of Section 7.4), he continues:

But I am much mistaken if there is anyone who dares to say that he can conceive of a possible, purely possible, substance. For I am convinced in my own mind that although one talks so much of these purely possible substances, nonetheless one never conceives of any of them except according to the notion of one of those which God has created. One might therefore say, it seems to me, except for the things which God has created or is to create, there is no passive possibility but only an active and infinite potency. (G.II.32/M.32)

In order to interpret these passages, it will be beneficial to make a distinction between *pure possibilia* and *pure possibilities*. Pure possibilia are objects (or worlds, persons, stuff, etc., henceforth: 'objects') that have being but do not actually exist. Pure possibilia are *mere possibilia* or *mere possible objects*. *Pure possibilities*, on the other hand, are those states of affairs that are possible (or impossible) logically independent of the will of God. Given that pure possibilities are states of affairs and pure possibilia are objects, these two concepts are distinct, at least conceptually.²⁸

In the two passages above, Arnauld critiques the very foundations of Leibniz's conception of God. In the first, Arnauld claims that "*these* purely possible substances" (emphasis mine) are figments of the imagination. As I read him, Arnauld is directly commenting on the uncertainty passage and the purely possible substances to which he refers are an explicit reference to the possible substances Leibniz places in God's mind. When Arnauld argues against *these* purely possible substances, he should be read as questioning that there are in God's understanding possible substances that are never created, because given Arnauld's conception of God and divine simplicity, there can be no possibility independent of God's will, in

²⁸ See also my discussion of second scholastic modal voluntarism in Chapter 10.

God's understanding. So, there are no possible substances in the understanding of God prior to any volitional act by God.

Arnauld then makes another claim which may be opaque on the surface – namely, that what we call “possible, purely possible substances” are nothing “other than God's omnipotence, which being a pure act does not permit the existence in it of any possibility.” The locution “possible, purely possible substance” is more inclusive than Arnauld's prior concern with just those possible substances in God's understanding. In context, it becomes clear that Arnauld is continuing his direct argument against Leibniz's conception of God and its relation to possibility. I suggest that with “possible, purely possible substances” Arnauld means to be picking out all possible substances that are possible independent of God's will. That is, Arnauld aims to pick out any pure possibilities or states of affairs independent of God's free volitions that determine possibilities about substances. Thus, Arnauld expands his attack on Leibniz from those possible substances in God's understanding, to question any conception of possible substances according to which they are independent of the will of God.

What Arnauld is primarily concerned with is Leibniz's conception of the relationship between God and possibility, and he is objecting to treating possibility (at least relative to created substances) as prior to God's volition. So, when Arnauld claims that “possible, purely possible substances” are nothing “other than God's omnipotence, which being a pure act does not permit the existence in it of any possibility,” I suggest we read Arnauld as denying pure possibilities, and claiming that what we call pure possibilities are simply God's omnipotence or total power. God could have created a married Arnauld, not because of some pure possibility making it possible, but simply because God is omnipotent. We should not confuse this with states of affairs that are possible or impossible logically prior to the will of God. It does not follow, Arnauld would argue, from God's having the power to will an infinite number of different things, that those things are possible prior to God's willing them (on my view, Arnauld would deny that we are in a position to know that God's being able to will x entails anything about the philosophically relevant modal status of x).²⁹ Further, God's omnipotence is a pure act; God's omnipotence just is God's power, which just is God's understanding, which just is God. Arnauld claims that possibility cannot be grounded in God's essence or understanding.³⁴ God's essence, since it is pure act, is not the sort of entity that grounds

²⁹ See my treatment of the epistemic creation doctrine in Part II of the book.

possibilities; God's different faculties do not play different roles in God's action. In order to ground possibility in the essence of God the way that Leibniz tries to, one must conceive of God's faculties of will and understanding (and God's essence itself) as problematically distinct and Arnauld denies that this is an appropriate way to conceive of God.

In an insightful paper, Alan Nelson offers a different interpretation of these passages. Nelson suggests that these passages, when connected with a Cartesian backdrop, result in a "strong argument against unactualized possibles in God's understanding (as Leibniz locates them . . .), or *anywhere else*" (emphasis mine).³⁰ Nelson offers the following reconstruction, treating Arnauld's argument as an argument against premise 1, proceeding on the assumption of 1 to an untenable conclusion:

1. Suppose that God has an idea, *P*, of something that is never actual.
2. In God, willing, knowing, and creative activity are the same thing.
3. God knows every idea that he has.

Therefore,

4. For every idea God has, he wills that it be so, and similarly, for every idea he has his creative activity is exercised.

Therefore,

5. Every idea God has is of something he has created or will create.

Therefore,

6. *P* is of a created, but never actual thing. In other words, it is of a thing God's creative power actively renders possible; it is of a purely possible thing, a thing whose mere possibility is created. (1 and 5)

Nelson argues that Arnauld would reject 6, since everything that exists falls into the categories of God and "the things God creates, i.e. actual things."³¹ Since 6 is false, 1–5 entail 6, and 2–5 are true, 1 must be false. Thus, on Nelson's reading, Arnauld uses divine simplicity to argue for an actualist theory of possibility.

The disagreement between Nelson's reading and my own is as follows: Nelson treats Arnauld as using divine simplicity to argue against pure possibilia (I take Nelson's use of "purely possible thing" in 6 to be a reference to what I have called pure possibilia). On my reading, Arnauld's discussion of God's *modus operandi* and divine simplicity is meant to

³⁰ Nelson (1993: 687).

³¹ Nelson (1993: 688).

undermine the existence of pure possibilities, not pure possibilia (although there is an overlap between the two). As I argue below, Arnauld's actualist account is then suggested as an alternative, although he makes no direct argument against pure possibilia. Nelson claims only that these passages, "when connected with the Cartesian background," take on a strong argument against pure possibilia generally, not that this is the precise argument Arnauld offers.³² Nevertheless, Nelson's reconstruction has Arnauld using divine simplicity, at least in part, to argue against pure possibilia, while on my reading divine simplicity and God's *modus operandi* are only meant to undermine the existence of pure possibilities relative to created substances (which includes any pure possibilia grounded in the divine essence).

Further, Nelson's reconstruction of this passage relies on Arnauld's denying 6. I agree with Nelson that Arnauld would reject 6, although on my interpretation Arnauld would not claim of God that God could not actively render something possible. However, my main concern with this reading of the passage is that there is no indication in Arnauld's argument that he relies on this consideration in denying 6.

That Arnauld is using divine simplicity and his account of God's *modus operandi* to argue against pure possibilities whether they are in God's understanding or anywhere else independent of God's volition, and not pure possibilia, can be seen in two passages earlier in the correspondence:

It seems to me, after that one must still ask (and this is the source of my difficulty) if the connexion between these objects (namely, Adam on the one hand, and everything that was to happen to him and his posterity on the other) exists as such of itself, independently of all the free decrees of God, or if it was dependent on them . . . Without [its being independent of them] I do not see how what you say can be true, "that the individual concept of each person contains once for all everything that will ever happen to him." (G.II.28–29/M.27–28)

In this passage, Arnauld directly addresses whether connections between objects are independent of the decrees of God or depend on the decrees of God. Arnauld is attributing to Leibniz the claim that there are, independent of the free decrees of God, connections between the created Adam and all of the predicates that can truly be attributed to Adam. This is relevant to pure possibility because all the connections between Adam and other predicates are pure possibilities, that is, they are possibilities about Adam that are true independent of the will of God. Arnauld continues:

³² Nelson (1993: 687).

It seems too that you insist on this last proviso; for I think you suppose that in the light of our understanding *possible things are possible prior to all the free decrees of God*: from which it follows that *what is contained in the concept of possible things is contained there independently of all the free decrees of God*. Now you suppose "that God found among possible things a possible Adam accompanied by particular individual circumstances, and that he possesses amongst other predicates also that of having in the course of time a particular posterity." Thus in your opinion there exists an intrinsic connexion, so to speak, independent of all God's free decrees, between this possible Adam and all the individuals comprising the whole of his posterity, and not only the people but in general everything that was to happen to them. Now this, Sir, is frankly, what I cannot understand. For it seems to me that according to you the possible Adam (whom God chose in preference to other possible Adams) was linked to all the selfsame posterity as the created Adam; since he is, in your opinion, so far as I can judge, merely the same Adam considered now as possible and now as created. (emphasis mine, G.II.29/M.28)

Arnauld explicitly attributes to Leibniz the view that possible things are possible prior to the free decrees of God. Arnauld then bases his criticism on this part of Leibniz's view. Whether possible things are possible prior to the free decrees of God is a question about pure possibilities. It is not a concern about what types of things these possible things are, but whether these possibilities are possible independent of the free decrees of God. The thesis at issue in this part of the correspondence is whether pure possibilities exist (states of affairs that are possible or impossible prior to the free decrees/will of God), not any direct concern with pure possibilia (beings that exist but lack actuality).

7.4 Arnauld's Positive Account

After denying the existence of any pure possibilities, at least with respect to created substances, and thereby any account of possibility in virtue of them, Arnauld offers a positive account of possibility:

But one can conceive of possibilities in the natures which he [God] has created, because since they are not being itself by essence [*parce que n'étant pas l'être même par essence*], they are necessarily made up of potency and act, which allows me to conceive of them as possible, as I can also do with an infinite number of modifications which are in the power of these created natures, such as the thoughts of intelligent natures and the forms of extended substance. (G.II.32/M.31–32/LR.98)

Later, Arnauld adds:

I find in myself the concept of an individual nature, since I find there the concept of myself. I have only to consult it, therefore, to know what is

contained in this individual concept, as I have only to consult the specific concept of a sphere to know what is contained in it. Now, I have no other rule for that than to consider what is such that a sphere would no longer be a sphere if it did not possess it, such as having all the points of its circumference equidistant from the centre, or what would not cause the sphere to cease to be a sphere, such as being only one foot in diameter whereas another sphere might be ten or a hundred feet. On that evidence I decide that the former is contained in the specific concept of a sphere and that the latter, the question of having a larger or smaller diameter, is not contained therein. I apply the same rule to the individual concept of myself. I am assured that as long as I think, I am myself. For I cannot think that I do not exist, nor exist so that I be not myself. But I can think that I shall or shall not take a particular journey, while remaining very much assured that neither one nor the other will prevent my being myself. So I remain very much assured that neither one nor the other is included in the individual concept of myself. (G.II.32–33/M.32–33)

In these passages, Arnauld directly invokes his essence-based modal actualism in his account of possibility.³³ Before considering these passages, however, it will be beneficial to develop Arnauld's account of substances and essential attributes. In fact, I would like to begin with a suggestion as to how to understand Arnauld's account, then consider passages from *VFI* to support this suggestion before returning to the Leibniz–Arnauld correspondence. Central to my suggestion is that on Arnauld's account of substance and essence, substances are irreducible modal entities. As I argued in Section 7.2, when God creates a physical substance, God creates something that is not only essentially an extended thing, but just is its extension. Further, I suggest that we treat the essence, in this case being extended, as an irreducible aspect of the world. A body is not essentially extended because of any relation to any other bodies or to any merely possible bodies; it is extended intrinsically. The same is true of minds. When God creates a mind, God creates a thinking thing. A mind is essentially thinking, not in virtue of any external relation, but in virtue of its own being.

³³ Nelson suggests that Arnauld defends an actualist theory of possibility (1993): 682–683, and is introducing counterfactual possibility through the notion of a power. Those things that are possible for a substance are things that are not repugnant to the concept of said thing, (1993): 685. Nelson seems to treat Arnauld as holding that our conceptual faculties are what constitute what is possible for a thing, whereas I hold that it is entirely mind-independent (and inheres in the substance) and our conceptual faculties are such that we can conceive of many of the possible modes of substance, but not all.

Each particular substance, simply insofar as it exists, has a modal profile. The modal profile of a substance is all of the properties that a substance has and how that substance has them (through this discussion of substances and modal profiles I use 'properties' again in a loose and nontechnical sense). There are four modal notions that are relevant to the modal profile of a created thing: essentially, necessarily, possibly, and contingently. Thinking and extension are the only essential properties. These are properties that constitute the essence of something (which are in fact nothing but the thing itself). There are also properties that a substance has necessarily, but which are not considered the essence of the thing. These are attributes that all substances of a certain type must have, but which are not properly considered the essential attribute. Arnauld often uses divisibility and mobility as examples of this type of mode. Extension is the only essential attribute of body, yet all bodies are divisible and have mobility.³⁴ All bodies are divisible, for example, because divisibility is regarded as depending on (and is a way of) being extended. Thus, for Arnauld, some properties that an object must have if it is to exist are not part of the essence, but merely necessary properties (these attributes are also only conceptually distinct from the substance itself).

The third aspect of a modal profile is those properties or modes that an object has possibly – its 'possible modes.' These are all the different ways that a substance could be. Intuitively, these are properties that depend on and imply, but do not follow from, an object's essence (though, as I argue below, their possibility does follow from the substance's essence). For example, every particular body could be round because being round is a way of being an extended thing, but something can be extended without being round.³⁵ Once again, treating the substance–mode distinction along the lines of a determinable–determinate distinction is informative. A body just is a determinable extension that can take on any number (likely infinite) of different determinate shapes, sizes, and so on. It is true of the actual determinable substance that there are a potentially infinite number of determinate ways that it can be. All of these determinate ways that a substance can be are what I am calling possible modes. What is central to this component of the modal profile of a substance is that these possibilities are grounded in and inhere in the substance itself. The possible modes a substance has are not ways that a substance can be because of the relation the substance has to other substances, because of our conceptual ability to understand the substance with different modes, or because of a substance-

³⁴ OA.4I.147/B.41/CG.61 and OA.4I.150/B.43–44/CG.64.

³⁵ OA.4I.147/B.41/CG.60–61.

independent ontological/logical fact. Instead, they are true of the substance itself because they inhere in the substance. What it is to be an extended thing, for Arnauld, just is to be a determinable extended thing with certain determinate intrinsic possibilities; to be an extended thing is to be a determinable entity capable of existing in any number of determinate ways. So, this account does not posit a new ontic category of 'merely possible modes' into Arnauld's ontology, thereby violating his dual dualisms. For Arnauld, all that God creates are substance (minds and bodies), and insofar as these substances are created or exist in determinate ways, they have modes. In addition to creating substances, God does not create 'possible modes.' Rather, these 'possible modes' are grounded in and inhere in the created substance and its essence.³⁶

Finally, in addition to essential, necessary, and possible properties, a substance also has certain properties contingently. Contingent modes of a substance are a proper subset of the possible modes of a substance – namely, those possible modes of a substance that it instantiates at any given time. There is an important distinction between those properties that a substance has essentially, necessarily, and possibly on the one hand, and those properties that a substance has contingently on the other. The properties that an object has essentially, necessarily, and possibly all inhere in and depend only on the essence of the substance. An extended body, in virtue of being an extended body, is essentially extended, necessarily divisible, and possibly square. What it is for God to create an extended body just is for God to create an entity with a certain modal profile relative to the properties it has essentially, necessarily, and possibly. So, one can reduce the modal properties of substances to that substance's essence. But, since an essence is a modal notion, the modal properties of a substance do not reduce to non-modal features of a substance (or to the non-modal properties of anything). In addition to those properties that follow from the essence of an individual substance, there are modes that a body has contingently. The contingent modes a body has do not follow from the

³⁶ On Arnauld's ontology, modes are contingent properties of substance. What I am calling 'possible modes' are not contingent properties of substance. If a substance has the possible mode 'being square,' such that it is an intrinsic feature of the substance that it could be square, then it is a necessary feature of the substance that it could be square. Indeed, it is my view that the totality of all of a substance's possible modes is an attribute of the substance (and thereby only conceptually distinct from the essence of the substance). Yet, it seems that calling these features of substances possible modes has at least two reasons in its favor. First, it is quite convenient to refer each particular mode that a substance could instantiate as opposed to the total set, and (more importantly) second, the 'possible modes' are all of the possible contingent modes that that substance could instantiate.

essence of the substance alone (qua contingent modes). The contingent modes of a substance depend on the actual contingent features of the world and the contingent facts of its particular creation. All of the contingent modes of a substance are a part of the essence of the substance qua possible mode, but not qua contingent mode. For example, God could have created a particular extended body as round and that mode would be contingent. From there, this extended body's shape would change on account of its causal interaction with other bodies. On the conception of a modal profile I am suggesting, an adequate idea of the substance would include all of its essential, necessary, and possible modes. An adequate idea (see the discussion in Chapter 3) is a complete conception of the thing in question.³⁷ Indeed, on the account I am defending, an adequate idea of the nature of extension is an idea of all of the substance's essential properties, necessary properties, and possible modes. The contingent modes are a proper subset of the possible modes – namely, those possible modes that that substance instantiates at any given time.³⁸

The account I have sketched above is one in which substances are irreducibly modal entities. The properties that a substance has essentially, necessarily, and possibly can be reduced to and are grounded in/inhere in the essence of the substance in question. The essence of a substance, either being a thinking thing or being an extended thing, is, for Arnauld at least, a modal notion. Substances are irreducibly modal because the modal properties of a substance cannot be reduced to non-modal properties of a substance. Arnauld never offers an explicit account like the one sketched above, yet he often suggests it. As I argue below, this is the view he offers in his correspondence with Leibniz. Arnauld also suggests a view of this type in many passages in *VFI*.

In *VFI*, Arnauld claims in reflecting on our clear and distinct idea of a substance that we are “*seeing the properties of things in their ideas* [*voir les propriétés des choses dans leurs idées*].” He continues: “seeing, in the idea of extension that it must be [*doit être*] divisible and mobile; seeing in the idea of mind, that it must be [*doit être*] a substance really distinct from extended substance.”³⁹ According to Arnauld, we can ‘see’ the properties of the

³⁷ Here I mean Arnauld's use in *VFI*, not the *Fourth Objections*.

³⁸ This component of the modal profile allows Arnauld to combine actualism with the claim that there are possible states of affairs in which the actual thing exists with different properties than their current contingent properties. A body, for example, is an actual determinable entity, and while it actually exists with a certain set of contingent properties, it is possible that it exists with a different set of determinate properties.

³⁹ OA.38.209/K.30.

substance. For example, one can conceive or ‘see’ in the idea of a body that it *must be* divisible and mobile. And given Arnauld’s endorsement of CIP, we can truly predicate these properties of an extended body. Indeed, Arnauld claims that these are properties of the things in question [voir les propriétés *des choses*] and not simply that we can understand the substance counterfactually to have these features. While Arnauld does not directly address possible modes in this passage, the same account would apply to these types of modes. Just as it is contained in the idea of a body that it must be divisible, it is contained in the idea of a body that it could be square. In fact, Arnauld introduces a modal notion into the clear and distinct idea of a body by claiming of a body that it must be divisible. Arnauld could have claimed that it is contained in the clear and distinct idea of a body that it is divisible and mobile, but instead claimed of a body that it must be divisible and mobile. Similarly, I want to suggest, it is grounded in the essence of a particular mind that it has the power to think an infinite number of different thoughts and it follows from the idea of a body that it could have an infinite number of different shapes and these different ways of being are possible modes.

Arnauld suggests this in other passages from *VFI* as well. In chapter XXIV, for example, he claims:

Our mind cannot comprehend *all the shapes* of which matter is capable. But that does not prevent it from knowing matter by a clear idea. Therefore, we do not need to comprehend *all the modifications* of which an object is *capable* in order to know it through a clear idea. (OA.38.326/K.147, emphasis mine)

The context of this passage is Arnauld defending the claim that clear and distinct ideas need not be complete – for example, that one need not know every property of a body to have a clear and distinct idea of a body. Arnauld claims that we need not know all the shapes of which matter is capable to know it by a clear idea, suggesting that we know at least some of the shapes of which matter is capable. Arnauld at least suggests that the different modifications of which an object is capable are intrinsic properties of the substance in this passage since they are a capacity of the substance. And finally, when Arnauld describes modes in the *Logic*, Arnauld is clear that we can clearly and distinctly conceive of a substance without conceiving any particular mode, thus implying that we can clearly and distinctly conceive the substance with possible modes. It is true of each actual substance that there are an infinite number of modifications it could have – for example, making a certain judgment, thinking a certain thought, or having a certain shape.

Throughout these letters, Arnauld is offering an interesting alternative to Leibniz's possible-worlds approach to modality. Arnauld claims that one can "conceive of possibilities in the natures that he [God] has created" and that an "infinite number of modifications" are "in the power of these created natures." These substances are "made up of potency and act [*elles sont nécessairement composées de puissance et d'acte.*]"⁴⁰ Arnauld is claiming that the substance itself grounds all of the possible modes it could instantiate. As argued in Section 7.2, Arnauld identifies a substance's nature with its complete concept. Arnauld claims that a substance's possible properties can be conceived of in the nature or complete concept of the substance, and implies that it is an intrinsic feature of the substance as this potency composes or makes up (*composer*) the substance. Here Arnauld claims that the possible modes that substances do not instantiate, but could instantiate, are grounded in the fundamentally modal nature of the entity in question. Consider a particular soul and a particular thought that has never occurred (perhaps with some complicated mathematical content). In Arnauld's terminology, this is a possible mode of the mind that is never instantiated. This possible mode is not a pure possibilium, nor is it a thing. It is possibly precisely because that particular substance could be that way.

Arnauld develops this discussion and applies it directly to his essence. He claims that he finds within himself the concept of himself. Earlier, Arnauld equated a particular individual concept with a particular individual nature. When Arnauld asserts that he can find his concept within himself, he is claiming he knows his essence. Arnauld claims that he is assured that, so long as he thinks, he will be himself, and other features, like taking a particular journey, are accidental to him. This amounts to a sophisticated essence-based modal actualism. According to Arnauld, when God creates the world, God creates substance. These substances are modal entities since they are entities with irreducibly modal features. Arnauld refuses to reduce modality to anything more primitive. God creates 'Arnauld' who is essentially a thinking thing. It also follows from Arnauld's essence that he is 'possibly celibate' and 'possibly married.' Arnauld is also contingently celibate. Arnauld is an actualist because all that exists are actual things. He is a modal actualist because the actual world is composed of fundamentally modal things – namely, created substances. And finally, he is an *essence-based* modal actualist, because essences are what resist reduction and ground *de re* counterfactuals.

⁴⁰ G.II.32/M.31–32/LR.98.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Arnauld defends a sophisticated essence-based modal actualism. Arnauld's view is most clearly on display in the correspondence with Leibniz. Not only is this reading of Arnauld preferable because it best fits the text, it is also a view that could be developed into a plausible view in its own right. Another aspect of Arnauld's modal theory is his account of the relation between God and possibility. I examine this theory in the final two chapters of the book. In those chapters, I briefly return to Arnauld's actualism and make one further clarification about the view that will best be addressed in the context of God and modality. In brief, I argue that Arnauld holds that a philosophically interesting account of modality must be grounded in created essences. Arnauld does not rule out the possibility that there is some connection between God and modality (in principle) beyond our finite ability to understand and know. However, as Arnauld says to Leibniz: "I find it hard to believe that good philosophy consists in seeking out the way God knows things . . . Divine understanding is the rule of the truth of things, as they are in themselves, but so long as we are in this life it does not seem to me that it can be the rule as far as we are concerned."⁴¹ All told, Arnauld's actualism, when divorced from its theological motivations and with several important augmentations, could serve as a foundation for a plausible view that deserves to be considered in contemporary debates concerning modal metaphysics.

⁴¹ G.II.31/M.30.

PART II

God

Preface to Part II

Conceptions of God

Arnauld was primarily a theologian who engaged philosophical questions most often at the service of a theological goal. It is thus not surprising that some of his most sophisticated and interesting philosophical work concerns questions related to his conception of God. In the next four chapters, I defend a novel interpretation of Arnauld's conception of God that I call a 'partially hidden' conception of God.¹ Arnauld's account of God is a subtle amalgam of two other conceptions of God: the Cartesian account of God on the one hand and the Jansenist *Dieu caché* (or hidden God) account on the other. Arnauld's account of God is principled, grounded in his method, and consistent from text to text. While it may seem that Arnauld makes use of different conceptions of God in different texts to suit his dialectical purposes, I think this appearance is a consequence of failing to appreciate the novelty and subtlety of his view.

In order to defend this interpretation of Arnauld, I begin, in Chapter 8, with Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God. I show that Arnauld grounds our reason-based knowledge of God in an innate idea of God, but brings in considerations reminiscent of the *Dieu caché* to limit the scope of knowledge from this innate idea. In Chapter 9, I consider Arnauld's account of God's nature. I focus on divine simplicity and whether God is a rational being. Finally, in Chapters 10 and 11, I consider the vexed question of whether Arnauld held the doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths. I argue that, in his earliest texts, he denies the creation doctrine, but ultimately endorses what I call an 'epistemic' version of the creation doctrine.

Before getting to the core of this part of the book, in this brief preface, I offer a short overview of two central conceptions of God prominent in seventeenth-century Europe: the voluntarist conception of God and the rationalist conception of God. These are general categories within which

¹ Building on Stencil (2019a and 2019b).

there is much variation from thinker to thinker. I shall focus on one exemplar of each especially relevant to Arnauld: Descartes and Malebranche. Developing these two general accounts is important for several reasons. First, Arnauld's own views on God are influenced by Descartes's voluntarist position and developed (or at least revealed) in dialogue with Malebranche and Leibniz – both of whom hold versions of the rationalist account. Second, it is central to understanding the debate between the two most developed and prominent interpretations of Arnauld's God: Moreau's *integral* conception (which situates Arnauld as broadly in the rationalist camp) and Nadler's *voluntarist* reading. Finally, it helps situate the novelty of the account of God that I argue Arnauld holds – namely, the *partially hidden* conception of God – a conception which fits neither in the rationalist nor the voluntarist camp. I conclude this preface by offering a brief overview of this Arnauldian account of God.

The Voluntarist Conception of God

The first conception of God that merits consideration is the *voluntarist* conception of God.² While this conception of God was not widely held, Descartes defended it, and his endorsement of it was well-known, influential, and in many ways set the terms of the debate among many seventeenth-century French thinkers.³ While my focus here is on the seventeenth century, it is noteworthy that numerous medieval thinkers held positions that have been associated, one way or another, with voluntarism, though often less robust versions than Descartes's; I address some of these in Chapter 10. For now, I focus specifically on Descartes's version of voluntarism. This version of the voluntarist conception of God can be understood by focusing on the following three components:

- (i) *“Strong” simplicity*: God is an absolutely simple being such that there are no distinctions in God (though there may be conceptual distinctions in how we think about God).
- (ii) *Beyond rationality*: God is a being that transcends rationality.
- (iii) *Free creation of eternal truths (the creation doctrine)*: Eternal truths, truths like mathematical truths and truths about essences, are freely created by God such that God could have created them otherwise.

² This preface follows much of Nadler (2011b and 2011c).

³ For other Cartesians who may have held the creation doctrine, see Schmaltz (2002); Cook (2005); and Easton (2009).

Descartes's account of God is not as clearly on display in the main text of the *Meditations* but is prominent in his *Replies* to the *Objections* to the *Meditations* and especially in his correspondence.

Central to Descartes's voluntarist conception of God is what I shall call a *strong* account of divine simplicity, according to which there are no distinctions of any kind in God, though there are conceptual distinctions in how we conceive of God.⁴ In Chapter 9, I argue that, although he does not address it much, Arnauld more or less adopts Descartes's account of conceptual distinction and that this type of distinction is central to Arnauld's account of God. As such, Descartes's theory of distinction, especially conceptual distinction – along with his account of divine simplicity – warrants investigation here.

In the *Principles*, Descartes differentiates between real distinction, modal distinction, and conceptual distinction (i.e., distinction of reason, *distinctio rationis*). He seems to take these three types of distinction as exhaustive and exclusive.⁵ In Chapter 3, I discussed both real and modal distinctions. It is clear that neither of these types of distinction can apply to God. God is a single substance so there can be no real distinctions in God.⁶ Since God has no modes, there are no modal distinctions in God.

Whether there are conceptual distinctions in God for Descartes is a more difficult question. Scholars have traditionally held that Descartes's account of divine simplicity denies that any of these distinctions apply to God and God's different attributes. Étienne Gilson, for example, claims in his *La liberté chez Descartes et la théologie* (first published in 1913), that Descartes "refuses to admit the slightest distinction, even of reason among the divine attributes."⁷ Nadler attributes to Descartes the view that "in an absolutely simple and omnipotent being such as God, will and understanding are one and the same thing, distinguishable *ne quidem ratione* [not even by reason]."⁸

Recently, however, several scholars have attributed a more moderate version of divine simplicity to Descartes, according to which Descartes

⁴ Many scholars argue that Descartes uses divine simplicity as a premise in his argument for the creation doctrine, e.g., Frankfurt (1977: 40); Kaufman (2003a: 554); Walski (2003: 24); and Nadler (2011b: 532). My own view is that both divine simplicity and the creation doctrine are meant to follow from God's ontological independence.

⁵ AT.VIIIa.28/CSM.I.213. Nolan (1997a) argues that these distinctions are exclusive and exhaustive. For a different reading, see Hoffman (2002). See also Ariew (2011: ch. 1).

⁶ Cf., Kaufman (2003a: 561–563); and Pessin (2010: 86). ⁷ Gilson (2013: 74).

⁸ Nadler (2011c: 172). Similar interpretations of Descartes's account of divine simplicity are found in Frankfurt (1977); Gouhier (1978); Alanen (1985); Grene (1998); Nelson (1993); and Nadler (2008a).

allows conceptual distinctions between God and God's attributes and between God's different attributes.⁹ I find this interpretation compelling. To see why, we need to investigate more thoroughly Descartes's conceptual distinction.

Descartes describes a conceptual distinction as follows:

A *conceptual distinction* [*distinctio rationis*] is a distinction between a substance and some attribute of that substance without which the substance is unintelligible; alternatively, it is a distinction between two such attributes of a single substance. (AT.VIIIa.30/CSM.I.214)

Descartes offers two types of conceptual distinctions: those that obtain between a substance and some attribute of a substance, and those that obtain between two attributes of the same substance. Attributes, for Descartes – as for Arnauld – are necessary features of the substance in question – for example, having a shape.¹⁰ Directly after this passage, Descartes continues to offer a “diagnostic test” for discovering each type of conceptual distinction:¹¹

Such a distinction is recognized by our inability to form a clear and distinct idea of the substance if we exclude from it the attribute in question, or, alternatively, by our inability to perceive clearly the idea of one of the two attributes if we separate it from the other. For example, since a substance cannot cease to endure without also ceasing to be, the distinction between the substance and its duration is merely a conceptual one. (AT.VIIIa.30/CSM.I.214)

A conceptual distinction between a substance and an attribute of that substance can be recognized by our inability to form a clear and distinct idea of the substance while excluding that attribute. As Dugald Murdoch has shown, Descartes uses ‘exclusion’ and the related ‘abstraction’ to refer to specific mental operations. Abstraction, in Murdoch's words, occurs when “we focus our attention on *one* idea which is a component of a richer, more complex idea to which it is connected, and ignore the other components of the richer idea.” Exclusion, on the other hand, occurs when we “attend to *both* ideas together and exclude one from the other, or deny one of the other.”¹² So, Descartes claims that a conceptual distinction obtains between a substance and an attribute of that substance if we cannot

⁹ Kaufman (2003a) and Pessin (2010). There are earlier proponents of such a reading as well, e.g., Laporte (1938: 354).

¹⁰ AT.VIIIa.29/CSM.I.213–214.

¹¹ I borrow this terminology from Nelson (2013: 193).

¹² Murdoch (1993: 38–39).

form a clear and distinct idea of the substance while excluding the attribute from it.

With respect to two conceptually distinct attributes, Descartes tells us this kind of conceptual distinction can be recognized if we cannot form a clear idea of one of the attributes separated from the other. Descartes's use of 'separate' parallels his use of 'exclude.' Take, for example, a book's shape and its divisibility.¹³ One cannot, Descartes claims, have a clear idea of the book's shape separate from the idea of its divisibility. One can think of divisibility while not thinking of shape (and vice versa), but not actively separate them, and so there is a conceptual distinction between a book's shape and its divisibility.

With the theory of distinction in hand, we can proceed to consider Descartes's account of divine simplicity. In a key letter to Marin Mersenne, Descartes notes:

In God willing and knowing are a single thing in such a way that by the very fact of willing something he knows it and it is only for this reason that such a thing is true. (AT.I.149–150/CSMK.III.24)

In a subsequent letter, he adds:

For it is in God, one single thing to will, to understand and to create, without one preceding the other, <not even by reason> [*ne quidem ratione*]. (AT.I.153/CSMK.III.25–26)¹⁴

In a letter to Mesland, he claims:

Nor should we conceive any precedence or priority between his intellect and his will; for the idea which we have of God teaches us that there is in him only a single activity, entirely simple and entirely pure. (AT.IV.119/CSMK.III.235)

There are a number of reasons to interpret Descartes as allowing conceptual distinctions between God and God's attributes as well as between God's attributes.¹⁵ Descartes never claims that there are no conceptual

¹³ Following Nelson (2013), we can distinguish between two readings of conceptual distinctions. The *ontological interpretation* holds that if X and Y are conceptually distinct, then there is an ontological distinction between X and Y, and the *identity interpretation* holds that conceptual distinctions obtain between identicals. I shall here follow the latter and take Nolan's suggestion as a baseline – namely, that “we generate a rational distinction in our thought by taking a substance which is singular, and not diverse in itself, and regarding it diverse ways,” and “we regard a substance in various ways by abstracting from our clear and distinct idea of it,” Nolan (1997a: 136). See also Secada (2000: 198); and Brown (2011).

¹⁴ Translation amended. For all CSMK translations in this preface, < > indicate passages in Latin in letters otherwise in French.

¹⁵ See Kaufman (2003a).

distinctions in God. The closest he comes seems to be in the middle passage above, where he denies that any act of God *precedes* any other even conceptually. Indeed, this passage is often cited by those who deny Descartes allows conceptual distinctions in God, including Gilson.¹⁶ In addition to never claiming that there are no conceptual distinctions in God, Dan Kaufman notes several other reasons in favor of interpreting Descartes as allowing them, including that he often predicates a plurality of attributes to God and raises the issue of inseparability of God's attributes, which seem to suggest that there is some distinction between them.¹⁷

According to strong simplicity, then, there are no real or modal distinctions in God, though there are conceptual distinctions among God's attributes (as well as between God and God's attributes). The main feature of strong simplicity and what Descartes denies is that there are conceptual priorities among God's attributes. That is, when conceiving of God's action, Descartes denies that we should conceive any priority of God's understanding to willing such that God first understands and then subsequently wills (or vice versa). So, in conceiving of God's action we ought not to consider God as willing things based on options provided by the understanding. Indeed, Descartes's account of conceptual distinction provides a reason for denying such a priority. One can distinguish God's will and understanding through some type of abstraction, but to conceive of God as first understanding and then willing is to exclude the will from the understanding and to conceive of God's understanding operating exclusive of the will.

This nicely leads to the second component of Descartes's voluntarist conception of God, the *beyond rationality* component. Descartes offers an insight into this aspect of his view in a key passage from the *Sixth Replies*:

As for freedom of the will, the way in which it exists in God is quite different from the way in which it exists in us. It is self-contradictory to suppose that the will of God was not indifferent from eternity with respect to everything which has happened or will ever happen; for it is impossible to imagine that anything is thought of in the divine intellect as good or true, or worthy of belief or action or omission, prior to the decision of the divine will to make it so. I am not speaking here of temporal priority: I mean that there is not even any priority of order, or nature, or of 'rationally determined reason' as they call it, such that God's idea of the good impelled him to choose one thing rather than another. (AT.VII.431–432/CSM.II.291)

While there is some debate about the full extent of this lack of rationality in God, Descartes seems to hold that God is a truly unfettered and

¹⁶ Gilson (2013: 74).

¹⁷ Kaufman (2003a: 572–573).

arbitrary willer. Here Descartes makes explicit not only that various eternal truths are true because God willed them, but also that God's will is indifferent to anything that has happened or will ever happen. Claims like these at least suggest that Descartes's God is beyond rationality altogether. One might wonder about the scope of this doctrine; perhaps there are things outside the scope of things that have or will "happen," but certainly it seems that Descartes holds that God is, to a large degree at least, beyond rationality. This leads to the final component of the voluntarist God: *free creation of the eternal truths*.

The free creation of the eternal truths, or the creation doctrine, is the view that God freely creates the eternal truths – truths like mathematical truths or truths about essences. He introduces this view in an early series of letters to Mersenne:

The mathematical truths which you call eternal have been laid down by God and depend on him entirely no less than the rest of his creatures. Indeed to say these truths are independent of God is to talk of him as if he were Jupiter or Saturn and to subject him [*l'assujettir*] to the Styx and the Fates. Please do not hesitate to assert and proclaim everywhere that it is God who has laid down these laws in nature just as a king lays down laws in his kingdom. (AT.I.145/CSMK.III.23)

Descartes claims that the eternal truths depend on God no less than other creatures. In subsequent letters he adds:

As for the eternal truths, I say once more that <they are true or possible only because God knows them as true or possible, not however contrarily known to God as true as if they were true independently of him.> (AT.I.149/CSMK.III.24).¹⁸

And:

You ask me <by what kind of causality God established the eternal truths>. I reply: <by the same kind of causality> as he created all things, that is to say, as their <efficient and total cause.> For it is certain that he is the author of the essence of created things no less than their existence; and the essence is nothing other than the eternal truths. (AT.I.151–152/CSMK.25)

In these passages, Descartes claims that the eternal truths are not known by God as if they are true independent of God, that God established the eternal truths as an efficient cause, and that God is their efficient cause.

¹⁸ Translation amended. Cf., DPW.260.

In a letter to Mesland, Descartes seems to make the position even more explicit:

You raise the difficulty of conceiving how God could have chosen, freely and indifferently, that it should not be true that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or in general that it should not be true that contradictories cannot be together. It is easy to dispel this difficulty by considering that the power of God cannot have any limits, and that our mind is finite and so created as to be able to conceive as possible the things which God has wished to be in fact possible, but not be able to conceive as possible those things which God could have made possible, but which he has nevertheless wished to make impossible. The first consideration shows us that God cannot have been determined to make it true that contradictories cannot be true together, and therefore that he could have done the opposite. The second consideration assures us that even if this be true, we should not try to comprehend it, since our nature is incapable of doing so. (AT.IV.118–119/CSMK.III.235/DPW.291)¹⁹

In this passage, Descartes seems to explicitly state that God “could have done the opposite” with respect to making contradictories true.²⁰ Descartes’s account of the free creation of the eternal truths has received a vast amount of scholarly attention.²¹ I address some of this scholarship in Chapter 10. From these passages above, however, it certainly at least seems as if Descartes intends to defend the claims that: (i) God freely creates the eternal truths such that God could have created them otherwise; (ii) God is the efficient cause of the eternal truths; and (iii) the eternal truths depend on God in much the same way as created beings depend on God.

The Rationalist Conception of God

The dominant conception of God in seventeenth-century European philosophy is the rationalist conception of God. This conception of God is exemplified by Arnauld’s interlocutors: Leibniz and Malebranche. The driving force behind this conception of God is that God is a rational agent in much the same way that finite persons are rational agents. To be sure, on this view God is an infinite being and finite persons are finite beings, and there is a vast difference between God and finite creatures. But

¹⁹ Here I follow the DPW translation for the first sentence of this passage.

²⁰ See Bennett (1994) and Nelson (2020) for a different reading.

²¹ See Frankfurt (1977) and Curley (1984) for seminal treatments. See also Alanen (1985); Bennett (1994); Nelson and Cunning (1999); Kaufman (2002, 2003a); Walski (2003); Bouchilloux (2006); and Arbib (2019).

fundamentally, both God and creatures have (in some legitimate sense) distinct faculties of understanding and will, such that what one wills is informed by what one understands. I shall focus on Malebranche's conception as he is Arnauld's main interlocutor in the texts focused on in part II. Malebranche's rationalist conception of God can be understood as involving the following three main components.

- (i) "*Weak*" simplicity: God is an absolutely simple being, but God's simplicity is consistent with God having distinct faculties that, in some sense, perform different functions in God's action and creation.
- (ii) *Practical rationality*: God is a being that acts with practical rationality.
- (iii) *Conceptualism about eternal truths*: Eternal truths, truths like mathematical truths and truths about essences, are grounded in God, but logically independent of God's free volition.

It is important to note that there are many different conceptions of God that would best be categorized as rationalist and many of them do not exemplify all three of the above.

Let's begin with Malebranche's endorsement of a weak version of divine simplicity. Malebranche claims, in the *Elucidations* to his *Search*:

It is a property of an infinite being to be simultaneously one and all things, compounded, as it were, of an infinity of perfections, and to be so simple that each perfection it possesses contains all other perfections without any real distinction. (OC.III.148/LO.624)

Similarly, in his *Réponse de l'auteur de la Recherche de la Vérité au livre de Monsieur Arnauld Des Vraies et Fausses Idées*, Malebranche notes:

It is a property of the infinite, incomprehensible to the human mind, to be at the same time one and all things, composed, so to speak, of an infinity of perfections, and simple in such a way that each perfection that it possesses contains all the others without any real distinction. For as each perfection is infinite, it constitutes the whole divine Being. (OC.VI.52n)²²

In these two mentions, Malebranche declares that God is simple and explicitly denies real distinctions between God's different perfections. He does not elaborate on exactly in what ways God's various attributes or perfections are distinct. Malebranche's account of God's simplicity seems to allow a type of distinction between God's attributes stronger

²² Translation: Adams (2013: 77–78). Cf., OC.I.439/LO.231; and OC.XII.135/JS.137–138.

than a conceptual distinction, but not so strong as a real distinction. Both Jean Laporte and Moreau suggest, I think plausibly, that Malebranche holds that the divine attributes or perfections are distinct in a way much like Duns Scotus's formal distinction.²³ Scotus holds that God's simplicity is consistent with there being distinctions in God over and above conceptual distinctions. Scotus tells us that:

There is therefore there [among the divine attributes] a distinction that is in every way prior to the [operation of] the intellect, and it is this: that wisdom actually exists naturally, and goodness actually exists naturally, and actual wisdom is formally not actual goodness. [Vatican.6.192]²⁴

For Scotus, then, God's different attributes are distinct – in his terminology, formally distinct – prior to any operation of our finite intellect.

Malebranche's mention of the various different perfections being composed in God [*composé, pour ainsi dire, d'une infinité de perfections*"] suggests something like this account of formal distinction. One key aspect of this suggestion is that Malebranche's God's different attributes are perfections that are ontologically non-identical, yet only capable of being possessed together. Whether the above suggestion is correct, Malebranche unequivocally treats divine simplicity as being consistent with some sort of distinction between God's various perfections and a God who acts for reasons (thereby a God whose understanding and volition play different roles in creation).

The fact that Malebranche endorsed a weak account of divine simplicity is even clearer when we turn to the next component of his conception of God: *practical rationality*. Malebranche's God is a practical reasoner. God's acting for reasons is in fact central to Malebranche's theodicy – the main instigator of the Malebranche–Arnauld debate. Central to Malebranche's account of God and theodicy in the *Traité* is the claim that: "God, loving himself by the necessity of his being, and wanting to procure for himself an infinite glory . . . consults his wisdom concerning the accomplishment of his desires."²⁵ Earlier in the *Traité*, Malebranche claims that, prior to creation, God finds "an infinity of possible worlds" in God's wisdom and then "determines himself to create that world which could have been produced and preserved by the simplest laws."²⁶ God could have created a "more perfect" world, Malebranche tells us, but only by sacrificing simple

²³ Laporte (1938: 344–345) and Moreau (1999: 103). See also Bardout (1999: ch. V) for a discussion of Malebranche's God and God's different attributes; and Moreau (1999: 225–232).

²⁴ Translation: Cross (1999: 43; see also chs. 2 and 3 in their entirety). ²⁵ OC.V.38/R.120.

²⁶ OC.V.28/R.116. See also OC.XI.19.

laws, which for a variety of reasons, God would not do.²⁷ Malebranche's theodicy relies on a conception of God according to which God acts for reasons and has distinct attributes that, in some sense at least, perform different functions in creation.

Malebranche confirms that God has practical reasons in the *Réflexions sur la promotion physique*, his last major work before his death. In that work, Malebranche explicitly claims that: "God can do nothing without a motive, a motive drawn from Himself, for to will is only to consent to a motive."²⁸ Further, Malebranche's God understands things that God does not will, and wills some things (in some sense of will at least) that do not obtain – for example, that "all men are saved," and these different attributes or perfections seem to have different properties, or at least we can make different true predications about them. Malebranche explicitly notes that these attributes can in some sense be at odds with each other.²⁹ These considerations suggest some sort of distinction between these attributes stronger than a conceptual distinction.

Not only does God have reasons for Malebranche, we as finite beings are well positioned to know what some of these reasons are. As he tells us in the *Traité*:

If I were not persuaded that all men are reasonable only because they are enlightened by eternal wisdom, I would be, no doubt, quite presumptuous to speak of the plans of God, and to want to reveal some of his ways in the production of his work. But since it is certain that the eternal Word is the universal reason of minds, and that by the light which it spreads ceaseless in us we can all have some commerce with God, one should find nothing to object to in the fact that I consult that light. (OC.V.24–25/R.114)

This passage indicates a central aspect of Malebranche's *Traité* that Arnauld finds intolerable. Malebranche's God acts for reasons and some of these reasons are within the epistemic scope of created beings through reason.

Malebranche also explicitly rejects Descartes's creation doctrine and holds a *conceptualism* about eternal truths. In his *Search*, for example, he engages with Descartes's claims:

Since most men do not distinctly know that only Eternal Wisdom enlightens them, and that intelligible ideas that are their mind's immediate object

²⁷ OC.V.29–30/R.117. See also Rutherford (2000).

²⁸ OC.XVI.133. Translation: Lennon (2011: 175).

²⁹ OC.V.180: "The wisdom of God then renders God impotent in the sense that it does not permit God to will certain things nor act in certain ways."

are not created, they imagine that eternal laws and immutable truths are established as such by a free volition of God; and this is what led Descartes to say that God could have made twice four not equal eight, or the three angles of a triangle not equal two right angles, “because,” he says, “there is no order, no law, no ground [*raison*] of goodness and truth that does not depend on God.” And because it is He “who as sovereign legislator has ordained and established the eternal truths.” (OC.III.85–86/LO.587)

He continues:

This learned man did not notice that there was an order, a law, a sovereign reason that God necessarily loves, which is coeternal with Him and according to which He necessarily acts, given that He wills to act. For God is indifferent in what He does external to Himself, but He is not indifferent, although perfectly free, in the way in which He does it; He always acts in the wisest and most perfect way possible. He always follows the immutable and necessary order. Thus, God is capable of not making minds or bodies; but if He creates these two kinds of beings, He must create them by the simplest means and arrange them in a perfect order. For example, He can join minds to bodies, but I maintain that He cannot subject the former to the latter, unless, as a result of the order He always follows, the sin committed by minds should oblige Him to do so, as I have already explained in the seventh article and in the first Elucidation near the end. (OC.III.86/LO.587)

According to Malebranche’s conceptualism about the eternal truths, eternal truths are coeternal with God and, while God acts freely in creation, God could not have made “twice four not equal eight.” There is an “immutable order” that contains some truths and guidance for God’s will.³⁰

Interpretations of Arnauld

With the voluntarist and rationalist conceptions of God in hand, we can now consider Arnauld’s conception of God. The two most prominent interpretations are the *integral* interpretation defended by Moreau and the *voluntarist* interpretation defended by Nadler. Of special note here is that Moreau’s integral interpretation treats Arnauld as broadly speaking in the rationalist camp (albeit a quite unique type of rationalist account and with an important caveat noted below) whereas Nadler’s account puts Arnauld right in line with Descartes’s voluntarism.

³⁰ For more on the immutable order, see Walsh and Stencil (2016).

Moreau, who offers his account primarily in *Deux cartésiens*, interprets Arnauld as holding the integral conception of God.³¹ According to this account of God, Arnauld holds an account of divine simplicity that precludes conceiving of any conceptual priorities (*hiérarchisations*) between God's attributes but allows conceptual distinctions among them. All of God's attributes "functionally interpenetrate," such that it is perfectly appropriate to say that God's will wills and knows and that God's understanding knows and wills.³² On this view, "the action of God is reasonable and reasoned," and God is a rational agent.³³ God's will acts by reasons internal to the will itself, but these reasons are obscured by our finite perspective. Moreau suggests that the central difference between Malebranche's account and Arnauld's account of God's reason is not whether God has reasons but whether we, as finite beings, have access to these reasons. I have noted that Moreau's account of Arnauld's God puts Arnauld in the rationalist camp. One caveat here is that Moreau reads Arnauld as endorsing the creation doctrine. That said, Moreau's interpretation of Arnauld on the creation doctrine is such that the creation doctrine does not entail that God could have done otherwise. On Moreau's reading, the creation doctrine is not reflective of God's 'arbitrary' will, but God's freedom consists in a conjunction of the indifference and necessity in God, such that God is still acting reasonably.³⁴

Nadler interprets Arnauld as holding a voluntarist conception of God.³⁵ Unlike with Moreau's interpretation, Nadler's Arnauld not only denies that finite beings have access to God's reasons but also that God has reasons. Arnauld's God, in Nadler's words "transcends practical rational agency altogether" and "is a deity who does not act for reasons at all."³⁶ According to this voluntarist conception of God, Arnauld thinks it mistaken "to distinguish wisdom from will in God – even by a 'distinction of reason,' grounded not in reality but in the way things are conceived – and have wisdom guide will by providing compelling reasons for its choices."³⁷

³¹ Moreau (1999: 280). ³² See Moreau (1999: 280–286); and Moreau (2000: 102–104, 107).

³³ Moreau (1999: 295). See also Nadler (2008a: 534 and 538); and Schmaltz (2017: 156–159).

³⁴ See especially Moreau (1999: 295); and Nadler (2008a: 533–535) for discussion. Something like this interpretation of Descartes can also be found in Laporte (1950) and Bouchilloux (2006).

³⁵ See especially Nadler (2008a). ³⁶ Nadler (2008a: 538) and Nadler (2011c: 174).

³⁷ Nadler (2011c: 172). See also Nadler's claim that for Descartes, "in an absolutely simple and omnipotent being such as God, will and understanding are one and the same thing, distinguishable *ne quidem ratione*" (2008a: 532). Ndiaye (1991: 335) and Nelson (1993: 685–689) offer similar accounts of Arnauld's conception of simplicity.

I thank Monte Cook for helpful commentary on an earlier paper which helped me make my account of Nadler's view of conceptual distinctions more precise.

On this reading, then, it is a mistake to distinguish between God's faculties even in our conception of God. Once more, Nadler reads Arnauld as endorsing the creation doctrine according to which God could have done otherwise.

In the following four chapters, I develop a novel interpretation of Arnauld's God that I call a 'partially hidden' conception of God. This account does not neatly fit under the umbrella of either the rationalist or voluntarist conception of God. While my account shares some features both with Moreau's integral conception and with Nadler's voluntarist conception, it differs from both by focusing on certain aspects of Arnauld's account of our restricted epistemic access to God – aspects that are inseparable from his metaphysical conception of God. Following the schema outlined above, Arnauld holds:

- (i) *"Strong" simplicity*: God is an absolutely simple being such that there are no distinctions in God (though there may be conceptual distinctions in how we think about God).
- (ii) *Mitigated agnosticism on rationality*
 - a. *No practical rationality*: God is not a being with practical rationality.
 - b. *Agnosticism on rationality simpliciter*: Whether any type of rationality applies to God is beyond the scope of knowledge of finite beings.
- (iii) *Agnosticism on free creation of eternal truths/epistemic creation doctrine*: Whether eternal truths, truths like mathematical truths and truths about essences, are freely created by God such that God could have created them otherwise is beyond the scope of knowledge of finite beings.

I begin in Chapter 8 with an interpretation of Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God. I then move on, in Chapter 9, to offer an account of Arnauld's conception of divine simplicity and whether God acts for reasons. Finally, in Chapters 10 and 11, I consider the vexed question of Arnauld's position on the creation doctrine.

CHAPTER 8

Knowledge of God Sources and Scope

While Antoine Arnauld's conception of God has received a fair amount of recent attention, nearly all of that attention focuses on issues related to the nature of God. Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God has received relatively little attention. This is in some ways surprising as many in the Jansenist camp famously viewed God as a *Dieu caché*, epistemically inaccessible through reason. While it is clear that Arnauld does not hold the *Dieu caché* conception of God, one can often detect hints of it in his writings, including in his use of similar arguments and analogies to thinkers in the *Dieu caché* camp. Yet, he also clearly endorses Cartesian elements in his conception of our epistemic access to God, not least an explicit and robust defense of knowledge of God via an innate idea.

The important first step, then, in developing Arnauld's partially hidden conception of God is understanding his account of our epistemic access to God. In fact, this account is indispensable to a proper understanding of Arnauld's account of God's nature. As I shall argue throughout this part of the book, Arnauld maintains that, on many issues concerning God's nature, we are in a subtle and unique epistemic position. For example, we can know that God does not act via practical reasons, but we cannot know whether God acts via reasons in any sense. While Arnauld's God is not the hidden God of the Jansenists, God is not as accessible to us as thinkers like Malebranche and Leibniz (and even Descartes) think.

As outlined in Chapter 2, Arnauld makes a strong distinction in his method between two sources of knowledge: reason and authority/faith. Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God follows exactly this strong distinction. Arnauld invokes this distinction (however implicitly) when arguing against Malebranche's claim that God acts nearly always by general volitions:

This grand maxim, that God acts in the order of nature only as a universal cause who does not have particular volitions, since it is not supported either

by scripture nor by tradition, could be accepted as a principle only because it is contained clearly in the idea of a perfect being, and this is what cannot be said. (OA.39.185)¹

This passage is an illustrative example of Arnauld's method in action. Arnauld notes two possible sources of knowledge to ground Malebranche's claim that God acts only as a universal cause: the idea of God on the one hand and scripture and tradition on the other. Arnauld is following his method. He offers both reason (the clear idea of God) and authority (scripture or tradition) as possible grounds for Malebranche's claim.

Arnauld denies that either of the sources of knowledge can ground Malebranche's particular maxim. However, based on Arnauld's method, both sources can provide ground for genuine knowledge about God. Arnauld holds that we can have knowledge of God through faith and such knowledge comes from scripture and tradition. With respect to reason, the main source of knowledge of God is our clear idea of God. As we will see, one distinctive aspect of Arnauld's approach is that, while we have an innate idea of God, we can only make claims about God from this idea based on what is contained in it. And we certainly cannot make analogical inferences about God based on our idea and any comparison to finite beings. Such knowledge about God is limited to unpacking the innate idea itself, including ruling out things about God inconsistent with that idea – for example, that God has a body. This fact is reflected in Arnauld's objection to Malebranche that such claims about God's action need to be contained in the clear idea (as opposed to grounded in a chain of reasoning starting from this innate idea). And although Arnauld does not mention sensory data in the above quote, he also allows a very limited amount of knowledge about God through inferences based on sensory experiences (the only examples he gives are that God exists and that God *in fact* acts in certain ways). I take it Arnauld thinks it obvious that Malebranche's maxim could not be grounded via sensory knowledge.

In this chapter I shall argue that Arnauld believes we have three sources of knowledge about God, namely:

1. The clear idea of a perfect being
2. Sensory experience

¹ Translation: Sleigh (1996b: 77). In this insightful paper, Sleigh attributes a view called 'theological restraint' to Arnauld and offers a summary: "If a purely philosophical proposition appears to generate new theological knowledge, then it needs to have its wings clipped," at 84. My interpretation is indebted to Sleigh's insights. Compare Moreau (1999: 217–222).

3. Scripture and tradition.²

The first two sources of knowledge of God fall under the scope of reason, while the third falls under faith/authority. Throughout this chapter, I develop Arnauld's view and argue that he treats the above list of sources of knowledge of God as exhaustive, and I further develop his account about what sorts of knowledge each source can ground. I focus on natural knowledge of God or knowledge of God via reason, but I also briefly address his view on scripture and tradition.

I begin in Section 8.1 with a brief overview of four accounts of the nature of our epistemic access to God prevalent among Arnauld's predecessors and peers: the empirical model, the innatist account, the illuminationist account, and the *Dieu caché* account. This overview will be essential to appreciating and situating Arnauld's account. I then, in Section 8.2, consider Arnauld's account of our innate idea of God and his rejection of the empirical model. In Section 8.3, I consider the *Dieu caché*-inspired limitations Arnauld puts on knowledge via this innate idea of God and sketch his account of what sorts of knowledge this idea can give us and what sorts it cannot. In Section 8.4, I briefly consider Arnauld's rejection of divine illumination and discuss the limited amount of knowledge of God Arnauld thinks we can get via the senses. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks, including a brief discussion of Arnauld's account of knowledge of God via faith.

Arnauld's account turns out to be a subtle amalgam of the two incompatible accounts noted above: the Cartesian account, according to which our knowledge of God is grounded in our innate idea of God; and the *Dieu caché* account, according to which we can have no knowledge of God through reason.

8.1 Sources of Natural Knowledge of God

In this section, I briefly canvas various accounts of our natural knowledge (or natural cognition) of God prominent among Arnauld's contemporaries and major influences. The models I cover are the empirical model, the

² As an anonymous reviewer helpfully suggested, it may be that Arnauld would also add Church authority to scripture and tradition as a separate category for knowledge of God, especially given his *fait* and *droit* distinction and controversy covered in Chapter 1. This is a question I shall not pursue here, as I am mostly interested in his philosophical positions, but if this is a distinct category, it would certainly fall under the category of faith.

divine illumination model, and the innatist model, as well as the *Dieu caché*, or hidden God, account.³

8.1.1 *The Empirical Model*

The first potential source of natural knowledge of God is sensory experience. While one could hold that we can have direct sensory knowledge of God, this source of knowledge of God is nearly always treated as indirect. Through our sensory faculties we discover things about the natural world, and we arrive at knowledge of God by means of inferences or principles – which are not always empirical in nature – and/or our intellectual powers, such as our power of abstraction. A common position among philosophers and theologians is that all of our natural concepts and knowledge of God come from sensory experience in the manner described above. I shall call this position the *empirical model*. Figures who hold this view, or at least that for the most part our natural knowledge of God comes indirectly from sensory experience, include Aquinas,⁴ Scotus,⁵ Ockham,⁶ and Arnauld's contemporary Pierre Gassendi.⁷ While these figures offer vastly different accounts about the nature and scope of such knowledge, they all treat sensory experience of the world as the key starting point of such inquiry.⁸

One prominent example of this supposed knowledge of God from sensory experience is the argument from design. Aquinas famously offers a version of this argument as one of the five ways:

The fifth way [that God's existence can be proven] is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result.

³ I do not mean to suggest that these options are exhaustive, but only that they are the main position of relevance to the study of Arnauld's position. One example that might be outside this schema is Anselm of Canterbury's view in his *Proslogion* (chapters 2 and 3). For discussion see Davies (2004: especially 158–159); and Visser and Williams (2009: ch. 5).

⁴ I briefly consider Aquinas below.

⁵ For Scotus, see the works collected in DSPW.13–33; Marrone (1988); Cross (1999: especially chs. 1 and 2); Mann (2003); and Ingham and Dreyer (2004: chs. 2 and 3).

⁶ Ockham clearly limits our natural epistemic access to God considerably, and there is scholarly debate about the extent to which we can have natural knowledge of God for Ockham. But Ockham does allow at least some limited natural knowledge of God. See, for example, the texts collected in OPW.96–113; *Quodlibetal Questions* 5.7 (FK.420–424); Adams (1987: ch. 22); and Maurer (1999: ch. 6).

⁷ See Osler (1994: 51); and Lolordo (2006): especially 83–88 and 239–244) and the texts cited therein.

⁸ C.f., Alston (1991) for a contemporary account that grounds knowledge in perceiving God in “direct, non-sensory experiences,” at p. 5.

Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God. (*Summa Theologica* 1.2.3/IA.27).

According to this argument, through our sensory awareness of the world, we can discover that things in the world have certain properties, including that they act towards an end. Given the acceptance of the principle that, in order for things that lack knowledge to act towards an end they must be directed by a being with knowledge and intelligence, we can infer that God exists. As such, we can have indirect sensory knowledge of God's existence.

Elsewhere in the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas considers: "Whether God can be known in this life by natural reason?" and claims:

Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our intellect cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God ... Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen. But because they are His effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God *whether He exists*, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him. (1.12.12/IA.93–94)

Passages like these suggest the empirical model of natural knowledge of God and this model is a dominant model in later medieval philosophy.⁹

8.1.2 *The Divine Illumination Model*

A second potential source of natural knowledge of God is divine illumination. When discussing divine illumination as a general source of knowledge (as opposed to a source of knowledge of God specifically), Robert Pasnau helpfully describes it as the view according to which "the human mind regularly relies on some kind of special supernatural assistance in order to complete (some part of) its ordinary cognitive activity."¹⁰ 'Special assistance' and 'ordinary cognitive activity' are especially important aspects of distinguishing divine illumination from other accounts. This is true for the former because any theistic account that relies on divine conservation

⁹ See for example, Pasnau and Shields (2016: 101); Davies (2002a: 228); and Weigel (2008: 43).

¹⁰ Pasnau (2020: section 1).

or God's continuing sustaining of creatures would result in divine illumination, given the fact that our cognitive faculties rely on God's conserving them in order to function. The latter is important because occasional mystical experience would count as divine illumination without the specification that divine illumination is an aspect of ordinary cognitive activity.

The figure most associated with divine illumination as a general means of natural knowledge is Augustine.¹¹ The key proponent of this view in the seventeenth century is none other than Malebranche. With respect to our natural knowledge of God, he defends *divine illuminationism* – the position that our primary source of natural knowledge of God is divine illumination. In a section of the *Search* titled “How we know God,” Malebranche claims:

Only God do we know through Himself . . . only He can act on our mind and reveal Himself to it. Only God do we perceive by a direct and immediate perception. Only He can enlighten our mind with His own substance. Finally, only through the union we have with Him are we capable in this life of knowing what we know, as we have explained in the preceding chapter; for He is the only master, according to Saint Augustine, ruling our mind without the mediation of any creature. (OC.I.449/LO.236–237)

Malebranche holds that we know God by a direct and immediate perception through God's enlightening our minds. He then refers to his vision in God doctrine and cites Augustine as a source of this view. He continues:

I cannot conceive how a created thing can represent the infinite, how being that is without restriction, immense and universal, can be perceived through an idea, i.e., through a particular being different from universal and infinite being . . . Thus it must be said that (a) we know God through Himself, though our knowledge of Him in this life is very imperfect and (b) we know corporeal things through their ideas. (OC.I.449–450/LO.237)

Malebranche argues that we cannot know God through the idea of God, but rather only through God enlightening our minds.¹²

¹¹ See, for example, book II of Augustine's *On the Free Choice of the Will*; O'Daly (1987: ch. 7); and Matthews (2001). For other discussion of theories of illumination, see Marrone (2001) and Connolly (2015).

¹² Cf., OC.XII.53/JS.23 and OC.XIV.12. See Radner (1978: 64–69) for a discussion of Malebranche's account of our knowledge of God and this style of argument. One striking feature of this passage is that Malebranche relies on a principle quite similar to one used by Pascal and Angélique Arnauld in their discussions of the *Dieu caché* that I discuss below. See Robinet (1974) for a discussion of a possible Jansenist influence on Malebranche.

8.1.3 The Innatist Model

A third potential source of natural knowledge of God is our innate idea of God. This view is exemplified by Descartes. In the *Principles*, he claims:

The existence of God is validly inferred from the fact that necessary existence is included in our concept of God.

The mind next considers the various ideas which it has within itself, and finds that there is one idea – the idea of a supremely intelligent, supremely powerful and supremely perfect being – which stands out from all the others. And it readily judges from what it perceives in this idea, that God, who is the supremely perfect being, is, or exists. (AT.VIIIa.10/CSM.I.197)

And that:

There is a great advantage in proving the existence of God by this method, that is to say, by means of the idea of God. For the method enables us at the same time to come to know the nature of God, in so far as the feebleness of our nature allows. For when we reflect on the idea of God which we were born with, we see that he is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, the source of all goodness and truth, the creator of all things, and finally, that he possesses within him everything in which we can clearly recognize some perfection that is infinite or unlimited by any imperfection. (AT.VIIIa.13/CSM.I.200)

For Descartes, one can know not only that God exists based on the clear and distinct and innate idea of God, but many other things, including various attributes of God.¹³ I shall call the view that the main source of our knowledge of God is our innate idea of God *divine innatism*.

8.1.4 The Dieu Caché

The last position I shall canvas is the *Dieu caché* of the Jansenists. It should be noted that Jansenism is a rather indeterminate and fluid collection of individuals and views, as is reflected in Bayle's 1684 claim: "Jansenism is a species of heresy that no one can define, but that one imputes to whomever one will."¹⁴ One ought not to think of the Jansenist movement as having a special set of codified doctrines, and there is much dissent between thinkers associated with the movement on key philosophical

¹³ See also *Principles* Book I, Article 54, AT.VIIIa.25–26/CSM.I.211. See Carriero (2009: ch. 3[III]) for a thorough discussion of Descartes's account of our cognition and knowledge of God based on our idea of God. Carriero informatively compares Descartes's account to Aquinas's.

¹⁴ Cited in Schmaltz (1999: 42).

and theological issues.¹⁵ As noted in Chapter 1, if there is a key thread among Jansenists it is a commitment to the doctrine of efficacious grace, according to which grace is given by God, such grace is never resisted, and no meritorious activity can be performed without the aid of grace. On this account of grace, finite creatures cannot give a rational account of who receives grace.¹⁶ A natural extension of this view is that no knowledge of God is achievable through natural means, and such a view was in fact popular among Jansenists. On this view, we as finite beings can have no knowledge of God's existence or nature through reason and any knowledge of God can come only from another means – for example, scripture or revelation. One of the most well-known thinkers associated with the Jansenist movement, Pascal, seems to hold, or at least suggest, this position in his *Pensées*:¹⁷

But we know neither the existence nor the nature of God, because he has neither extent [*étendue*] nor limits [*bornes*] . . . But we know of his existence through faith. (L.418/P.153)¹⁸

And later:

If there is a God, he is infinitely beyond our comprehension, since, having neither parts nor limits, he bears no relation [*nul rapport*] to ourselves. We are therefore incapable of knowing either what he is, or if he is. That being so, who will dare to undertake a resolution of this question? It cannot be us, who bear no relationship to him. Who will then blame the Christians for being unable to provide a rational basis for their belief . . . ? (L.418/P.153)

In these passages, Pascal highlights two features of God that render God unknowable naturally by finite things: that God has no extent or limit, and that God has no relation to finite beings.¹⁹

Another central figure of the Jansenist movement, Angélique Arnauld, makes similar claims of God. Angélique Arnauld led spiritual conferences at Port-Royal where she would respond to questions posed by other nuns.

¹⁵ See Nadler (1988b) for key philosophical disagreements and Solère (1996) for a key theological disagreement.

¹⁶ See, for example, Lennon (1978: 188).

¹⁷ The *Pensées* themselves were not intended as a stand-alone work. See Levi's introduction to the *Pensées* and Hunter (2013: 8–9). Whether this is Pascal's considered view, these fragments illustrate a *Dieu caché*-type account.

¹⁸ Following convention, references to the Lafuma edition of the *Pensées* are 'L' followed by the fragment number, rather than the page number.

¹⁹ See also Goldmann (1964: ch. XV); Gouhier (1971: ch. IV); and Hunter (2013: 154–157). For a book-length treatment of the relationship between Arnauld and Pascal, see Le Guern (2003).

We have the transcripts of these conferences. In one such transcript, Arnauld claims:

Everything [God] does is beyond human capacity, is incomprehensible to our minds: for if we are in front of God like little ants, is it strange that we cannot understand him nor the greatness of his plans? Ants cannot know the thoughts of human beings, nor judge their actions: yet there is less in common [*moins de comparaison*] between God and us than between us and ants. Because, even if they are below human beings, they have in common with us that they are also creatures; but from man to God there is no similarity [*il n'y a nulle proportion*]. It is necessary that they know that God is a being infinitely above us, and by consequence that it is impossible for them to know his ways, or understand his plans. (C.254)²⁰

Angélique Arnauld claims that everything God does is incomprehensible to our minds because of the lack of similarity (*proportion*) between God and humans. She compares us trying to understand God, to ants trying to understand humans. In the case of ants trying to understand us, however, at least there is something in common – namely, that ants and humans are both creatures.

While whether Pascal or Angélique Arnauld endorse the *Dieu caché* account tout court is beyond the scope of this chapter, especially given the nature of the texts here cited, they both voice key themes and motivations for this account. With this background in hand, we can move on to consider Antoine Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God. I argue in the remainder of this chapter that Arnauld holds a version of divine innatism, but one that is sufficiently weakened by *Dieu caché* considerations that it is really an amalgam of these two views. Arnauld also allows some modest knowledge of God via sensation but rejects both the empirical model and the divine illumination model.

8.2 The Idea of God

The central pillar of Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God through reason is his account of our innate idea of God. While he accepts that we have an innate idea of God sufficient for knowledge of God, he puts robust limitations on what knowledge we can derive from this idea. Arnauld's version of divine innatism is more mitigated than Descartes's on

²⁰ See also Conley (2009: 61–65 and 93–96) and Conley (2016). For a discussion of the nature of these conferences and the transcripts, see Conley (2009: 60). For Angélique Arnauld's role in the development of Jansenism, see Sedgwick (1998: especially ch. 3).

account of some distinctly *Dieu caché*-type considerations. In this section, I consider Arnauld's account and argument for our having an innate idea of God. His argument for this innate idea is intimately tied to his rejection of the empirical model of knowledge of God and I shall treat them concurrently. In the next section, I focus on Arnauld's treatment of the limits of knowledge from this innate idea.

In Chapter 2, I outlined Arnauld and Nicole's argument for the existence of innate ideas in general from part 1 of the *Logic*, as well as their argument that these innate ideas are epistemically trustworthy. In essence, the argument has two steps. First, the Port-Royalists argue that we have ideas – for example, of being and thought – that could not have come to us through the senses. Second, they argue that our only means of knowledge of things is through ideas. So, if we know anything about – for example, thought – it must be grounded in our idea of thought. Since we do know things about thought, the idea must be trustworthy. While the argument might seem to beg the question, I think a more charitable and accurate way to think about it is as a dilemma. Either innatism is true about at least some ideas, or skepticism is true. Skepticism is not true, so innatism is.²¹

Their argument about our idea of God follows essentially this same pattern as above (it is in fact treated at the same time as other ideas). But their discussion of the innate idea of God merits special attention. To begin their discussion, the Port-Royalists claim that:

We can express nothing by our words when we understand what we are saying unless, by the same token, it were certain that we had in us the idea of the thing we were signifying by our words, although this idea is at times more clear and distinct, and at others more obscure and confused, as we shall explain below. For there would be a contradiction in maintaining that I know what I am saying in uttering a word, and yet that I am conceiving nothing in uttering it except the sound itself of the word. (OA.41.129/B.26/CG.41)²²

Arnauld and Nicole hold that we must have an idea in us of that which we are signifying by our words in order to understand what we are conceiving.

²¹ See Popkin (2003: chs. 5 and 6) for helpful context on the relation between skepticism and faith in this period.

²² See Descartes's letter to Mersenne, July 1641, AT.III.393/CSMK.III.185: "For we cannot express anything by our words, when we understand what we are saying, without its being certain thereby that we have in us the idea of the thing which is signified by our words." This connection is noted by Buroker at B.26.n.3.

Appreciating this fact, they tell us, allows one to “see the falsity of two very dangerous views that have recently been advanced by philosophers.”²³

The first of these two great errors interests us now: that we have no idea of God. Arnauld and Nicole offer several problems with the view that we do not have an idea of God:

If we had no idea of God, on what could we base everything we say about God, such as that there is only one, that he is eternal, all powerful, all good, all wise? None of this is contained in the sound “God,” but only in the idea of God connected to this sound. (OA.41.129/B.27/CG.42)

They continue:

This is also the only reason we refuse to give the name “God” to all the false divinities. It is not because this word taken materially could not be attributed to them, since the pagans in fact did so, but because the idea of a sovereign being connected by usage to this word “God” conforms only to the one true God. (OA.41.129–130/B.27/CG.42)

Arnauld and Nicole claim that, if we do not have an idea of God, we would not be able to base or ground what we say about God. So, when attributing properties or qualities to something, in this case God, we can only succeed in doing so if we have an idea of that thing (as opposed to merely having a word without an idea).

Taking themselves to have established that we do have an idea of God, the Port-Royalists go on to argue that this idea, among numerous others, does not come from the senses. They reject the view that “our idea of God originates in the senses” because it is “worthy only of anthropomorphites.”²⁴ Arnauld and Nicole consider the idea of God as a “venerable old man” as an example of what our sensory idea of God would be. They argue that if our idea of God were based on the senses, like an idea of a venerable old man, then our judgments about God “would have to appear false to us whenever they conflict with this idea.”²⁵ Such an idea of God would preclude our ability to confirm truths like “God has no parts, that he is incorporeal, that he is everywhere, and that he is invisible” as none of these agree with the idea of a venerable old man, or presumably any supposed sensory idea of God.²⁶ They do allow that “God is sometimes represented under this form,” but that this “does not imply this is the idea we ought to have of him.”²⁷

²³ OA 42.129/B.26/CG.41.

²⁴ OA.41.132/B.29/CG.45.

²⁵ OA.41.132/B.29–30/CG.45.

²⁶ OA.41.132–133/B.30/CG.45.

²⁷ OA.41.133/B.30/CG.45–46.

Arnauld and Nicole go on to claim that the idea of God is clear and distinct. Since the idea is clear and distinct, the idea of God falls under the scope of CIP, which I have covered several times throughout this book. Based on CIP, we are epistemically justified in attributing everything contained in our clear idea of God to God. This would seem to ground robust and extensive knowledge of God. However, even when introducing the idea of God as clear and distinct, Arnauld and Nicole note some reservations [hereafter: the ‘idea of God passage’]:

We can also say that the idea we have of God in this life is clear in one sense, although in another sense it is obscure and quite imperfect.

It is clear in being sufficient to make us know a great many attributes in God which we are sure of finding in God alone. It is obscure, however, when compared to the idea had by the blessed in heaven. And it is imperfect because the mind, being finite, can conceive of an infinite object only very imperfectly. But being perfect and being clear are different conditions in an idea. For it is perfect when it represents everything in its object, and it is clear when it represents enough of it to conceive of the object clearly and distinctly. (OA.4I.157/B.49/CG.71)

Arnauld and Nicole hold that the idea of God is clear and distinct (or rather that one can have a clear and distinct idea of God), but make clear that the idea of God is not perfect or complete. As discussed in Chapter 3, clear and distinct ideas, not perfect, comprehensive, or adequate ideas, are what are needed for philosophical and epistemological pursuits. However, the Port-Royalists offer an important qualification in this passage – namely, that finite minds can conceive of infinite objects only very imperfectly. As their 9th axiom from book iv, chapter 7 of the *Logic* states: “It is the nature of a finite mind not to be able to understand the infinite.”²⁸

All told, Arnauld and Nicole argue that we have an idea of God and this idea of God does not come from the senses, otherwise we would not be in a position to know many of the things about God that we do know. The claims in the *Logic* about anthropomorphizing God lead nicely to our next section where I argue that, while Arnauld holds that our innate idea of God grounds genuine knowledge, such knowledge is quite mitigated on account of several important considerations. If we are not careful, Arnauld holds, we quickly outstrip our epistemic position with respect to our innate idea of God.

²⁸ OA.4I.383/B.251/CG.322. See also Chapter 2.1.

8.3 *Dieu Caché* Considerations

In the last section, I outlined Arnauld's account of our innate idea of God and his subsequent rejection of the empirical model. Arnauld offers a restrictive scope for what sorts of knowledge this innate idea can ground. And Arnauld invokes distinctly *Dieu caché*-type considerations to defend this limited scope.

As noted in Chapter 2, the *Logic* distinguishes three types of supposed objects of knowledge: things that can be known clearly and certainly; things that we do not in fact know clearly, but that we can hope to come to know; and things that are virtually impossible to know with certainty.²⁹ They offer two reasons why some knowledge is beyond our capacity:

- (i) Because we lack the principles to lead us to them.
- (ii) Because they are too disproportionate to the mind.

As we shall see, both of these considerations are relevant to our idea of God and place much of the supposed rational knowledge of God in the 'virtually impossible to know' category (at least through reason).

Starting with the second qualification, the Port-Royalists tell when considering the third type of supposed knowledge (hereafter: the dazzled by infinity passage):

The best way to limit the scope of the sciences is never to try to inquire about anything beyond us, which we cannot reasonably hope to be able to understand. Of this type are all questions concerning God's power, which it is ridiculous to try to confine within the narrow limits of the mind, and generally anything having to do with infinity. Because the mind is finite, it gets lost in and is dazzled by infinity, and remains overwhelmed by the multitude of contrary thoughts that infinity furnishes us. (OA.41.358/B.230/CG.295)³⁰

This passage will be especially important in our discussion of the creation doctrine. For now, its primary importance is the fact that the finite mind is dazzled by the infinite clearly indicates that infinite objects – God – fall under category (ii). For Arnauld the fact that we have an innate and clear and distinct idea of God does not entail that there are not aspects of God that we fail to understand.

In the *Examen*, Arnauld defends a principle that suggests that (i) applies to God as well. Arnauld claims:

²⁹ OA.41.357–358/B.230/CG.295.

³⁰ See also Moreau (1999: 314).

Nothing would be less reasonable than to expect that philosophers, who are entitled in the human sciences to follow the light of reason, are obliged to take what is incomprehensible in the mystery of the Incarnation as a rule for their opinion when they explain the natural union of the soul with the body We would not have those thoughts which only serve to confuse [*brouiller*] everything in Philosophy and Theology, if we were more convinced of the clear and certain maxim that Cardinal Bellarmine used against the quibbles of the Socinians. “No inference can be made from the finite to the infinite;” or as others put it: “there is no proportion [*proportio*] between the finite and the infinite.” (OA.38.175/E.141)³¹

In this passage, Arnauld defends the maxim which I shall call the ‘no-proportio principle’ as “clear and certain.” Arnauld offers two ways of understanding the principle: “No inference can be made from the finite to the infinite” and “There is no proportion between the finite and infinite.” The first thing to note about this principle is that it is very similar to principles from the arguments given by Pascal and Angélique Arnauld above in discussion of the *Dieu caché* account. Pascal, for example, denies any relation [*rapport*] between us and God. Angélique Arnauld also denies that there is any proportion between God and human beings [*des hommes à Dieu, il n’y a nulle proportion*] in her argument that we can have no natural knowledge of God. Her principle is very similar to Arnauld’s second formulation of the no-proportio principle: ‘*fniti ad infinitum nulla est proportio*.’³²

So, how do we square Arnauld’s endorsement of a clear and distinct idea of God with his various claims about how the finite mind is dazzled by the infinite? I’ll here sketch what I take Arnauld’s view to be, though we will return to it in subsequent chapters and continue to finesse the account. Arnauld holds that we have an innate and clear and distinct idea of God and there is no doubt that this idea grounds knowledge of God, not least that God exists. Since there is no doubt that Arnauld holds our idea of God is (or at least can be) clear and distinct, via CIP whatever is contained in the clear idea of God can be affirmed of God with truth. Here, however, is where our first limitation comes in. Unlike with Descartes’s account, for Arnauld the propositional content of what we claim to know about our clear ideas is actively formed by the finite mind (as I argue in Chapter 2). The innate idea of God does not include the content *that* God is omnipotent. Rather, for Arnauld, our finite mind sees omnipotence contained in

³¹ See also Carraud (1996: 95).

³² The second formulation is found, word for word, in Nicolas Cusanus’s *Dei visione dei*, at OO.6.79/DM.728. See Miller (2021) for discussion.

the idea of God and actively forms the judgment (and propositional content) that 'God is omnipotent.' So, for Arnauld, while this process may be very reliable in considering things like squares and triangles, when considering God, we must remember that our minds are "dazzled" by infinity and that any propositional content known via the innate idea is formed by the finite mind. While the propositional content 'God is omniscient' can safely be claimed on account of our innate idea of God, the judgment 'God knows everything including future contingents' might be seen as going beyond the idea itself.

While the specifics of the view are a bit elusive, it is at least *prima facie* plausible to me that the move from 'God is omniscient' to 'God knows future contingents,' or 'God's power is not limited,' to 'God freely creates the eternal truths such that they could have been other than they are' involves more than simply unpacking an innate idea (which Arnauld thinks we are able to do, if done carefully), to a finite mind trying to grapple and understand – through some sort of reasoning or comprehension – what omniscience or omnipotence might require or entail. This is a rather rough characterization of the view, and it is further complicated by the fact that Arnauld seems to think some reasoning based on the idea of God is well-grounded, especially when denying things of God that are incompatible with the idea of God – for example, being angry. I return to this more in the following chapters, and I think Arnauld ultimately is not precise enough on where and how to draw the lines, but I do think it is a principled, albeit somewhat vague, position.

In addition, given the no-proportio principle, we can absolutely not make any positive analogical inferences from the way finite beings are to the way God is, and in fact we can often know that God does not act in an analogous way. We can know that God is wise from our innate idea and validly make the judgment that God is wise. We must be careful in trying to reason about or unpack in what God's wisdom consists, and we absolutely cannot infer that God acts in a way analogous to finite beings. Let's take a finite person named August. We know that August is wise, and August's wisdom consists in reasoning about options, weighing those options, and picking the best option. I'll return to this in Chapter 9, but Arnauld thinks this is a way of acting that is distinctly finite. Not only does the no-proportio principle rule out unpacking God's wisdom by comparing it to August's wisdom, we can also positively know that God's wisdom does not consist in weighing options in the sense that August's does because such a procedure is reflective of finitude. As we will see, this is one of the things that Arnauld finds scandalous in Leibniz and

Malebranche. In Arnauld's view they reason about God, relying on analogous inferences to finite beings.

8.4 Sensory Experience and Divine Illumination

In this section, I cover two remaining issues on Arnauld and our natural knowledge of God: his account of what knowledge we can have of God via sensation and his rejection of divine illumination – a central feature of his decade-long public debate with Malebranche and the subsequent debates Arnauld had at the end of his life.

Concerning knowledge of God grounded in sensation, while Arnauld unequivocally and forcefully rejects the empirical model, he does allow some very limited indirect empirical knowledge that God exists and that God in fact acts in certain ways.³³ In order to acquire knowledge about God from sensory experience (except direct sensory experience), one needs to be in a position to make an inference from the sensory world (the finite) to God (the infinite). The no-proportio principle might seem to undermine any such account. And, while I do not defend the claim here, I think there is good reason to suppose Arnauld thinks that the innate idea of God is a prerequisite for any of this sensory knowledge – that is, we need the idea of God first, but then we can acquire limited knowledge of God from sensory experience.

There are two prominent examples of knowledge of God via sensory data in the *Examen*. Arnauld briefly endorses Descartes's argument for God's existence via the motion of bodies. Arnauld claims that Descartes has shown that matter can never move itself and so it must be God that moves matter. Arnauld claims that this argument from motion is one of the "beautiful proofs of the divinity."³⁴ Arnauld does not elaborate, but it is important that all he takes this to show is that since matter moves (something we can know through the senses) and matter cannot move itself (something we know through the clear idea of extension), it must be God that moves matter (via an elimination of all other possible causes). We can learn nothing of God beyond God's existence and this basic fact – that God moves matter. This argument gives us no knowledge of anything about God's nature nor about why God acts this way, only that God does.

³³ Arnauld also allows knowledge of God via sensory experience in the case of miracles. For Arnauld and miracles, see Hunter (1996). Arnauld allows knowledge of God via sensory experience by means of reading scripture and authorities of the Church worthy of credence, but sensory experience is not the source of such knowledge.

³⁴ OA.38.93/E.16.

The second example is Arnauld's defense of body-to-mind occasionalism. As discussed in Chapter 4, his argument proceeds by noting that the mind regularly has sensory perceptions on the occasion of certain bodily motions. Arnauld claims that these perceptions in the mind can have only three possible causes: corporeal motions, the soul itself, or God.³⁵ He rejects that either bodies or our own soul cause these perceptions and the only other option is God. Arnauld arrives at knowledge that God causes something on account of an empirical starting point – namely, the correlation between sensory experience and certain types of bodily activity. Arnauld is careful in what he takes to derive from this fact and makes no claim of access to God's nature.

Given these two cases from the *Examen*, the same work where he offers the no-proportio principle, the best way of understanding Arnauld's use of the principle in this context is that, given the radical dissimilarity between finite creatures and God, we can make no inferences about the nature of finite things to the nature of God. Principles learned from studying the finite world do not apply to God. However, empirical experience can give us knowledge that God acts in certain ways – for example, moving bodies and causing our sensory experiences. These inferences do not depend on any knowledge of God's nature. Rather, they rely on considering all possible explanations of a certain empirical phenomenon and eliminating all of the options except God.

Moving on to divine illumination, while Arnauld's positive account I sketched above precludes the need for such assistance, I have not yet explicitly considered Arnauld's rejection of divine illumination as a source of knowledge of God. There is good reason to suppose that Malebranche's account of our epistemic access to God was one of the main issues Arnauld had with Malebranche's *Traité*. One puzzle about the Arnauld–Malebranche polemic is: Given that it was Arnauld's reading of Malebranche's *Traité* and his theodicy that provoked Arnauld, why did Arnauld begin his attack on Malebranche with a treatise on ideas? To my mind, the best answer to this question is that it is primarily Malebranche's claim to have access to God's plans, via his account of vision in God, that prompted Arnauld's concern. Malebranche's theory of divine illumination plays an important role throughout the *Traité*. In the passage cited in the

³⁵ OA.38.145/E.97. Arnauld's ontology does include angels who have the causal power to move bodies, but Arnauld thinks that this is rare. See Kremer (2021: 3.3).

preface, Malebranche claims that his theodicy is dependent on the view that persons “are enlightened by eternal wisdom.”³⁶

Malebranche’s account of why there is evil in the world, given that the world was created by God, depends on his ability to speak of the plans of God, which is subsequently dependent on “commerce with God.” Given that we are illuminated by God, we can have epistemic access, however imperfect, to God and some of God’s plans. As Andrew Pyle puts it, Arnauld begins with Malebranche’s theory of ideas because: “The doctrine of the Vision in God allows the human mind to participate, at least to some extent, in the divine intellect, and thus to grasp, at least in some cases, God’s reasons for acting.”³⁷ Arnauld’s initial engagement with Malebranche focuses on his theory of ideas because Arnauld rejects Malebranche’s account of divine illumination as a source of knowledge about God and by extension how much and the types of knowledge of God Malebranche thinks it grounds.³⁸

8.5 Knowledge via Faith, and Concluding Remarks

This chapter has focused on Arnauld’s account of our knowledge of God via reason. It is very clear for Arnauld that scripture and Catholic tradition (the latter seems to be an extension of the former for Arnauld) can also ground knowledge of God if we follow his method carefully (e.g., interpret scripture correctly) and trust the appropriate traditions and authority figures. There are many nuances, but fundamentally Arnauld’s account is that, if some claim about God is grounded in scripture or in the correct authority figures, then this is at least good *prima facie* reason to believe it. We must use reason to assess what are good authority sources and how to understand any claim from those sources. As noted in Chapter 1 when I discussed his *de droit* and *de fait* distinction, Arnauld accepts the authority of the pope to determine heresy, but the pope’s authority does not extend to what was in Jansen’s text, the latter being within the scope of reason (via the senses). I return to Arnauld’s view of knowledge via faith in my discussion of the creation doctrine and the *prima facie* tensions created by scripture and reason in Chapter 11.3. Therein, I also consider examples from scripture that Arnauld thinks we can know to not be literally true, like God’s having a body, because it is repugnant to the idea of God.

³⁶ OC.V.24–25/R.114.

³⁷ Pyle (2003: 4). See also Moreau (1999) and Moreau (2000: 34–35).

³⁸ See also Chapter 1.4.

All told, Arnauld offers an account of our epistemic access to God and God's nature that follows his method of distinguishing between reason and faith. With respect to reason, Arnauld's account is built around his view that we have an innate and clear and distinct idea of God. As he tells Malebranche, "One can hardly imagine a confession more impious than that of a man who says he has no idea of God . . . for that is to profess not to know him either by natural reason or by faith or in any other way whatsoever."³⁹ This idea of God grounds knowledge of God. However, Arnauld brings in *Dieu caché*-like considerations to limit the scope of knowledge from this idea. We can know of God what is included in the idea God gave us and we can elucidate notions so contained. We cannot subsequently use our reason to make analogical inferences from this idea, and must be careful not to go beyond what is contained in the idea of God. We must remember that all knowledge of God is based on finite minds making judgments about the innate idea of God and accept our inability to fully comprehend the infinite. Arnauld's view incorporates key aspects of the *Dieu caché* of the Jansenists and Cartesian innatism. Additionally, Arnauld is willing to allow knowledge that God exists and in fact acts in some ways from our senses, and that we can have knowledge of God from tradition and scripture.

³⁹ OA.38.339/K.160.

CHAPTER 9

God's Nature Simplicity and Rationality

In the previous chapter, I developed an account of Arnauld's view of our epistemic access to God. Building on that account, in this chapter, I develop an interpretation of his view of God's nature. In particular, I shall focus on the first two components of the *partially hidden conception of God* as outlined in the Preface to Part II. The first component of the partially hidden conception of God is 'strong simplicity' and the second component of Arnauld's partially hidden conception of God is 'mitigated agnosticism on rationality.'

The plan of this chapter is as follows. In Section 9.1, I argue that Arnauld holds a strong version of divine simplicity. In the Preface to Part II, I described strong simplicity as the view that "God is an absolutely simple being such that there are no distinctions in God (though there may be conceptual distinctions in how we think about God)." In this chapter, I develop that definition and argue that Arnauld's conception of divine simplicity has the following three components:

1. God, God's action, and God's attributes are identical (the identity thesis).
2. God, God's action, and God's attributes are conceptually distinct (the distinctness thesis).
3. There are no conceptual priorities among God, God's action, and God's attributes (the nonpriority thesis).

As we shall see, Arnauld's account of divine simplicity focuses both on God's nature and on the adjacent issue of how we ought to conceive of God. In Section 9.2, I move on to consider Arnauld's account of whether God acts for reasons. With respect to God's relation to reasons, I defend an interpretation of Arnauld as holding what I call a 'mitigated agnosticism on rationality.' This account has two central components:

1. *No practical rationality*: God is not a being with practical rationality.
2. *Agnosticism on rationality simpliciter*: Whether any type of rationality applies to God is beyond the scope of knowledge of finite beings.

Finally, I offer some concluding remarks.

Before getting into the main content of the chapter, it merits noting that the central texts that illuminate Arnauld's account of God's nature and those that I rely most on in this chapter are his objections to Malebranche, specifically to Malebranche's theodicy. There is much about Malebranche's theodicy that Arnauld finds audacious. Two of Arnauld's central objections are clear. First, he argues that Malebranche's account of God's activity violates a proper understanding of God's nature, including divine simplicity and the nature of God's action. Second, Arnauld objects to Malebranche's claim that finite beings can give reasons for God's action.¹ In the course of exploring Arnauld's account of God's nature, I also develop his objections to Malebranche's system.

9.1 Divine Simplicity

Throughout Arnauld's many objections to Malebranche's system, it can be difficult to determine when he is embracing Malebranche's positions or those of another philosopher (Aquinas or Descartes, for example) for rhetorical effect and when he is genuinely stating his own opinion. This has led to some debates among scholars about Arnauld's position on the nature of divine simplicity. I outlined one key debate in the preface between Moreau and Nadler. In brief, Nadler holds that Arnauld's account of divine simplicity precludes conceiving of any distinctions, even conceptual distinctions, in God. Moreau, on the other hand, treats Arnauld's view as allowing only conceptual distinctions, but no conceptual priorities, among God's attributes. The various attributes, according to Moreau, functionally interpenetrate, such that God's will wills and knows, and God's understanding knows and wills.

Throughout his objections to Malebranche, it is clear that Arnauld holds a strong version of the identity thesis – that God, God's action, and God's attributes are identical. In his *Réflexions*, Arnauld makes all of the following claims:

Nothing is more essential to an infinitely perfect being than to will . . . and that his action and his will are the same thing. (OA.39.237)

¹ See Nadler (2008a: 534) and Moreau (1999: 295).

The word ‘wisdom’ can be taken either actively, for the wisdom which is in God, or rather which is God himself; or passively for the wisdom which is in the works of God. (OA.39.245)

His [God’s] will is his essence itself. (OA.39.625)

And, commenting directly on Malebranche’s position:

Can one have thoughts more unworthy of God than to imagine such a disagreement between his wisdom and his will? As if his wisdom and his will were not the same thing. (OA.39.748)

In the *Neuf Lettres*, Arnauld claims that “The immensity of the divine being, and the substance of God are the same thing.”²

From just these passages it is clear that Arnauld holds that God’s action, God’s will, God’s wisdom, God’s immensity, God’s essence, and God are all identical. While he does not consider all of God’s attributes in these passages, they offer compelling evidence for the identity thesis.

Whether Arnauld endorses the distinctness thesis – that God, God’s action, and God’s attributes are conceptually distinct – is a more difficult question. Nadler’s suggestion that Arnauld denies this thesis is motivated primarily by several passages in the *Réflexions* where Arnauld criticizes Malebranche’s conception of God as “consulting” God’s wisdom in creation. I shall examine Arnauld’s objections and argue that they provide compelling evidence that Arnauld endorses the nonpriority thesis – that there are no conceptual priorities among God, God’s action, and God’s attributes – but that, contrary to Nadler’s suggestion, they provide no evidence that Arnauld denies the distinctness thesis. In fact, I shall argue these passages suggest that Arnauld holds the distinctness thesis. Nadler considers the following passage from *Réflexions II.5*:

Did he [Malebranche] really think that it was an expression perfectly conforming to the idea of a perfect being, to say of God that He consults His wisdom? One consults only when one is in doubt; and one consults about how to accomplish one’s desires only when there may be some difficulty in achieving what one desires. Neither the one nor the other can be said about the perfect being, whose knowledge is infinite and whose will is all-powerful. (OA.39.449)³

Arnauld claims that Malebranche’s description of God’s activity as consulting “does not conform to the idea of a perfect being.”⁴ In *Réflexions*

² OA.39.143.

³ Translation: Nadler (2008a: 529–530). See also Kremer (2021).

⁴ OA.39.447.

II.24, in a passage also cited by Nadler, Arnauld asks rhetorically whether it is appropriate to say of God

‘that he consults his wisdom’, and it is from there that it happens that all that he wills is wise; as if the word *consult* could pertain to an infinitely perfect being, when we profess that we do not speak according to common parlance? As if God needs to consult his wisdom so that what he wills is wise? As if his will is not his wisdom? As if everything that he wills is not essentially wise as soon as he wills it. (OA.39.578)⁵

In these passages, Arnauld objects to Malebranche’s claim that God consults God’s wisdom in creating and acting, and he gives several reasons for objecting. In the last passage, he cites the identity of God’s will and wisdom as a reason that God does not consult. But this does not end the debate about whether the distinctness thesis is true. I have noted several times that Arnauld allows conceptual distinctions to obtain between identicals, but shall now more fully defend the claim. In a passage from the *Logic* partially cited in Chapter 7, Arnauld and Nicole claim:

We should remark, however, that the mind, accustomed to knowing most things as modified since it knows them almost always by accidents or qualities that strike the senses, often divides the essence of the substance itself into two ideas, viewing [*dont il regarde*] one as subject and the other as mode. For example, although everything in God is God himself, this does not prevent us from conceiving him as an infinite being, regarding [*regarder*] infinity as an attribute of God and being as the subject of this attribute. Thus a human being is often considered as the subject of humanness [*l’humanité*] *habens humanitatem* [possessing humanness], and consequently as a modified thing.

In these cases the essential attribute, which is the thing itself, is taken for a mode because it is conceived as in a subject [*parce qu’on le conçoit comme dans un sujet*]. This is properly speaking an abstraction of substance, such as humanness [*humanité*], corporeality, and reason. (OA.41.134–135/B.31/CG.47–48)⁶

Arnauld and Nicole offer two examples of a substance and its essential attribute being identical: God and everything in God, and a human being and a thing that has humanness or the property of being human. In both cases, Arnauld and Nicole claim that these are the same thing, even though the mind regards or conceives them in different ways. The distinction between God and God’s attribute of infinity, for example, is the result of mental abstraction. Often, when conceiving of God, Arnauld and Nicole

⁵ Some of the translation is from Nadler (2008a: 531).

⁶ Translation slightly modified.

claim, we conceive of God as a being who has the property of being infinite. While it is true that God is infinite, it is not the case that God has the property of being infinite in such a way that God and being infinite are distinct. The distinction between God and God's infinity does not exist in God. Rather, we can conceive of God as having the property of infinity in the subject, but only through an abstraction of substance. As finite beings, we view or regard the same thing in different ways. We do this, Arnauld and Nicole suggest, by dividing the essence into two ideas. So, while everything in God is identical to God, when conceiving of God we turn our idea of the essence of God into two distinct ideas: God as a subject and infinity as an attribute, and we conceive of infinity as an attribute of God, though in God they are one and the same.

They confirm the above account in the abstractions of the mind passage cited in Chapter 7. There they note that one way of conceiving things by abstraction occurs "in the case of a single thing having different attributes, we think of one attribute without the other even though they differ only by a distinction of reason [*distinction de raison*]." They explain that, in such a case, if "I reflect that I am thinking . . . In my idea of the I who thinks, I can consider a thinking thing without noticing that it is I, although in me the I and the one who thinks are one and the same thing."⁷ While the main topic in that passage is the creation of general ideas, Arnauld and Nicole consider abstractions of the mind and refer to a distinction of reason, that is, a conceptual distinction.⁸ While they do not explicitly claim that there is no ontological distinction in any sense between "I" and "the one who thinks," they do claim that the "I" and "the one who thinks" are "the same thing." They add that the various attributes of a substance differ only by a distinction in reason. These passages suggest that conceptual distinctions obtain when we form two ideas of the same thing, even though these ideas are only different ways of regarding the same thing. In fact, as I read the *Logic*, the Port-Royalists embrace Descartes's account of conceptual distinctions canvassed in the Preface to Part II, and they hold that conceptual distinctions obtain between identicals.

With the discussion from the *Logic* in hand, we can now return to the *Réflexions* and ask whether Arnauld holds the distinctness thesis. Arnauld's claim that God's various attributes are identical does not preclude their being conceptually distinct. In fact, in the *Réflexions II.5* passage, Arnauld's argument seems to require something like conceptual distinctions among

⁷ OA.41.143/B.38/CG.56.

⁸ See also Pécharman (1995: 68), for conceptual distinctions in the *Logic*.

God's attributes. Arnauld cites two reasons to deny that God consults God's wisdom. First, one consults only when one is in doubt, and an infinitely perfect being could never be in doubt. Second, one desires something only when there may be a difficulty in achieving what one desires, which cannot be true of God. The former is inconsistent with God's knowledge, which is infinite, and the latter with God's will, which is all-powerful. Arnauld's objection relies on (a) making a conceptual distinction between God's all-powerful will and God's infinite knowledge in order to support claims about God's various attributes and also (b) making true predications about these attributes in order to ground knowledge about God. This process requires conceptual distinctions among God's attributes.

To further develop the point, we can return to the idea of God passage from the *Logic*, where Arnauld and Nicole note that our idea of God is clear, but imperfect (cited in Chapter 8). In that passage, the Port-Royalists note that, while the idea of God is clear in one sense, in another it is obscure and imperfect. They add: "It is clear in being sufficient to make us know a great many attributes in God which we are sure of finding in God alone," but obscure because we "conceive of an infinite object only very imperfectly."⁹ The Port-Royalists explicitly claim that we can know a great many attributes of God: This alone suggests distinctions among them. But my main interest here is what Arnauld and Nicole tell us about our idea of God: Although this idea is clear enough to tell us much about God, it is far from a perfect idea. As finite beings, we can know attributes of God in virtue of our clear idea of God. But our knowledge of God cannot be comprehensive. Conceptual distinctions among God's attributes are the result of our finitude, not of any nonidentity in God.

In the *Réflexions II.5* passage, Arnauld relies on conceptual distinctions among God's attributes to object to Malebranche's account. Although God is supremely simple, we can consider our innate idea of God, focus on certain aspects of it, and form new ideas about God. The result is having a variety of ideas about a simple being. We can form an idea of God as a being with infinite knowledge and with a will that is all-powerful. From these ideas, we can know that God is never in doubt and that God has no difficulty achieving what God desires.

My point here is that, for Arnauld, although we can know God only very imperfectly, our process of knowing God by reflecting on our idea of God preserves epistemic validity insofar as we can justifiably believe things

⁹ OA.41.157/B.49/CG.71.

about God because of this idea. But we should not form ideas of God according to which one of God's attributes is excluded from another. We should not think of God's understanding as acting independently of God's will, since they are one and the same. This independent action is what Malebranche seems to embrace when he conceives of God as consulting; he conceives of God's understanding as operating prior to and, in some way, exclusive of God's will. This projects a *modus operandi* of finite beings onto God (and is a violation of the no-proportio principle described in the last chapter).

Arnauld describes the appropriate process for reflecting on the idea of God in *Réflexions II.2*: "I will consult, with all the attention and respect of which I am capable, the vast and immense idea of the infinitely perfect being," adding that "perfect being, being itself, and the plenitude of being, form in us the same idea." Having this idea, he finds that the perfect being "has nothing to desire, then, since he has everything," and "among the goods God possesses, I see in him an infinite power, which enables him to do all that he wills."¹⁰ Arnauld examines his idea of an infinitely perfect being, and, by focusing on different aspects of this idea and then forming new ideas, he draws a variety of conclusions about it. Here the nuance of Arnauld's account of our rational knowledge of God via an innate idea is on display. Arnauld examines the idea and unpacks it, makes attributions of various attributes to God and even seems to make an inference (from God's infinite power to the ability to do all that God wills). He does not reason about God's power beyond that and certainly does not compare God to finite things to explore in what God's infinite power consists. In fact, just before the *Réflexions II.24* passage, he mentions Malebranche's claim that one ought "not to speak of God like common men and according to the common parlance." Instead, one should speak of God, as Malebranche tells us, in a manner worthy of the "vast and immense idea of the infinitely perfect being."¹¹

In *Réflexions II.24* cited above, Arnauld objects to the claim that God "'consults his wisdom' and *it is from there* that it happens that all that He wills is wise," explicitly rejecting temporal or conceptual priority between God's will and wisdom. This seems to make a strong distinction between God's will and understanding, as it assumes that we can conceive of God in such a way that God's understanding is independent of God's willing. Presented with God's simplicity, we can still form a variety of ideas about God by abstracting from our idea of God's essence. But we should

¹⁰ OA.39.429.

¹¹ OA.39.578.

not think that God's various faculties have different roles in creation. Our idea of God precludes this.

All told, the passages cited by Nadler (and Arnauld's many objections to Malebranche on similar issues) suggest that God is radically different from creatures. God's essence, God's attributes, and God's activity are all identical. Yet we can come to have knowledge of God by abstracting from our idea of God and examining its content. We must be careful, however, not to anthropomorphize God by attributing to God human features. All of God's attributes are identical (the identity thesis), and we should not suppose that God's different faculties or attributes have functions that are different from and/or prior to one another (the nonpriority thesis). Denying the latter claim makes God operate like a finite being. Finally, while all of God's attributes are identical, they are still conceptually distinct (the distinctness thesis), and abstracting from our idea of God, when done properly, can help us arrive at (limited) knowledge of God's nature. So, contra Nadler, I suggest that we treat Arnauld as allowing for conceptual distinctions – but not conceptual priorities – among God's various attributes.

The account of divine simplicity defended here is in some ways a defense of Moreau's interpretation against Nadler's objections. Nevertheless, my account is substantially different from Moreau's. I do not think he pushes the identity thesis enough.¹² On his account, God's various attributes are identical and functionally interpenetrate.¹³ Moreau relies on the integration, identification, and interpenetration of God's attributes. He points to passages that might support his interpretation that God's will wills and knows and that God's understanding knows and wills.

Moreau cites this passage from Arnauld, for example: "God wills only wisely [*Dieu ne voulant rien que sagement*], he wills nothing that his wisdom does not will."¹⁴ I agree that, for Arnauld, God's will reasons and God's understanding wills. Yet this seems not to be because God's attributes are integrated or interpenetrate. Acts of God's understanding and God's will are not in any way distinct in God. To claim that God reasons with God's will makes sense – not because various faculties interpenetrate, however, but because we grasp God's action imperfectly and God's act of understanding and of willing is the same act. God's will

¹² Moreau holds that, for Arnauld, all of God's attributes are identical and that conceptual distinctions are grounded in us, not in God (1999: 280 and 284).

¹³ See Moreau (1999: especially 280–286) and Moreau (2000: especially section 4.3).

¹⁴ OA.39.748.

understands because God's will is only conceptually distinct from God's understanding.

While I know of no passage where Arnauld makes such a claim explicitly about God's attributes, he says this about another pair of conceptually distinct things: extension and matter. In the *Neuf Lettres*, he writes: "Extension and matter being the same thing, everything that we can say of that thing which has two names under one of these names, can and will have to be said of it under the other name."¹⁵ God's will understands not because of a functional interpenetration of the two attributes but because these attributes are identical and merely conceptually distinct. The importance of the difference between these two accounts can be further illuminated by turning to the question of God's reasons.

9.2 God's Reasons

With Arnauld's account of divine simplicity in mind, we can now consider whether his God acts for reasons. The two main interpretations of Arnauld's account of God's reasons I shall position mine against are Moreau's and Nadler's. Moreau treats Arnauld's God as an agent who acts for reasons, whereas Nadler thinks that Arnauld's God transcends reason altogether. Both Moreau and Nadler claim that Arnauld holds that we are in an epistemic position to know whether God has reasons (though they disagree about whether God has reasons). I argue that Arnauld denies that we are in a position to know whether God has reasons and that his considered view about whether God has reasons, in any sense, is agnosticism. However, he holds that we can know that *if* God has reasons, they are not practical ones.

Nadler's interpretation focuses on two themes in Arnauld's criticisms of Malebranche: the nature of divine simplicity and the nature of God's freedom. Nadler claims that "Arnauld wants to defeat Malebranche's whole way of conceiving the relationship between will and wisdom in God."¹⁶ As we saw in the previous section, Arnauld strongly identifies God's will with God's understanding, and he rejects Malebranche's claim that God consults God's own wisdom. Nadler also cites this passage on divine freedom from *Réflexions II.26*:

By following Malebranche in the manner in which he conceives God, I do not see how He can be indifferent to creating or not creating something

¹⁵ OA.39.147. Ndiaye (1991: 324) points to this passage.

¹⁶ Nadler (2008a: 529).

outside Himself, if He was not indifferent to choosing among several works and among several ways of producing them. (OA.39.600)¹⁷

In Nadler's words, "Malebranche's God, Arnauld claims, cannot possibly satisfy what he sees as St. Thomas's legitimate demand that the will of God remain perfectly self-determining, never willing anything external to itself *ex necessitate*."¹⁸ In the end, according to Nadler, Arnauld's insistence on God's radical simplicity and his account of divine indifference entail that God is a being beyond reason. Nadler makes a strong argument: If Arnauld's God is thoroughly simple, such that all of God's attributes are identical, and if God's complete freedom is indifferent to creating anything other than God, then it is unclear how Arnauld's God could act from reasons.

Yet Moreau has pointed to passages that seem to suggest that Arnauld's God does, in fact, act for reasons. Moreau claims that Arnauld "never wrote 'God acts without reason,'" adding that "he even says the opposite."¹⁹ He offers two passages to substantiate this claim: one from the *Réflexions* and one from the *Neuf Lettres*. The latter passage occurs in the second of the *Neuf Lettres*: "for how will you prove that God had no reason to distribute to human beings all the prosperity or adversity that happens to them by particular volitions?"²⁰ Moreau also cites Book II, chapter 2 of the *Réflexions*: "Who would dare to say that God created all things without reason?"²¹

What should we make of Arnauld's various discussions of whether God acts for reasons? The contexts make it clear that his questions are rhetorical and that he is actually sympathetic to the claim that we cannot prove that God does not have reasons. Accordingly, Moreau has highlighted passages where Arnauld is explicit about not denying that God acts for reasons or that God's actions have ends. Nonetheless, Nadler has presented systematic and compelling evidence for concluding that Arnauld's God does not act for reasons.

In fact, Arnauld offers a consistent position about whether God acts from reasons and his account is best appreciated with his method directly in the background. Arnauld is agnostic about whether God acts for reasons *absolutely* – whether God acts for reasons in any sense at all. But he also thinks we can know that certain types of reasons do not apply to God. Something like this, in fact, is suggested by the passages that Moreau cites:

¹⁷ Translation: Nadler (2008a: 530). ¹⁸ Nadler (2008a: 530). ¹⁹ Moreau (1999: 295).

²⁰ OA.39.30; Moreau (1999: 295, note 2). See also Nadler (2008a: 534).

²¹ OA.39.431; Moreau (1999: 295, note 2).

Arnauld does not claim in either of them that God acts from or for reasons, as Moreau suggests.²² Arnauld's claim in each case is that we dare not state or could not prove a denial that God acts for reasons. As I shall argue, Arnauld's considered view is that we are not in an epistemic position to know whether God acts for reasons. I shall also argue that claiming that God does not act for reasons is, in Arnauld's opinion, audacious because it is well beyond our epistemic means. Yet Malebranche's account of how God acts for reasons is also objectionable because it treats God as a finite being – and this makes his account unacceptable and false. This reading is supported by the contexts of the passages cited by Moreau, as well as by Arnauld's larger epistemological project.

As argued in Chapter 2, Arnauld's epistemological project revolves around a distinction between two legitimate epistemic sources: faith and reason. Reason is grounded in our use of reason and the senses. Faith is grounded in authority. And, as argued in Chapter 8, Arnauld offers a modest view of the scope of reason for questions about God. Since God is infinite, our finite minds cannot comprehend God. Arnauld also allows faith as a legitimate source of knowledge of God. Here we have one case where Arnauld employs this method subtly, consistently, and effectively.

The two passages cited by Moreau concerning God and reasons can be illuminated in the context of this discussion of Arnauld's method. Chapter 2 of Book II of the *Réflexions*, for example, begins with this title:

That we do not in any way find in the idea of the perfect being, that He could will to act outside himself only in order to procure an honor worthy of him: but that S. Augustine, S. Thomas, and all the master Theologians find just the opposite. (OA.39.428)

Arnauld refers to Malebranche's claim that God can create only for God's glory.²³ First, he denies that such a claim is included in the idea of God, adding that no reputable Catholic authority makes such a claim about God. He mentions two grounds for claiming that God can act in order to procure a worthy honor: (i) the idea of a perfect being and (ii) teachings of theologians like Augustine and Aquinas. This reflects his method and view that there are two sources of knowledge about God: reason (in this case, only our idea of God) and faith (authorities in the Catholic tradition).

This method is on display in the relevant chapter of the *Réflexions*. First, Arnauld asks whether one can learn from the idea of God that God acts

²² Both Nadler (2008a) and Schmaltz (2017: 158, note 171) seem to agree that Arnauld claims in these passages that God acts for reasons.

²³ For example, at OC.V.12/R.112.

outside God to procure an honor. Arnauld not only denies this, but he also calls it “manifestly contrary to the vast and immense idea of the infinitely perfect being.”²⁴ He claims the idea of a perfect being is the same idea as “being itself” and “the plenitude of being.” Since such a being lacks nothing, as he tells us, it can desire nothing. He adds that the idea of God includes an “infinite power,” and that God can do or make anything that God wills.²⁵ So, he concludes, not only does the idea of God not include the idea that God can act only for God’s glory, but it is also incompatible with such a claim since an infinite being lacks nothing – glory included.

Arnauld then moves on to what Augustine and Aquinas have to say. He concludes that neither supports Malebranche’s position. In fact, Arnauld quotes Augustine in the passage used by Moreau – as Moreau notes. Arnauld examines what both luminaries say about the issue, concluding that neither underwrites Malebranche’s claim. He invokes both Augustine and Aquinas to confirm his own claim that Malebranche’s account treats God like a creature.

In the passage cited, then, Arnauld denies Malebranche’s claim about God’s action by first denying that it is grounded in the idea of God and then charging that it is contrary to that idea. He also goes on to deny that Malebranche’s claim is grounded in Catholic tradition, pointing to Augustine and Aquinas. Given the framework of his epistemological project, Arnauld’s considered view is that, for most questions about God, there are only two epistemic grounds: the clear idea of God, and Catholic tradition and scripture. This is the same approach Arnauld takes when he examines Malebranche’s claim that God acts by general volitions and very rarely by particular volitions (cited in the introduction to Chapter 8).

In addition, just before the *Réflexions II.2* passage, Arnauld considers Malebranche’s claim that “God, being able to act only for his glory, and being able to find it only in himself, cannot have had any other end [*dessein*] in the creation of the world than the establishment of his Church.”²⁶ Arnauld distinguishes between the claims that (i) God, in fact, created the world only for Jesus Christ and (ii) that God *could* create the world only for Jesus Christ. He insists that, since the second restricts God’s will in a way found “neither in Scripture nor in Tradition,” it could “be

²⁴ OA.39.430. ²⁵ OA.39.429.

²⁶ OA.39.424. Arnauld cites Article 1 of Book One of the *Traité* OC.V.12/R.112, translation slightly amended.

based only on clear notions, manifestly contained in the idea of the perfect being.”²⁷

In keeping with his method, Arnauld maintains that there are two possible sources for knowledge of whether God acts according to reasons: faith and reason. With respect to the former, we have scripture and tradition to inform us. With respect to the latter, we only have the idea of God. Furthermore, guided by Arnauld’s epistemic project and the no-proportio principle, we can examine this idea and unpack what it contains. But we are not in an epistemic position to make analogical inferences from this idea.

In order to examine Arnauld’s position in detail, we can distinguish practical rationality from rationality in general. R. Jay Wallace suggests that practical rationality is the

capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what one is to do. Deliberation of this kind is practical in at least two senses. First, it is practical in its subject matter, insofar as it is concerned with action. But it is also practical in its consequences or its issue, insofar as reflection about action itself directly moves people to act.²⁸

Arnauld holds, I argue, that it is within our epistemic means to deny that God acts according to practical reasons so defined. Our idea of God precludes thinking of God as a being who needs to resolve, by reflecting on it, any question about what to do. Arnauld tells us that this pertains only to beings who lack knowledge and that God lacks nothing. Moreover, nothing can constrain God’s will, and any reasons in the relevant sense would constrain it. Both these facts are within our epistemic means because they result just from unpacking our innate idea of God.

Does rationality of any kind apply to God, however? Again, Arnauld has two sources to answer this question: He can appeal to the idea of God or to authority and scripture. As his discussion of divine simplicity confirms, he takes our innate and clear idea of God as evidence that God is wise: In fact, God is wisdom. However, to ask what it is for God to be wise is a question we must approach with caution. We can deny that God’s wisdom consists in what Malebranche describes not just because his account exceeds our epistemic means but also because we can know it to be false since it is at odds with God’s infinity. But it would be a mistake to infer, simply from our idea of God, what it is for God to be wise. God is infinite and beyond our capacity: Given the no-proportio principle, we lack the principles to

²⁷ OA.39.424. See also Bouillier (1868: 201). ²⁸ Wallace (2020).

discover what God's wisdom consists in. Perhaps it involves reasons of some sort – albeit reasons that are nonmotivating and do not resemble reasons that creatures act on.

The other possible sources of knowledge about God's wisdom is authority: scripture and Catholic tradition. In the chapter from the *Réflexions* discussed above, in addition to arguing that neither Augustine nor Aquinas support Malebranche's account, Arnauld considers a different reason offered by Augustine and Aquinas about why God creates: to communicate goodness to the world. Arnauld treats this as better since it does not saddle God with needing the world to bring God glory. He notes Augustine's remark that "if we ask why God created the heavens and the earth, we must respond only, because he willed it: and if we ask again why he willed it, it must be said that this question is impertinent, because there can be no cause of the will of God." He continues:

We can nevertheless assign a final cause, for which God has willed to make the world that he willed to make and that he made. For, as it is said in Proverbs, "God has made all things for himself," one can also say that God willed to create the world for himself. (OA.39.434)

Although Arnauld warns that it is impertinent or audacious even to ask whether God's will has a cause, he also relies on Augustine and Proverbs to support the belief in some purpose in God's action or at least to permit finite beings to assign some purpose to God's action.²⁹

So Nadler is correct: Arnauld does not think that God acts according to practical reasons. And yet Arnauld takes care to preserve the possibility of God's having reasons, though this possibility is grounded in faith, not reason. While acknowledging that nothing can constrain God's will, Arnauld is careful not to conclude that there is no sense in which God's will is rational. I believe Moreau is correct to focus on Arnauld's insisting that God is not capricious or arbitrary and the fact that Arnauld never directly denies that God acts for reasons. However, I think that Moreau's account of what it would mean for God to act for reasons exceeds Arnauld's conception of the limits on our epistemic means. We have evidence that God is wise and that, in some sense, there is purpose in God's actions. But we cannot know whether God's will has any reasons – even reasons internal to God's will.

²⁹ Compare Malebranche's *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*, at OC.XIV.11, where, worried about Quietism, he warns against confusing 'les motifs' with 'la fin' – motives/reasons with ends in actions by finite creatures. See the discussion by Walsh and Lennon (2012) of Malebranche's position.

Before concluding the chapter, I shall consider one objection to Arnauld's account. This worry is motivated by the claim that being agnostic about some claim or view p is a coherent position only if p is itself intelligible. The worry continues that a reason that is nonmotivating is incoherent, and so Arnauld's claim that we should be agnostic about whether God has them is problematic. Or similarly, if the reasons which apply to God are so different from those that apply to creatures, they should no longer be considered reasons.³⁰ I think that Arnauld would respond by focusing on three things. First, he would emphasize the faith-based reasons we have to believe there is some sense in which reasons (or at least reason or purpose) apply to God. And, he would rely on that to ground his calling them reasons or at least that God is reasonable and/or purposeful. Second, as will be discussed in the next two chapters, Arnauld is sympathetic to the view that predicates do not apply to God and creatures in the same way. He would not be bothered by the claim that any sort of reason that applies to God would be different in kind from reasons as applied to creatures; Indeed, he would find it a strength of the view. Finally, third, I think Arnauld would claim that in cases involving infiniteness, the fact that we cannot conceive of how something might be coherent does not give us reason to doubt its possibility, especially if there are strong reasons from faith or reason for thinking it might be possible. In the dazzled by infinity passage, Arnauld notes that "it is ridiculous to try to confine [God's power] within the narrow limits of the mind." Arnauld would say the same of God's wisdom. Since we have faith-based evidence that some type of reason applies to God, and the idea of God precludes reasons for God that are practical, we should remain agnostic on whether other reasons might apply to God, conceivable or otherwise.

9.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for two key components of Arnauld's "partially hidden" conception of God. I have defended an interpretation of Arnauld according to which he endorses a strong conception of divine simplicity. According to this conception of divine simplicity, God, God's action, and God's attributes are identical, even though God, God's action, and God's attributes are conceptually distinct. Moreover, there are no conceptual priorities among God, God's action, and God's attributes. As to whether God acts for reasons, I have argued that Arnauld's

³⁰ I thank one of CUP's readers for raising this worry.

considered position is 'mitigated agnosticism on rationality.' Arnauld believes we lack the epistemic means to determine whether there is any sense in which God acts for reasons, although we can know that some conceptions of how God acts for reasons – like Malebranche's – are mistaken.

The arguments of this chapter also help us focus on the nature of Arnauld's principal objections to Malebranche on God's *modus operandi* and God's relation to reasons. First, Arnauld objects to Malebranche's method for answering this question – he thinks Malebranche treats God as much too accessible through reason and objects that Malebranche goes beyond his epistemic means. With respect to God's reasons in particular, Moreau argues that the primary objection is epistemic: Arnauld acknowledges that God has reasons but objects to Malebranche's claim to have access to what those reasons are. Nadler suggests the primary objection is metaphysical: Arnauld denies God has reasons while Malebranche thinks God has reasons accessible to humans. In essence, I have argued that Arnauld has both epistemic and metaphysical objections. Arnauld thinks that Malebranche's account is wrong in that it mistakenly holds that God acts according to practical reasons. We are in a position to rule out that God acts accordingly. Epistemically, Arnauld holds that we are not in a position to know, especially through reason, whether God has reasons in any sense at all.

God and the Eternal Truths I
1641–1648

In the previous two chapters, I outlined two components of Arnauld's partially hidden conception of God. In Chapter 8, I offered an interpretation of his account of our epistemic access to God. In Chapter 9, I considered Arnauld's accounts of divine simplicity and whether God acts for reasons. In this chapter and the next, I turn to the question that has vexed Arnauld interpreters more than any other: whether Arnauld followed Descartes in embracing the creation doctrine. One reason this question has proven so difficult is that Arnauld never explicitly takes a stand on the doctrine. Arnauld's relative silence is especially surprising since he had many opportunities, and at least one direct invitation, to take a stand on this distinctly Cartesian issue but did not.

Arnauld's position on the creation doctrine is among the most disputed questions in Arnauld scholarship. The majority opinion, held by Kremer for example, is that he rejected it.¹ Other scholars have claimed that Arnauld never took a position on the issue, or that he accepted the possibility of the doctrine.² As discussed in the Preface to Part II, Moreau and Nadler have argued that, despite his lack of an explicit defense, Arnauld holds the creation doctrine.³ Both Moreau's and Nadler's respective interpretations rely on arguing that Arnauld holds positions about God that are similar to the positions Descartes uses as motivations for the creation doctrine and/or Arnauld holds positions that commit him to the creation doctrine. I shall argue that Arnauld endorses an epistemic version, but not a metaphysical version, of the creation

¹ Kremer (1996a: 86–87). For other accounts according to which Arnauld rejected the creation doctrine, see Ndiaye (1991: 323–358); Ndiaye (1996); Faye (2005); Schmaltz (2017: 164) [cf., Schmaltz (2002: 15–16 and 250)].

² Carraud (1996: 104) suggests that Arnauld is accepting the possibility that the creation doctrine is true.

³ Moreau (1999) and Nadler (2008a). For Moreau (1999), see ch. 6, esp. pp. 159–181. See also Laporte (1922: 335, note 28); and Stencil (2016: 23, note 34). See also Nelson (1993).

doctrine.⁴ I explain this distinction more thoroughly in Section 10.1; but roughly, the metaphysical version of the doctrine claims that God created the eternal truths and the epistemic version is the view that we cannot know whether God is limited by anything (including the eternal truths) and so we cannot rule out the possibility that God created the eternal truths.

Whether Arnauld held some version of the creation doctrine is of no small consequence. As Schmaltz has shown, the creation doctrine is a central feature of what he calls radical Cartesianism and concerns the metaphysical foundation of Descartes's thought, not least because of the significance Descartes put on the doctrine, and the fundamental role it plays in the systems of later Cartesians like Robert Desgabets and Pierre-Sylvain Régis.⁵ Arnauld's position on the creation doctrine is a central issue for understanding his Cartesianism, his account of God, and more broadly, for understanding the French reception of Descartes.⁶

In addition to his relative silence on the matter, understanding Arnauld's position on the creation doctrine has at least two major obstacles. The first obstacle is knowing what the creation doctrine is. Descartes's own discussion of the creation doctrine is underdeveloped and there are many plausible interpretations of his position. Both Moreau and Nadler argue that Arnauld endorses the creation doctrine, and both scholars seem to treat Arnauld as having largely adopted Descartes's exact position. But they disagree about what Descartes's position is, and subsequently offer different readings of Arnauld. Further, other seventeenth-century thinkers, like Desgabets, claim to be following Descartes on the creation doctrine even though they make claims that exceed anything Descartes explicitly claimed.⁷ And, it is certainly the case that one could hold a version of the creation doctrine even if the version one holds is not identical to Descartes's.

The second substantive obstacle to a proper understanding of Arnauld on this issue is that he considers issues related to the creation doctrine in texts as early as 1641 and as late as 1693 and it is not clear he is consistent

⁴ See also Stencil (2019b) which is the basis for Chapter 11.

⁵ Schmaltz (2002: 17, 77). In this context Schmaltz uses 'radical' "in the more etymological sense of getting to the 'root' of Descartes's thought" (17). This is so, as Schmaltz notes, despite the fact that the doctrine is "virtually absent" in the works Descartes published in his lifetime (77–78). See also Marion (1981). For Desgabets, see *Traité de l'indéfectibilité des créatures* (OPD volumes 2 and 3). For Régis, see *L'Usage de la raison et de la foi*.

⁶ For discussion of the varieties of French Cartesianism, see Schmaltz (2002 and 2017).

⁷ See Schmaltz (2002: 91–92) for discussion.

through all of these texts. Many of the treatments of Arnauld that deny he held the creation doctrine focus on the early texts. Moreau and Nadler both acknowledge that Arnauld does not hold the creation doctrine in the early texts and that he ultimately adopts the creation doctrine in later texts, especially in the debate with Malebranche. But, they also disagree about the nature of his early view.⁸

In this chapter and the next, I offer an interpretation of Arnauld throughout his early texts (this chapter) and later texts (next chapter) that simultaneously explains both his position and evasion with respect to the creation doctrine and addresses both obstacles mentioned above. With respect to the first obstacle, I argue that Arnauld, at no point in his life, positively holds the *metaphysical* version of the creation doctrine. This is the version most often attributed to Descartes, and both Moreau's and Nadler's interpretations of Arnauld fall into this category. Arnauld does hold for most of his life, however, an *epistemic* version of the doctrine. If my argument about Arnauld's view is correct, and Descartes does in fact hold a metaphysical version of the doctrine as most scholars (and I) believe, Arnauld's position on the creation doctrine is not simply an endorsement of Descartes's view. While influenced by Descartes, Arnauld's account is also infused with his own insights. A proper appreciation of Arnauld's view acknowledges him as an original thinker, and not simply an able defender of Cartesianism.

With respect to the second obstacle, I focus on two clusters of texts that best inform his view on the creation doctrine. The first set of texts were written in the 1640s and surround his interaction with Descartes or were written while studying and teaching at the Sorbonne. The second set of texts is his correspondence with Leibniz from the 1680s and his debate with Malebranche (focusing on texts from the 1680s).⁹

The position I defend in these two chapters is as follows. In the early texts, I argue that Arnauld initially defends a view in accordance with his early nominalism, according to which God is limited (only) by the principle of noncontradiction. While not a version of the creation doctrine, it is potentially a type of modal voluntarism, or perhaps a type of

⁸ Moreau (1999) and Nadler (2008b: 204–210).

⁹ While I do not address it in this book, there is some debate about Arnauld's position in the Thomistic-turn texts as well, especially the *Dissertatio Bipartita*, and the *Règles*. Moreau (1999: 159–172) argues these late texts suggest the creation doctrine while Faye (2005: 204–209) and Schmaltz (2017: 164) argue they do not. On my view, the issues addressed in these texts, despite some of the terminology used, are primarily not related to the creation doctrine, and there is nothing to suggest he changes his view from the position I defend in Chapter 11.

modal transcendentalism. I'll elaborate on these views below, but modal transcendentalism grounds modality (at least the principle of noncontradiction) independent of God, while modal voluntarism grounds it in God's will. Modal voluntarism does not entail (at least according to some philosophers with whom Arnauld was likely familiar) a free creation of the modal truths, but only that it is God's will or power that grounds them. Starting as early as 1641, Arnauld's views on God begin to change, and there is a clear shift in Arnauld's views on this issue during the 1640s. Although the texts are a bit ambiguous, I suggest that Arnauld likely holds the epistemic creation doctrine by 1648. In the second set of texts, addressed in the next chapter, especially his polemic with Malebranche and correspondence with Leibniz, I argue that, despite his lack of an explicit endorsement of such a view, Arnauld does in fact hold the epistemic creation doctrine during this period of his life.

In this chapter, I examine four texts from the 1640s that inform Arnauld's views on the creation doctrine: the *Fourth Objections* (1641), the *Conclusions* (1641), *Quod est nomen Dei?* (1647), and the *New Objections* (1648).¹⁰ In addition, the defense itself of the *Conclusions* will play a key part in the discussion. In Section 10.1, I outline the distinction between the metaphysical and the epistemological versions of the creation doctrine. Then in Section 10.2, I situate the scholarly debate on Arnauld's early view and focus on the text of the *Conclusions* and relate the view there to nominalism and Ockham's views in particular. In Section 10.3, I focus on the *Fourth Objections*. I conclude these two sections by suggesting that Arnauld's early view is either a modal transcendentalism in the spirit of certain interpretations of Ockham, or a modal voluntarism. In Section 10.4, I consider the defense of the *Conclusions* and *Quod est nomen Dei?*. It is here that we see Arnauld's view begin to change and become more clearly voluntarist. I conclude, in Section 10.5, by considering the *New Objections* and argue that in this text Arnauld likely holds the epistemic creation doctrine.

10.1 The Epistemic and Metaphysical Creation Doctrines

The metaphysical version of the creation doctrine is the view that God freely creates the eternal truths, such that God could have done otherwise.

¹⁰ See Chapter 1 for more details on the texts and relevant chronology. To date, there has been no systematic study of the early four texts with respect to the question of God and possibility in Arnauld's early career. Moreau (1999: 173–175) is the most thorough to date.

Most often, such interpretations of Descartes include the fact that God can make (or could have made) contradictions true.¹¹ Descartes usually suggests the metaphysical version of the view when discussing the doctrine. The passages cited in the Preface to Part II where I discuss the eternal truths in Descartes seem to suggest this view. Another passage from the letters to Mersenne further suggests this metaphysical reading:

You ask also what necessitated God to create these truths [the eternal truths]; and I reply that he was free to make it not true that all the radii of the circle are equal – just as free as he was not to create the world. And it is certain that these truths are no more necessarily attached to his essence than are other created things. You ask what God did in order to produce them. I reply that <from all eternity he willed and understood them to be, and by that very fact he created them>. Or, if you reserve the word <created> for the existence of things, then he <established them and made them>. (AT.I.152–153/CSMK.III.25–26)

Descartes tells us that God was free to make mathematical truths different than they are. Passages like this suggest that Descartes's God in fact freely creates the eternal truths in such a way that God could have done otherwise and that that freedom extends to making contradictions true.

The epistemological version of the creation doctrine, on the other hand, is the weaker claim that we are not in a position to know that God is limited by anything, and we cannot know whether God created the eternal truths.¹² Once more, we certainly should not positively claim that God did not create the eternal truths. One passage in which Descartes seems to endorse only this weaker view comes in a 1648 letter to Arnauld himself:

I do not think that we should ever say of anything that it cannot be brought about by God. For since every basis of truth and goodness depends on his omnipotence, I would not dare to say that God cannot make a mountain without a valley, or bring it about that 1 and 2 are not 3. I merely say that he has given me such a mind that I cannot conceive a mountain without a valley, or a

¹¹ Frankfurt (1977) and Walski (2003) hold this view of Descartes. Whether the metaphysical version of the doctrine includes the ability to make all contradictions true is related to what Schmaltz (2002: 80) has called the 'scope problem' – namely, whether any truths are exempt from the doctrine. So, the metaphysical reading combined with a 'limited scope' view might limit some of the potential contradictions within God's power.

¹² One might question my decision in calling this an epistemic version of the creation doctrine, as opposed to an agnosticism about the creation doctrine. While both have merit, my main reasons for calling it such are, first, the literature on Descartes treats this as a version of the creation doctrine and some scholars even treat this as Descartes's view. I want to highlight that connection. Second, it seems to me, at least for Arnauld, the view is not simply that we cannot know whether God created the eternal truths, but that while we have very strong reasons pushing us in that direction, we should stop short of claiming to understand God's omnipotence.

sum of 1 and 2 which is not 3; such things involve a contradiction in my conception. (OA.38.87–88/AT.V.223–224/CSMK.III.358–359/K.195)

In this passage, Descartes does not claim that God could make a mountain without a valley, but that we ought not to claim that God could not. This passage also suggests that we cannot know that God could not make a mountain without a valley. One interpretation of Descartes as holding only an epistemic version of the doctrine suggests that we take him to hold: “for no X ought we to say that God cannot do X ,” where X includes making contradictions true.¹³

10.2 Philosophical Conclusions

There are two prominent interpretations of Arnauld’s early view. Some scholars, like Nadler, Ndiaye, and Kremer, treat Arnauld’s early view concerning God and possibility as in the Augustinian and/or Thomistic tradition.¹⁴ While Augustine and Aquinas do not share the same account of the relation between God and possibility, they agree that possibility is grounded in God, that God’s act of creation is, in some sense at least, guided by the ideas or exemplars of the creatures that God understands as possible, and that such possibility is grounded in God logically and causally independent of God’s will, volition, or power.¹⁵ Nadler offers a nice description of this account of these early works:

There was thus no reason why Arnauld, only beginning his philosophical and theological career, and certainly not yet fully committed to Cartesianism, should not, in preparing [the *Conclusions*], naturally have followed the standard Augustinian and Thomistic line on the uncreated nature of the eternal truths and, consequently, on the general resemblance between God’s way of knowing and willing and our own. (2008b: 207)

Nadler relates Arnauld’s account to Aquinas’s and Augustine’s and also makes an important suggestion – namely, that the young Arnauld holds that God’s way of knowing and willing and our way of knowing and willing generally resemble each other (see the univocity discussion below).¹⁶

¹³ Nelson and Cuning (1999: 144). See also Bennett (1994). For a different account see Normore (1991).

¹⁴ See Kremer (1996a); Ndiaye (1996); and Nadler (2008b: 207). Faye (2005) suggests Arnauld’s view is Thomistic, though generally focuses on the later texts.

¹⁵ For Augustine, see *The City of God* 11.21; and Knuuttila (2001: 109). For Aquinas, see *Summa Theologiae* 1a15.2 and Wippel (1981: 734).

¹⁶ Cf., Schmalz (2002: 86–88) and his discussion of the similarity problem.

A second view, developed by Carraud and endorsed by Moreau, suggests Arnauld's early view is more Ockhamist in nature. In Chapter 1, I defended Carraud's suggestion that Arnauld's early view was in general Ockhamist, or as I prefer, in the broadly nominalist tradition. And as we shall see, this is also true on questions of God and possibility. The nominalists held, generally speaking, that God is limited only by the principle of noncontradiction. There is much suggesting of this nominalist account of God in the *Conclusions*. I here focus on two passages.

The first important passage from the *Conclusions* concerning Arnauld's early view of God is the univocity passage:

Being pertains synonymously to God and to creatures, to substance and to accident. (OA.38.2/TP.10)

In this passage, Arnauld takes a stand on a robust debate between several views about the meaning of predicates. These debates involved issues in a number of different areas, but the aspect that is most of interest to us now is the relation between predicating the same thing or property of God and of finite creatures. As E. Jennifer Ashworth and Domenic D'Ettore concisely explain, the fundamental question is: "How can we speak about a transcendent, totally simple spiritual being without altering the sense of the words we use?"¹⁷ While this debate engages any number of predicates, the central one is whether 'being' when applied to God and finite creatures has the same meaning. Here, in the *Conclusions*, Arnauld defends univocity about 'being' with respect to God and to creatures (and also about substance and accident – another debate in this area). Arnauld claims that at least one predicate – being – applies to God and creatures in a univocal way. What it means for God to be a being and for Wilford the cat to be a being are the same. Univocity is famously defended by Ockham. It is not unique to the nominalist tradition, however; it is also defended by Scotus – the inspiration for the Scotist school of philosophy, for example. Other views in this space include the doctrine of analogy, famously defended by Aquinas – which holds that at least some predicates when applied to God and creatures have analogical meanings, and the doctrine of equivocity – which holds such predicates have equivocal meanings, a view often attributed to Descartes.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ashworth and D'Ettore (2021). I owe much of this paragraph to their article. See also Klima (2012) and Ashworth (2017).

¹⁸ See, for example, Descartes's claim in the *Sixth Replies* that "no essence can belong univocally to both God and his creatures" (AT.VII.433/CSM.II.292), which does not in and of itself require an equivocity reading but simply a denial of univocity.

The second, and more important passage for our purposes, is the possibility of things passage:

Essence is distinguished from existence by the mind alone. Real essence outside of God for all eternity is a waking dream. The possibility of things must not be sought [*repetenda*] anywhere but in the immense power of God [*immense Dei virtute*]. (OA.38.6/TP.22–24)¹⁹

I agree with Carraud and Moreau that this passage especially is suggestive of Arnauld's early nominalism. However, neither scholar elaborates on exactly what Arnauld's view might be.²⁰ In this passage, Arnauld denies that there is any real and eternal essence outside of God. He further suggests that the source of possibility is God's power. One might read this passage as suggesting something like the creation doctrine. Arnauld denies essence outside of God and grounds possibility in God's power. However, this seems to me to read too much into the text. With respect to the first feature, one can deny essence outside of God and ground it in God in some way. Indeed, an Augustinian and/or Thomistic account grounds essence in God. With respect to the second feature, one could ground possibility in God's power without holding that God freely establishes these possibilities. I do think it is the latter claim that pushes us away from an Augustinian and/or Thomistic account to the nominalist account, but it certainly does not demand a creation doctrine reading. While the text is somewhat sparse, I think we can further illuminate what Arnauld's view in this early text might be by turning back to a debate among second scholastic thinkers Arnauld would have been familiar with, the nominalist tradition, Ockham, and how Ockham has been often (mis)interpreted.

Though often overlooked, scholastic philosophy was alive and well in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This period, sometimes called 'second scholasticism,' includes texts that would have been the basis of study for Arnauld at the Sorbonne. Thinkers associated with second scholasticism include Francisco Suárez, John Poinset, Pedro da Fonseca, and Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza.²¹ And Jeffrey Coombs has convincingly argued that questions about the ontological ground of possibility were particularly rich in this period.²² There are at least three key views on the relation of God and possibility, each of which had defenders among second

¹⁹ See Carraud (1995: 124–125). ²⁰ Ibid.; Moreau (1999: 174).

²¹ Coombs (2003). This section is much indebted to Coombs's work. In addition to Coombs, see also Novotný (2013; especially ch. 1); Heider (2014); and Heider (2016) for more discussion of second scholastics.

²² See Coombs (1996 and 2003: e.g., at 225).

scholastics: modal transcendentalism, modal conceptualism or intellectualism, and modal voluntarism.²³

Modal transcendentalism is the view that possibility is grounded independent of God. This ground independent of God could be a type of being, but for many second scholastics this ground “cannot be described as actually existing ‘in any sense.’”²⁴ This qualifier is quite important. While it is difficult to understand what could ground possibility independent of God that does not exist in any sense, this may be the sort of distinction Arnauld has in mind when he specifies *real* essence outside of God for eternity does not exist. Modal conceptualism or intellectualism is the view that possibility is grounded in God’s intellect or ideas.²⁵ Finally, modal voluntarism grounds possibility in God’s power. It is important to distinguish (at least in definition) modal voluntarism and the metaphysical version of the creation doctrine. The metaphysical version of the creation doctrine holds that God freely creates the eternal truths (and as such freely creates the ground of possibility) and God could have done otherwise. While this is a type of modal voluntarism, not all versions of modal voluntarism involve the claim that possibilities could be other than they are. To claim that possibility is ultimately grounded in the divine power (rather than in the divine understanding) does not, by definition at least, rule out some limits on divine power. Perhaps such a view is ultimately untenable, but as we see below, several second scholastic defenders of the position did not accept such an entailment.

With these three views in hand, we can consider Ockham’s view. Arnauld specifically mentions Ockham in the *Conclusions* and Ockham is a key inspiration for the nominalist movement. Ockham offers a robust account of God’s omnipotence and explicitly asserts that “God can do or make (*facere*) anything not involving a contradiction.”²⁶ And, this robust conception of omnipotence is also associated with the nominalists generally. Biel, for example, also holds that God is only limited by the principle of noncontradiction.²⁷ Domingo de Soto (who was for a time a student of the nominalist Mair) in a work first published in 1556 explains that the claim that “God can make everything which implies no contradiction” is

²³ See also Alanen and Knuuttila (1988) and Coombs (1996).

²⁴ Coombs (2003: 202). Coombs offers Cajetan as a defender of this type of view, at 203. Suárez’s view is controversial, though he is often read as defending such a view. For some discussion see, Wells (1981); Karofsky (2001); and Embry (2017).

²⁵ Coombs (2003: 218) offers Capreolus as a defender of this view.

²⁶ See Maurer (1999: 247). Note also the restriction mentioned in note 61.

²⁷ GB.I.419; Oberman (1963: 37); and Coombs (2003: 210–211).

an “axiom” of the nominalists [*Nominalium*].²⁸ And as discussed in Chapter 1, contemporary scholars also acknowledge this connection as in Normore’s “nominalist catechism” which has “anything is possible that does not involve a contradiction, and God can do anything possible” as core doctrines of the nominalists.²⁹ And finally (also discussed in Chapter 1), there were teachers at the Sorbonne during Arnauld’s time who appeared to defend this view (not least, du Chevreul).

In his *Ordinatio*, Ockham considers the following question: “Is the inability to perform the impossible a characteristic of God that is prior [by nature] to the impossible’s inability to be made by God?” In his rejection of the account offered by Henry of Ghent, Ockham claims:

Against this view we can use his [Henry’s] own counter-argument. For he claims elsewhere that we don’t say, “It is impossible for God to do something because it is impossible for the thing in question to be done.” Rather we assert the reverse, viz., “It is impossible for God to do this, therefore it is impossible for this to be done.” Similarly one argues affirmatively that “Because it is possible for God to do this, therefore it is possible for this to be done” and not the reverse, viz., “It is possible for this to be done, therefore God can do it.” This argument clearly gives God’s power as regards creatures priority over the creature’s recipient capacity as regards God and by implication it also gives God’s inability to do the impossible priority over the impossible’s inability to be done by God. (OTh. IV.642–643/WW.448)

In this passage, Ockham might seem to be claiming that the relationship between possibility and God is that God’s power and omnipotence are ontically prior to possibility and that the ultimate ground of possibility is the divine power, which would be a version of modal voluntarism. Modal voluntarism has been historically associated with Ockham often on account of this passage. In his now classic paper, “Ockham and the Textbooks: On the Origin of Possibility,” Allan Wolter examines thirteen popular neoscholastic textbooks from 1883 to 1942 and demonstrates that each of these textbooks offers a “distorted view” of Ockham’s positions.³⁰ Some of these texts suggest that he holds the view that “the internal possibility of a created being depends on the divine power.”³¹ Indeed, Wolter claims that

²⁸ S.104. Cf., Normore (2017: 131) and Lagerlund (2017: 103). For more on de Soto, see Ashworth (1990).

²⁹ Normore (2017: 133). See also Oberman (1960).

³⁰ Wolter’s paper first appeared in 1950, but has since been reprinted in a 2003 collection. I follow the latter. See also Adams (1987: 1069 and 1079–1080); and Maurer (1999: 252).

³¹ Wolter (2003: 292).

“theoretically, Ockham’s position is distinguished from that attributed to Descartes ... Practically, however, the average student is left with the impression that there is but little difference between the two.”³²

Coombs has further suggested that “this distortion already appears in second scholastic textbooks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”³³ Thus it is possible that Arnauld would have associated Ockham or the nominalist tradition with modal voluntarism. In fact, as pointed to by Coombs, modal voluntarism was (perhaps wrongly) often associated with Biel.³⁴ One instance of this attribution that may be of special importance for Arnauld is in a work by Gabriel Vásquez [Vázquez] (1549/1551–1604). In his *Commentariorum ac Disputationum in Primam Partem Sancti Thomae*, Vásquez attributes to Biel the view that “something is called possible, which is able to be made by [God’s] power.”³⁵ Vásquez is an important figure generally. Armand Maurer, for example, claims that “Vasquez was one of the most important links between medieval scholasticism and Cartesianism.”³⁶ More specifically, we know that, starting in 1633, Arnauld attended Jacques Lescot’s lectures at the University of Paris. The editor of Arnauld’s *Oeuvres* reports that these lectures of Lescot were “an abridgment of the Theology of Vásquez.”³⁷ So, it is possible that Arnauld may have associated modal voluntarism with Ockham and the Ockhamist and/or nominalist tradition. One potential, albeit highly speculative, line of influence of this association is via Lescot’s reading of Vásquez’s reading of Biel.

While the association of modal voluntarism and nominalism may be tenuous, Coombs argues that two Jesuits, Fonseca (1528–1599) and Hurtado (1578–1651), defend versions of modal voluntarism.³⁸ While a full examination of their positions is beyond the scope of this chapter, they both at least make claims that suggest voluntarism. Fonseca, for example,

³² Ibid.

³³ Coombs (1996: 238). Another piece of evidence of an association between Ockham and at least some types of voluntarism is that Francisco Suárez attributes to Ockham a moral voluntarism which he describes as the view: “that the natural law consists entirely in a divine command or prohibition proceeding from the will of God, as the Author or Ruler of nature” (*De legibus* 1.6.4/SFTW.190). Suárez claims that this view is “the view one ascribes to William of Occam.” While Suárez is only considering moral truths here, it is noteworthy that he attributes to Ockham the view that they proceed from God’s will and not just power or omnipotence.

³⁴ Cf., Doyle (1996: 441) who suggests that Biel might indeed be in the voluntarist camp.

³⁵ GV.509a. See also Bartholomew Mastrius, *Cursus philosophicus*, tomus V, 26b.

³⁶ Maurer (1962: 355).

³⁷ OA.10.ii; OA.43.6. Larrière notes that Arnauld was not very inspired by these lectures. See also Carraud (1995: 116).

³⁸ Coombs (1996: 238); Coombs (2003: 210–218).

claims that “all beings below God . . . can be conceived in no way however perfectly and distinctly, except depending on God as a primary efficient cause,” and he seems to treat the scope of ‘all beings’ to include possible beings.³⁹ Fonseca goes on to explicitly deny modal conceptualism:⁴⁰ “it ought to be denied that the divine ideas precede altogether by reason the practical knowledge of God, or his executive power.”⁴¹ He adds that “if God did not have the productive power of creatures, it would be the case that he would not be their exemplar.”⁴² Hurtado explicitly claims that “the term ‘possible’ is formally derived from God’s omnipotence.”⁴³ Both Fonseca and Hurtado seem to take the divine power to be the ground of modality. Fonseca and Hurtado are both significant figures in the seventeenth century. Fonseca, often called the “Portuguese Aristotle,” was one of the first Jesuits teaching philosophy at Coimbra in the sixteenth century. He was affiliated with (though often not considered a member of) the *Conimbricenses* and initiated the *Coimbra Commentaries*.⁴⁴ And, Fonseca’s logic was included on the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum*.⁴⁵ Hurtado was similarly influential. In fact, in his recent book on Baroque Scholasticism, Daniel Novotný claims “He [Hurtado] is less known than Suárez, but his influence might have been equal or greater.”⁴⁶ Both Fonseca’s *Commentariorum in libros metaphysicorum* and Hurtado’s *Metaphysica* were published by 1615. So, whether Arnauld associated modal voluntarism with Ockham, Biel, or nominalism, the position seems to be a live option among scholastic thinkers that Arnauld would have familiarity with.

Yet, such modal voluntarism does not seem to be Ockham’s actual view.⁴⁷ Later in the *Ordinatio*, Ockham claims:

And when one asks whether the inability of doing the impossible is something God has prior to the impossible’s inability to be made by God, I say that the inability to do the impossible is not something that God has prior to the impossible’s inability to be done by God. Neither is the impossible’s inability to be made by God prior to God’s inability to do the impossible.

And in the same fashion I say of the affirmative form: the ability to do the possible or to create a creature is not something God has prior to the

³⁹ F.326c; Coombs (1996: 239); and Coombs (2003: 212).

⁴⁰ This type of modal conceptualism is not related to Bennett’s interpretation of Descartes which he calls ‘modal conceptualism.’ See Bennett (1994).

⁴¹ F.326e–f and Coombs (2003: 212). ⁴² F.326f and Coombs (2003: 212).

⁴³ H.827a, translation: Coombs (1996: 239). ⁴⁴ See Doyle (2001).

⁴⁵ For some discussion, see Gilson’s note in Descartes (1967: 118). ⁴⁶ Novotný (2013: 19).

⁴⁷ See Adams (1987: 1079) and Maurer (1999: 252).

creature's ability to be made by God but they are simultaneous by nature in the same way that "to be able to make" and "to be able to be made" are simultaneous by nature. (OTh.IV.649/WW.452–453)

In this passage, Ockham denies that God's omnipotence is prior to a thing's being possible, but neither is a thing's being possible prior to God's will. Wolter suggests that Ockham's view is that: "If we ask: Are things possible because God can create them, or can God create them because they are possible? Ockham replies that neither proposition is true if by 'because' we understand some priority in nature."⁴⁸ Knuuttila suggests that Ockham's view is a type of modal transcendentalism. In Knuuttila's words:

While speaking about possible beings, Ockham also stresses in other places that there are no entities like 'possible being' or 'intelligible being' distinct from the thing itself. Possible beings are possible in and by themselves, but as such they do not have any kind of actuality . . . Ockham says . . . that one of the meanings of the term 'being' is "that to which existence in the world is not repugnant" (*cui non repugnat esse in rerum natura*). Possible beings are beings which though they do not exist can, however, exist.⁴⁹

Whatever one's view of Ockham on this question, it is clear that for Ockham it is not the case that possibles exist in God's understanding or essence prior to God's will. In fact, Ockham's account of divine simplicity rules out such a conception.

The divine wisdom is the same as the divine essence in every way in which the divine essence is the same as the divine essence, and this is equally true of the divine goodness and justice: between them there is absolutely no distinction *ex natura rei* or even non-identity. (OTh.II.17.9–12)⁵⁰

God's understanding is not conceptually prior to God's willing for Ockham.

I cannot here engage the debate about the correct reading of Ockham's view, but what the above discussion shows, I think, is that modal voluntarism is a live view among second scholastics, and a view (rightly or wrongly) associated with the nominalist tradition. Once more, the nominalist tradition was associated with a robust account of divine omnipotence. Modal voluntarism was attributed to Ockham dating back to at least the seventeenth century. Some modern scholars have suggested that Ockham was in fact a modal transcendentalist, though one who held that the ground of possibility independent of God was not a real entity, a view

⁴⁸ Wolter (2003: 292). ⁴⁹ Knuuttila (1993: 146–147). Knuuttila cites OTh.IV.538–540.

⁵⁰ Translation: Maurer (1999: 188).

I'll call Ockhamist transcendentalism. Whatever view of Ockham one has, however, it seems clear that Ockham's view is quite distinct from the Augustinian and/or Thomistic account outlined above.

With this discussion of Ockham and the nominalist tradition in the background, what are we to make of Arnauld's claim in the *Conclusions* that the source of possibility is sought in the divine power and that there is no real essence outside of God for eternity? It is quite natural to read this claim as endorsing some version of modal voluntarism. One issue with attributing a view like this to Arnauld in this early text is that we have no reason to suppose that Arnauld was aware of Descartes's creation doctrine at this point in his life, even though Descartes's first letters on the creation doctrine are from the 1630s. But, there is a strong, if unpopular, tradition of modal voluntarism that Arnauld would have been well aware of, and his comments in the *Conclusions* often suggest his view is a type of modal voluntarism. In the possibility of things passage, Arnauld denies real and eternal essence outside of God. While this might seem to push against modal transcendentalism, it is consistent with that view to the extent that the bounds of possibility independent of God need not be "real" in the spirit of Ockhamist transcendentalism. Perhaps Arnauld is more inclined to something like this latter position. What is most important for our purposes is that, while the precise nature of Arnauld's position may not be accessible from the texts, it does seem to rule out the view that possibility is grounded in God independent of God's power and/or will as the Augustinian and/or Thomistic account would seem to have it, and the view that possibility is grounded in real and eternal essences outside of God.

All in all, the *Conclusions* seems to me to suggest a modal voluntarism, especially since Arnauld connects the ground of possibility to God's power. The *Conclusions* rules out any type of modal conceptualism or intellectualism and the Augustinian and/or Thomistic account. Even in his earliest writings, Arnauld is pushing against a conception of God's *modus operandi* that has God's understanding operating conceptually prior to God's will. Arnauld's view, even if a type of voluntarism, does not extend to making contradictions true. As we will see in the next text, Arnauld explicitly holds there are some things God cannot do. But, as Coombs has shown, Hurtado seems to hold both modal voluntarism and the view that there are limits to God's power. Hurtado tells us that "God cannot remove the rational from a human because it belongs to his concept."⁵¹ So, as interpretations at least we ought to treat the claims as independent.

⁵¹ H.831a. See also Coombs (2003: 216).

10.3 *Fourth Objections*

A second text from the same period in Arnauld's life that engages with these issues is the *Fourth Objections*. The passages most relevant to and often cited from the *Fourth Objections* when considering Arnauld's account of the relation between God and modality revolve around Arnauld's objection to Descartes's claim that God "in a sense stands in the same relation to himself as an efficient cause does to its effect," which is central to Descartes's argument for God's existence in the *Third Meditation*.⁵² There Descartes argues that there must be a being that derives its existence "from itself" [*sit a se*] and this being is God.⁵³

In the *First Objections*, which Arnauld had read when writing the *Fourth Objections*, the Catholic theologian (and Thomist) Caterus pushes Descartes for clarity about what it means for God's own existence to derive from itself. Caterus argues that the phrase 'from itself' can have two meanings. It could be taken in a positive sense and mean "from itself as a cause" or it could be taken in a negative sense and mean "not from another."⁵⁴

In the *First Replies*, Descartes responds to Caterus. Descartes agrees that there are two different senses in which something might derive its existence from itself. However, he claims he meant it in the positive sense:

If we have previously inquired into the cause of God's existing or continuing to exist, and we attend to the immense and incomprehensible power that is contained within the idea of God, then we will have recognized that this power is so exceedingly great that it is plainly the cause of his continuing existence, and nothing but this can be the cause. And if we say as a result that God derives his existence from himself, we will not be using the phrase in its negative sense but in an absolutely positive sense. (AT.VII.110/CSM.II.79–80)

Descartes claims that God causes God's own existence in a positive sense.

In the *Fourth Objections*, Arnauld takes up this line of questioning from Caterus. Arnauld considers Descartes's claim that God "in a sense stands in the same relation to himself as an efficient cause does to its effect" and notes: "This seems to me to be a hard saying, and indeed to be false."⁵⁵ He argues:

I agree that I could only derive my existence from myself if I did so in the positive sense, but I do not agree that the same should be said of God. On the contrary, I think it is a manifest contradiction that anything should

⁵² AT.VII.208/CSM.II.146.

⁵³ AT.VII.49–50/CSM.II.34.

⁵⁴ AT.VII.95/CSM.I.68.

⁵⁵ AT.VII.208/CSM.II.146.

derive its existence positively and as it were causally from itself.
(OA.38.24–25/AT.VII.208/CSM.II.146)

Arnauld tells us that it is a contradiction that anything derives its existence from itself and uses this fact to argue that God cannot do so. He continues:

We should therefore conclude that God cannot be conceived of as deriving existence from himself in the positive sense, except through an imperfection of our intellect, which conceives of God after the fashion of created things.
(OA.38.29/AT.VII.212/CSM.II.149)

These are the central passages Kremer relies on from the *Fourth Objections* to distance Arnauld's view from Descartes's and to relate Arnauld's view of omnipotence to Aquinas's. Arnauld explicitly considers God as subject to the principle of noncontradiction, and as such is unable to "derive his existence from himself." It is clear that Arnauld acknowledges something God cannot do – namely, God cannot cause God to exist as an efficient cause.⁵⁶ And this is indeed good evidence that Arnauld's God is limited by the principle of noncontradiction in this text. As we saw above, however, this fact is consistent with the view I called Ockhamist transcendentalism and some of the versions of modal voluntarism discussed above. In addition, there are a number of considerations that suggest we should not read too much into these claims with respect to Arnauld's position on the creation doctrine or his position with respect to God and possibility more generally.

First, we must consider what Schmaltz has called "the scope problem," and whether claims about what God is able to do with respect to God's own creation apply to the creation doctrine.⁵⁷ The scope problem concerns whether any eternal truths are exempt from the creation doctrine. Two interpretations of Descartes's view have emerged. The universal scope interpretation holds that all eternal truths, even truths about God, fall under the scope of the doctrine. The limited scope interpretation – defended by Martial Gueroult and Schmaltz, for example – suggests exempting some truths from the doctrine.⁵⁸ In a passage suggestive of this latter reading, Descartes tells Mersenne: "the existence of God is the first and most eternal of all possible truths and the one from which alone all others proceed."⁵⁹ I am not here suggesting that the limited scope view of

⁵⁶ Kremer relies on other passages from later in Arnauld's career as well. He suggests that "Arnauld's notion of omnipotence is close to Aquinas's: For any action *A*, God can do *A* so long as neither the proposition that God does *A* nor the proposition that God wills to do *A* is self-contradictory" (1996a: 87).

⁵⁷ Schmaltz (2002: 80). ⁵⁸ Gueroult (1953) and Schmaltz (2002).

⁵⁹ AT.I.149–150/CSMK.III.24.

Descartes is the preferable reading, but rather that claims about what God is able to do relative to God's own creation could have a unique status even if one holds the creation doctrine. In fact, as Schmaltz has shown, Desgabets explicitly claims to be following Descartes on the creation doctrine, and also explicitly restricts the scope of the doctrine to not include truths about the divine essence and God's perfection.⁶⁰

Second, Descartes agrees with Arnauld.⁶¹ Descartes responds to Arnauld's objections: "only three criticisms are raised by M. Arnauld in this section, and they can all be accepted if they are taken in the sense which he intends." Concerning whether "God derives his existence from himself 'positively and as it were causally,'" Descartes claims: "By this I simply meant that the reason why God does not need an efficient cause in order to exist depends on a positive thing, that is, the very immensity of God, which is as positive as anything can be. M. Arnauld, however, shows that God is not self-created or self-preserved by any positive influence of an efficient cause; and this I quite agree with."⁶² If we take Descartes at his word, he agrees with Arnauld's objection. Given Descartes's (nearly) uncontroversial acceptance of the creation doctrine, such claims should not be a litmus test for holding the doctrine.

These two reasons alone suggest that this passage does not entail that Arnauld denies some meaningful version of the creation doctrine, or that his account is Augustinian or Thomistic. In fact, Arnauld's reason that we ought not to think that God does create God's self as an efficient cause is not that God and creatures are of one and the same order and thereby governed by the same laws of logic and causality, but because of their dissimilarity. Arnauld acknowledges that if he [Arnauld] were to derive his existence from himself he would do so in the positive sense. Arnauld's point seems to be that, since he is finite, if he were to cause himself it would have to be by an efficient cause, and so he could not possibly derive his existence from himself. He adds that any conception of God as deriving existence from God in the positive sense is the result of an imperfection of our intellect and conceiving of God after the fashion of a created being. This is reminiscent of claims Arnauld makes in later works that I covered in Chapter 8. Arnauld's point is not that both God and creatures are

⁶⁰ Schmaltz (2002: 90–94).

⁶¹ As would Ockham: "An omnipotent being cannot produce everything that does not involve a contradiction because it cannot produce God. Nevertheless an omnipotent being can bring about everything producible [*factibile*] that does not involve a contradiction, and everything other than God that does not involve a contradiction" (OTh.IV.36), translation Adams (1987: 1155).

⁶² AT.VII.231–232/CSM.II.162.

bound by the same principle of causation, but that they are not. It is not clear how much this aspect of the exchange separates Arnauld from Descartes or informs his broader view.

Returning to Arnauld's objections to Descartes, he adds an example to help elucidate his objection:

We look for the efficient cause of something only in respect of its existence, not in respect of its essence. For example, if I see a triangle, I may look for the efficient cause that is responsible for the existence of this triangle; but I cannot without absurdity inquire into the efficient cause of this triangle's having three angles equal to two right angles. If anyone makes such an inquiry, the correct response would be not to give an efficient cause, but to explain that this is the nature of a triangle. (OA.38.29–30/AT.VII.212/CSM.II.149)

He adds:

But it belongs to the essence of an infinite being that it exists, or, if you will, that it continues in existence, no less than it belongs to the essence of a triangle to have its three angles equal to two right angles. Now if anyone asks why a triangle has its three angles equal to two right angles, we should not answer in terms of an efficient cause, but should simply say that this is the eternal and immutable nature of a triangle. And similarly, if anyone asks why God exists, or continues in existence, we should not try to find either in God or outside him any efficient cause, or quasi-efficient cause . . . we should confine our answer to saying that the reason lies in the nature of a supremely perfect being. (OA.38.30/AT.VII.212–213/CSM.II.149)

Ndiaye relies on these passages to argue that Arnauld denies the creation doctrine. Ndiaye claims, for example, that these passages suggest that: "the eternal and immutable truths of mathematics function like the divine essence. They are to be treated like God."⁶³ While Arnauld denies that we should look for or inquire into the efficient cause of a triangle's essence and that there is an eternal and immutable nature of a triangle, neither of these two claims commits Arnauld to anything resembling an Augustinian or Thomistic account of God and possibility. Nothing in these passages is inconsistent with either a modal voluntarism or an Ockhamist transcendentalism, one of which was likely Arnauld's view in the *Conclusions*. Nor does such a claim commit Arnauld to the view that the mathematical truths function like the divine essence. Indeed, even the metaphysical creation doctrine can acknowledge that there are eternal and immutable

⁶³ Ndiaye (1996: 72–73).

essences of things like triangles; the view is that these essences are created by God.

With the *Conclusions* in mind, what are we to make of Arnauld's claims in the *Fourth Objections* that a triangle has an eternal and immutable nature and that we should not look for the efficient cause of a triangle's having three angles equal to two right angles? Arnauld is not committed to grounding such a nature independent of God (certainly as a 'real' essence), nor in God independent of God's will and/or power. Given the nature of the *Conclusions*, I think Arnauld is best read as being broadly voluntarist here, or at least transcendental Ockhamist. Ockham, for example, suggests:

I maintain that 'eternal' is taken two ways: one way, properly, for what truly, properly, and really actually exists [in God] eternally; another way for what is eternally and immutably understood or cognized, where the latter is an improper or extended use of 'eternal.' I maintain that Ideas are not eternal in the first way, but God alone is eternal this way. Ideas are eternal the second way – i.e., they are eternally and immutably cognized. (OTh.IV.498)⁶⁴

In the *Règles* Arnauld offers a similar suggestion. He claims that "there are two sorts of eternity" – one which pertains to God, and another which is "eternity improperly speaking." The latter is "not attached to any time" and he includes "the circle in general" among the improper eternities.⁶⁵ So, Arnauld could simply be acknowledging some features of the circle in general in this passage without grounding the essence in God's nature. Arnauld is not committed to any essence grounded independent of God or in God's essence independent of God's will or omnipotence because of his commitment to there being an immutable nature of a triangle. It is consistent with his claim that such an essence is eternal insofar as it is eternally willed to be by God in an Ockhamist sense. To be sure, nothing in these texts suggests that Arnauld would deny that God is limited by the principle of noncontradiction, or even that we do not know that God is so limited. He seems to acknowledge that God could not violate the principle of noncontradiction, but the view still seems in the modal voluntarism or Ockhamist transcendentalism camp, not the intellectualist one.

10.4 The Defense and *Quod est nomen Dei?*

On July 25, 1641, Arnauld's student Wallon de Beaupuis defended the *Conclusions*. Fellow Jansenist Pasquier Quesnel reports an interesting

⁶⁴ Translation: Adams (1987: 1056–1057).

⁶⁵ OA.41.228/TP.188.

occurrence at the defense having to do with the doctrine of univocity (which was asserted in the *Conclusions*):

M. de la Barde, a very learned man and subtle theologian . . . attacked this proposition [the doctrine of univocity] and pushed the respondent [Wallon de Beaupuis] vigorously. The president [Arnauld], seeing him embarrassed in the thick of the difficulty, came to his rescue; but he found himself so hard pressed, and so entirely convinced by the arguments of the disputant, that he believed he must pay homage to the truth. He preferred to admit that he had no further reply to make, rather than to search for subterfuges and pretexts such as professors never lack on such an occasion, and that he could have found better than many others. I believe, Monsieur, that you are right, he said to M. de la Barde; and I promise you that from now on I abandon my opinion to follow yours. (OA.38.i–ii)⁶⁶

If we are to trust Quesnel's account, Arnauld abandons the doctrine of univocity for its opposite. The respondent who provoked Arnauld's change of mind – Léonor de La Barde – is significant. Descartes's biographer, Adrien Baillet, notes that La Barde and Descartes were in contact during Descartes's stay in Paris from 1626 to 1628.⁶⁷ In his monumental *Histoire de la Philosophie Cartésien*, Francisque Bouillier reports that La Barde (along with Guillaume Gibieuf) was instrumental in introducing the study of Descartes into the Oratory (of which he was a member) and that La Barde became a "zealous partisan" of Descartes.⁶⁸ La Barde had, only a few months before the defense of the *Conclusions*, sent objections to Descartes's *Meditations* to Mersenne, which would ultimately become part of the *Sixth Objections*.⁶⁹ In the replies to those very objections, though not to La Barde's particular objections, Descartes also denies univocity: "no essence can belong univocally to both God and his creatures."⁷⁰

There is no known record of what arguments La Barde used to convince Arnauld of this change. Yet, I would like to add to the hypothesis I made above that Arnauld's broader views were nominalist, although this suggestion is much more speculative. Given the general nominalist nature of the *Conclusions*, the fact that Arnauld was already an active theologian and the fact that it was La Barde who pushed Arnauld, it seems to me plausible that Arnauld's shift here is not primarily one about God's nature, or the relationship between God and creatures. Rather, Arnauld's shift is simply about the nature of names and whether univocity is required to have

⁶⁶ Translation: Carraud (1995: 122–123). See also Nadler (2008b: 204–208).

⁶⁷ Baillet (1691: 139). ⁶⁸ Bouillier (1868: 9).

⁶⁹ Descartes mentions them in a June 16, 1641 letter to Mersenne, AT.3.385.

⁷⁰ AT.VII.433/CSM.II.292.

knowledge of God. This suggestion can be illuminated by briefly considering Duns Scotus, who also defends univocity, and Ockham.

As Richard Cross explains: "Scotus thinks that non-univocity theories will amount to the claim that all theological statements are equivocal" and that this entails that: "there would be 'no certitude about any concept' that is applied to God."⁷¹ Scotus claims, for example, that "unless 'being' implies one univocal intention [i.e., concept] theology would simply perish."⁷² Cross adds to his account that: "it is clear that Scotus does not want to deny all commonality" to God and creatures, and that "the theological result of all this is that the doctrine of divine ineffability . . . is greatly weakened in Scotus's account."⁷³ Given Cross's analysis, on Scotus's account of univocity, there is at least some resemblance between God and creatures, and univocity is necessary for knowledge of God. Ockham embraces univocity, and agrees with Scotus that it is necessary for knowledge of God.⁷⁴ Ockham allows, however, that univocal concepts can be common to many things that have no likeness at all.⁷⁵ Maurer explains: "Ockham contends that even though God and creatures have nothing real in common, at least we can conceive them in common concepts. We can abstract from creatures a concept of wisdom that is common to both creatures and God, and through this concept we can know that God is wise."⁷⁶ So, Ockham, while denying real resemblance between God and creatures, allows a common concept of being to be employed to ground (quite limited) natural knowledge of God.

Given this background, and the general nature of the 1641 texts, it seems to me that Arnauld does not hold the view, even in 1641, that God and creatures are similar in virtue of anything in God. What is central for Arnauld is that we can have genuine positive knowledge of God, especially via theological sources. When writing the *Fourth Objections* and compiling the *Conclusions*, he agrees with the Scotist/Ockhamist line that knowledge of God requires that at least 'being' pertains univocally to God and creatures, but like Ockham does not think this is so in virtue of any similarity in God and creatures. I speculate that, when tasked with teaching a course in philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1639 to 1641, Arnauld seeks out a philosophy that validates the legitimacy of theological

⁷¹ Cross (1999: 35–36).

⁷² Vatican.16.266, translation: Cross (1999: 36), text in brackets added by Cross.

⁷³ Cross (1999: 39). Cross notes that Scotus's account here is "not very explanatory."

⁷⁴ See *Quodlibetal Questions* 5.14; and Maurer (1999: 283–284). ⁷⁵ See Adams (1987: 954).

⁷⁶ Maurer (1999: 288–289), but see 277–292 for a discussion and comparison of Ockham and Scotus. See also Adams (1987: 952–960).

knowledge, but does not itself transcend the very strict limits of what we as finite creatures can know about God. The nominalist philosophy offers such an account. Arnauld holds a univocity theory that legitimates theological knowledge, but does not demand any robust similarity between God and creatures.⁷⁷

Then, at the defense, La Barde may very well have pushed a Cartesian view – namely, that our innate idea of God undermines the necessity of univocity because we need not abstract from the finite world to God to know truths about God. Arnauld already seemed to hold that we have a priori knowledge of God. He tells us in the *Conclusions*: “to one who is diligently attentive, and free from the prejudices of opinion, it is no less self-evident that God exists than that two is an even number.”⁷⁸ In the *Fourth Objections*, Arnauld tells Descartes that “the only thing I would criticize” about the argument for God’s existence from the innate idea of God concerns material falsity.⁷⁹ Surely Arnauld would have added a criticism that we have an innate idea of God if he denied it, especially given the importance of divine ineffability to his early theological positions. Arnauld was already convinced, I maintain, that God and creatures are so radically different that ‘being’ pertains univocally to God and creatures, despite their sharing no likeness at all on account of anything in God. Arnauld’s view changed only concerning whether univocity was necessary for knowledge of God. Prior to the defense he held that it was, but La Barde convinced him otherwise. At the least the texts do not demand that Arnauld’s view shifts from one holding a strong resemblance between God and creatures that is grounded in something in God, to a different view on the resemblance of God and creatures on the basis of the change in position on univocity.

We do not need to trust Quesnel’s account of the defense of the *Conclusions* in order to see that Arnauld changed his view on univocity. We can confirm that Arnauld changed his position by looking at *Quod est nomen Dei*? Six years after the defense of the *Conclusions*, Wallon de Beaupuis defended his own tentative, again directed by Arnauld (February 9, 1647). In this tentative, Wallon de Beaupuis defends the thesis that “nothing belongs univocally to God and to creatures.”⁸⁰ Later in *Quod est nomen Dei*? we are told that: “it can be clearly demonstrated

⁷⁷ Cf., Carraud’s discussion (1995: 123).

⁷⁸ OA.38.6/TP.24.

⁷⁹ OA.38.21/AT.VII.206/CSM.II.145.

⁸⁰ OA.10.33; see also OA.10.vii–viii; Nadler (2008b: 207–208); Carraud (1995: 123 and note 51); and Moreau (1999: 181–182).

that God exists from the fact . . . that there is some idea of the perfect being in us,” and he reiterates his claim from the *Conclusions* that those free from prejudice know God exists as clearly as that the number two is even.⁸¹ So, while Arnauld maintains his assertion that God’s existence is self-evident, he puts a Cartesian spin on it in endorsing the claim that God’s existence can be known based on the fact that we have an idea of God. This idea of God would be sufficient to ground knowledge of God, in Arnauld’s mind, without univocity.

To be sure, the changing view on univocity to a non-univocity does not entail or even suggest a change on the nature of possibility. It does, however, suggest that Arnauld’s views on God, or how we are able to know things or talk about God, are shifting at least to some extent, and perhaps shifting from a nominalist account to a more Cartesian one. Another passage from *Quod est nomen Dei?* suggests a second shift in Arnauld’s account of God, this one explicitly on God and possibility:

Divine omnipotence does not suppose the possibility of things, but establishes [*constituit*] it. Hence, it ought not be said that God is omnipotent because he is able to do [*potest*] all that is possible, but because he is absolutely able to do everything. (OA.38.33–34/TP.28)⁸²

Moreau has called attention to this passage and suggests that it is neither Ockhamist nor Thomist, but a “Cartesian statement on the creation of the eternal truths.”⁸³ Yet, I think there is more to be said about its content. Arnauld is connecting, similarly to the *Conclusions*, the source of possibility to God’s omnipotence, but seems to go even further. He suggests that omnipotence establishes possibility. ‘Constituit’ here might most naturally be translated as ‘constitutes’ but can also mean ‘establishes’ as I have chosen to translate it, or ‘erects,’ or ‘sets up.’ Depending on one’s reading of the *Conclusions*, Arnauld seems either (a) more likely to be endorsing a version of modal voluntarism, or (b) strengthening the voluntarism from the *Conclusions* in this text. Arnauld even specifies that we should not limit God’s power to what is possible, but to absolutely everything.

I would like to offer two notes of caution, however: Arnauld is still not claiming – at least explicitly – that God is not bound by the principle of noncontradiction. And second, Arnauld is still using language about how we ought to talk about God. He claims it ought not to *be said* that [*unde dici non debet*] God is omnipotent because he is capable of or can do all

⁸¹ OA.10.33/TP.26. ⁸² See also Moreau (1999: 174–175).

⁸³ Moreau (1999: 174–175). Cf., Kremer (2002: 116).

that is possible, but because he can absolutely do everything. I think this is quite deliberate. We have what I think is a pithy description of Arnauld's ultimate view on the creation doctrine. The claim is not the positive claim that God can make contradictions true. Rather, it is the claim that we ought not to say of God that God can do everything possible, but that we ought to say God can do everything. To claim that God can do all that is possible seems to suggest that God is bound by possibility. Claiming that God can do all that is possible (and only all that is possible) is tantamount to claiming to understand the extent of God's power and God's *modus operandi* and this is epistemically beyond us. This obligates God to the principle of noncontradiction and a set of possibilities and is in a way to claim to understand the extent of God's power. In denying that we should say this about God, Arnauld does not seem to hold the positive view that we can know that God can make contradictions true (which in its own way seems to take for granted grasping God's power), but simply that we ought not to say that God cannot. This seems close to what I have called an epistemic version of the creation doctrine.

Before moving on, it is worth emphasizing that, in the years between the *Conclusions* and *Quod est nomen Dei?* Descartes published the *Meditations* in August of 1641, which included his *Fifth* and *Sixth Replies*. In these texts, one gets a sense of Descartes's views on God and the creation doctrine. In the *Sixth Replies*, for example, Descartes denies univocity: "no essence can belong univocally to both God and his creatures."⁸⁴ Descartes also offers an account of the creation doctrine:

If anyone attends to the immeasurable greatness of God he will find it manifestly clear that there can be nothing whatsoever which does not depend on him. This applies not just to everything that subsists, but to all order, every law, and every reason for anything's being true or good. If this were not so, then, as noted a little earlier, God would not have been completely indifferent with respect to the creation of what he did in fact create. If some reason for something's being good had existed prior to his preordination, this would have determined God to prefer those things which it was best to do. But on the contrary, just because he resolved to prefer those things which are now to be done, for this very reason, in the words of Genesis, "they are very good"; in other words, the reason for their goodness depends on the fact that he exercised his will to make them so. (AT.VII.435–436/CSM.II.293–294)⁸⁵

In the time between the defense of the *Conclusions* and *Quod est nomen Dei?* there can be little doubt Arnauld had read this work. He cites the

⁸⁴ AT.VII.433/CSMK.III.292.

⁸⁵ Cf., AT.VII.380/CSM.II.261.

Fifth Objections in a letter from 1648.⁸⁶ It is quite plausible to me that Descartes's endorsement of this view in print led Arnauld to go from a modal voluntarism of the type where we can know that God cannot violate the principle of noncontradiction, to something resembling the epistemic creation doctrine.

10.5 *New Objections*

In his first letter of the 1648 *New Objections*, Arnauld describes himself "as one who agrees with almost everything you [Descartes] have taught in first philosophy" and asks Descartes to "free me from one or another remaining scruple."⁸⁷ One of Arnauld's scruples concerns the relation between vacuums and God's omnipotence. After pushing Descartes for clarification about the relation between the view that a body is identical to its extension and the "doctrine with the Catholic faith, which requires us to believe that the body of Christ is present on the altar without local extension"⁸⁸ – that is, the Eucharist – Arnauld proceeds to ask about Descartes's views on vacuums:

Concerning the vacuum

You claim not only that there is not, but that there cannot be, a vacuum in nature, and that certainly seems to take away from the divine omnipotence. Indeed! Cannot God annihilate the wine in a wine jar without producing another body in its place or permitting anything else to take its place? But the last clause is hardly necessary, since if the wine is destroyed another body could not take its place without leaving a vacuum elsewhere. Therefore either God necessarily conserves all bodies, or, if he can annihilate something, there can also be a vacuum. (OA.38.73–74/AT.V.190/K.188)

After Arnauld offers a suggestion about a natural way in which vacuums might be possible, he adds (hereafter the ignorance passage):

However that may be, I would rather acknowledge my ignorance than convince myself that God necessarily conserves all bodies, or at least that he cannot annihilate any one of them unless he at once creates another. (OA.38.75/AT.V.191/K.188)

Arnauld is troubled by Descartes's views about the vacuum and their relation to God's omnipotence. Descartes's account of matter entails that

⁸⁶ OA.38.67/AT.V.185–186/K.185.

⁸⁷ OA.38.67–68/AT.V.186/K.185.

⁸⁸ OA.38.73/AT.V.190/K.187–188.

empty space is impossible. Arnauld claims that he would rather acknowledge his ignorance than claim that God necessarily conserves all bodies or that God cannot annihilate a body without replacing it with another. While Arnauld's main concern may very well be concerning physical possibility, he offers an account here that is very reminiscent of the epistemic creation doctrine. When faced with a choice of asserting a limit of God's power or embracing his own ignorance, Arnauld chooses ignorance.

In Descartes's initial reply, he tells Arnauld he has nothing to say about the vacuum not found in the *Principles* and invites Arnauld (who writes these letters anonymously) to in-person conversation.⁸⁹ Arnauld follows up and reiterates his worry:

About the vacuum, I confess that I still cannot swallow the proposition that corporeal things are connected in such a way that God could not have created a world unless it was infinite, or annihilate a body without by that very fact being bound to create another of equal quantity, indeed without the space which the annihilated body occupied being understood to be a real and true body in the absence of any new creation. (OA.38.83/AT.V.215/K.192)

Descartes in a second letter responds to Arnauld's inquiries:

For since every aspect of the true and the good depend on his [God's] omnipotence, I would not dare to say that God cannot bring it about that there is a mountain without a valley, or that one and two are not three. But I say only that he has given me a mind such that I cannot conceive a mountain without a valley, or an aggregate of one and two which is not three, etc., and that such things imply a contradiction in my concept. I think that the same should be said about a space which is completely empty, or of a nothing which is extended and a universe of things which is limited, because no limit to the world can be conceived without my thinking of an extension beyond it. Nor can a wine jar be conceived to be so empty that there is nothing extended, and thus no body, in its cavity, because wherever there is extension, there also, necessarily, is body. (OA.38.87–88/AT.V.223–224/K.195–196)

Descartes's reply to Arnauld here is an oft-cited passage in defenses of Descartes as holding an epistemic version of the creation doctrine. Most notably, Jonathan Bennett cites it in his key defense of this type of reading, as do Nelson and David Cunning.⁹⁰ However, it is Arnauld, not

⁸⁹ OA.38.77/AT.V.194/K.190.

⁹⁰ Bennett (1994: 6) and Nelson and Cunning (1999: 144–145).

Descartes, who introduces the idea that he would plead ignorance before limiting God's power.⁹¹ It may well be Arnauld and not Descartes that is the historical genesis of the epistemic creation doctrine. It is in Arnauld's first letter, in the ignorance passage, where he notes he would rather embrace ignorance than accept that God necessarily conserves all bodies.

In the context of *Quod est nomen Dei?* and the other texts from the 1640s, Arnauld's concern becomes even clearer. Arnauld's view is that we should not say of anything that God cannot do it, and creating a vacuum at least seems to be something. So, we ought not to say that God cannot create a vacuum, even if that entails acknowledging our ignorance on the nature of a vacuum and/or the nature of God's power. If we view a truth as a necessary truth, indeed even if it is a necessary truth, we ought not to say that God cannot make (or at least could not have made) that truth false.

Arnauld denies that he can accept that corporeal things are connected in such a way that God could not have created a world unless it were infinite. Arnauld suggests that his concern is not that in the actual world there cannot be a vacuum, but about whether this fact about extension was one that bound God in God's creation. Arnauld would claim, I think, that just because the essence of matter is extension and this renders a vacuum impossible, this is not to say that God could not have created a vacuum or that extension and vacuums are such that God is bound by their relation. To claim that corporeal things are connected in such a way that God could not create a world unless it was infinite, for example, is to claim of something that God cannot do it, and this violates his view defended in *Quod est nomen Dei?* Further, it transgresses our epistemic limits with respect to our access to God.

As of this letter in 1648, I think two of Arnauld's main motivations for his endorsement of the epistemic version of the creation doctrine are in place. The first motivating factor for Arnauld's defense of the epistemic version of the creation doctrine stems from his commitment to a modest epistemic position with respect to God and a refusal to treat God in the manner of created beings. The view that God and creatures do not know or will in any robustly similar way, contra the suggestions of Nadler and others, seems to have been in place from 1641. As Arnauld claims in the *Fourth Objections*, we should not conceive of God after the fashion of created things. To claim that God is bound by certain principles both exceeds our epistemic position (we cannot understand the way in which God creates) and treats God as if God is a finite being who first discovers options grounded in the understanding and wills based on those options.

⁹¹ Cf., Schmaltz (2002: 83, note 20).

Arnauld's second motivation for an epistemic version of the creation doctrine is his insistence on a strong form of divine omnipotence, especially reconciling his strong form of divine omnipotence with necessary truths.⁹² In 1641, Arnauld held that God was limited by the principle of noncontradiction and openly declares something God cannot do – namely, create God as an efficient cause. Nevertheless, even at this early stage in his career, Arnauld was treating the possibility of things as depending on God's immense power. In 1647, Arnauld defends a more robust account, according to which we ought not to say of God that God can do anything possible, but rather that God can do everything. In 1648, Arnauld asserts he would rather embrace his ignorance than limit God's will even with respect to seeming necessary truths. In fact, he, not Descartes, brings up this idea in their exchange. Thus, I conclude that, in 1647 and 1648, Arnauld held an epistemic version of the creation doctrine.

10.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the development of Arnauld's views relative to the creation doctrine through four texts in the 1640s: the *Fourth Objections*, the *Conclusions*, *Quod est nomen Dei?* and the *New Objections*. I have argued that, although Arnauld did not hold any meaningful version of the creation doctrine in the *Fourth Objections* and is willing to claim that God cannot create God as an efficient cause because it is a violation of the principle of noncontradiction, the standard arguments used to show this that align his view with Augustinian or Thomistic accounts are overstated. It is more likely that Arnauld held modal voluntarism, or at least a broadly Ockhamist and/or nominalist view at the beginning of his career. The fact that a figure as significant as Arnauld was seemingly teaching a philosophy course at the Sorbonne inspired by nominalist and Ockhamist teachings is significant not just for a better understanding of Arnauld's thought, but also as an indication of the intellectual climate at the University of Paris in the seventeenth century. I then traced the development of Arnauld's two main motivations for his ultimate endorsement of an epistemic version of the creation doctrine through the texts of the 1640s. By 1647, I believe that Arnauld effectively held the epistemic version of the creation doctrine. The case for Arnauld holding the epistemic version of the creation doctrine is even stronger in his writings in the 1680s, which are the focus of the next chapter.

⁹² See Nadler (1996) for more on the importance of omnipotence to Arnauld.

God and the Eternal Truths II

The 1680s

In the previous chapter, I traced Arnauld's account of the relation between God and possibility through his early texts. I argued that his views develop and change throughout the 1640s. His earliest writings on the relation of God and possibility are sparse, but he likely held either an Ockhamist transcendentalism or a modal voluntarism in 1641. In texts from 1647 and 1648, Arnauld's view is even more likely to be voluntarist. These texts suggest a position like the epistemic creation doctrine, according to which we ought not to say that God is limited by anything and we cannot know whether God is limited by even the principle of noncontradiction. While that argument was admittedly a bit speculative, I shall argue in this chapter that the case for attributing to Arnauld the epistemic creation doctrine in his texts from the 1680s is compelling.

A secondary issue on Arnauld and the creation doctrine that I address in this chapter is why he remained silent on the issue. Arnauld is not known for shying away from controversy and it seems unlikely that the issue would not be of importance to him. Scholars have investigated not only Arnauld's position on the doctrine itself, but also why Arnauld uncharacteristically evades the issue. Carraud offers three possibilities for the silence. First, taking his cue from Henri Gouhier, he suggests that Arnauld could not outwardly endorse the creation doctrine because it would undermine the association he wished to draw between Augustinianism and Cartesianism. Second, he proposes that Arnauld does not want to openly assert the creation doctrine because there "is too much *obscurity* and *difficulty* in that quarter." Finally, Carraud claims that the most fundamental reason Arnauld refuses to endorse the creation doctrine is that he lacked "the audacity to contemplate *in philosophy*" such questions.¹

The plan of the chapter is as follows. In Section 11.1, I briefly review some key parts of my account of Arnauld's view of our epistemological

¹ Carraud (1996: 104). See also Gouhier (1978: 156–164) and Ndiaye (1996).

access to God from Chapter 8 and apply this account directly to the creation doctrine. Importantly, I rely on this epistemic background to make my *prima facie* case that Arnauld held the epistemic creation doctrine in these later texts. I show that Arnauld does not take reason to yield sufficient access to God's *modus operandi* for confirming or denying the metaphysical creation doctrine, but it does ground holding the epistemic creation doctrine. Then, in Section 11.2, I consider the strongest evidence against my reading – namely, that Arnauld holds or at least is committed to the metaphysical version of the doctrine because of his defense of a strong version of divine simplicity and a strong view of divine indifference. Descartes relies on his account of divine simplicity and divine indifference in defense of his own version of the creation doctrine and Arnauld's endorsement of these doctrines might seem to suggest that he holds or is committed to the metaphysical creation doctrine. I argue that Arnauld's account of our epistemic access to God gives him principled reasons for blocking the inference from these doctrines to the creation doctrine, and in so arguing further my case that he holds the epistemic creation doctrine. In Section 11.3, I discuss why Arnauld is relatively silent on the issue. In highlighting the essential role that method plays for Arnauld, I argue that his silence is the result of the fact that the two primary sources of knowledge – tradition and reason – are in *prima facie* tension and calling attention to this tension is the “path to heresy.” I then offer some brief concluding remarks and offer a summary of the subtle Arnauldian position on the creation doctrine.²

11.1 Epistemic Background and the *Prima Facie* Case

In this section, I develop the account of Arnauld's view on our epistemic access to God presented in Chapter 8 and strengthen my *prima facie* case that Arnauld holds the epistemic creation doctrine. Arnauld's ultimate view is that we are not in a position to know whether God freely creates the eternal truths. One important feature of Arnauld's epistemic version of the doctrine, which I develop in Section 11.3, is that, despite not knowing whether God created the eternal truths, Arnauld does hold that there are some situations in which it is permissible to believe and to say that God cannot do something. Notably, we have some evidence in tradition for believing that there are things God cannot do, and Arnauld does not

² One might similarly press the agnosticism requires coherence objection here as well. I think Arnauld's response would be mostly the same as what I outlined at the end of Chapter 9.

dismiss these out of hand even if he does not take these beliefs to attain the level of knowledge.

In Chapter 8, I argued that Arnauld allows three sources of knowledge for God: scripture and tradition; the clear idea of God; and knowledge based on inferences from sensory knowledge. The former is grounded in faith and the latter two in reason. In this section, I focus on reason and return to faith later in the chapter. It seems quite clear that Arnauld would deny that we can acquire knowledge of whether the creation doctrine is true via the senses. For one, as we saw, Arnauld allows for very little such knowledge in the first place. In addition, it is unclear what sensory data could be evidence for such a view. So, if you accept the arguments of Chapter 8, the only source of knowledge of the truth of the creation doctrine via reason is the clear idea of God. I shall further elaborate in Section 11.2, but my view is that Arnauld thinks the creation doctrine is broadly consistent with the idea of God (though there are potential tensions in legitimate scriptural knowledge). However, he does not think that the idea of God is sufficient for knowing that God created the eternal truths. In fact, God's power is for Arnauld a paradigm example of the third supposed type of knowledge – things that are virtually impossible to know with certainty. As noted earlier in the book, Arnauld offers two reasons for some supposed object of knowledge falling into this category:

- i. Because we lack the principles to lead us to them.
- ii. Because they are too disproportionate to the mind.

And, both of these considerations apply to the scope of God's power and the creation doctrine. In the dazzled by infinity passage, also cited in Chapter 8, Arnauld uses God's power as a paradigm case of this third type of supposed knowledge. The Port-Royalists note in that passage that "all questions concerning God's power, which it is ridiculous to try to confine within the narrow limits of the mind, and generally anything having to do with infinity," belong to this category. They explain that since "the mind is finite, it gets lost in and is dazzled by infinity, and remains overwhelmed by the multitude of contrary thoughts that infinity furnishes us."³ So, we have systematic reasons based on Arnauld's method to think he would hold the epistemic creation doctrine.

Arnauld is adamant, however, that we should not provide arbitrary limits to the will of God, and we are not in a position to know that God's will has any limits. Accounts that limit the power of God and

³ OA 4I.358/B.230/CG.295.

conceive of God after the fashion of created things, like Leibniz's and Malebranche's, ought to be rejected. Among other reasons, Arnauld sees them as violating important principles that are in the scope of human knowledge, not least the no-proportio principle. As explained in Chapter 8, this principle holds: "No inference can be made from the finite to the infinite." So, if our idea of God grounds that God is wise or powerful, we cannot reason about how God is wise by comparing God's wisdom to the wisdom of created beings. And, as we shall see, we can positively know that many of the claims made about God based on such inferences are false.

11.2 Arnauld's Epistemological Creation Doctrine

Perhaps the clearest expression of Arnauld's epistemic stance with respect to the creation doctrine is found in his polemic with Malebranche. Arnauld objects to Malebranche's claim that God "consults his wisdom."⁴ For Arnauld, this way of thinking problematically humanizes God's ways of acting:

Did he [Malebranche] really think that this was an expression perfectly conforming to the idea of a perfect being, to say of God that He consults His wisdom? One consults only when one is in doubt; and one consults about how to accomplish one's desires only when there may be some difficulty in achieving what one desires. Neither the one nor the other can be said about the perfect being, whose knowledge is infinite and whose will is all-powerful. (OA.39.449)⁵

Later in the *Réflexions* he returns to this theme and denies that it is permissible to say of God:

'That he consults his wisdom', and it is from there that it happens that all that he wills is wise; as if the word *consult* could pertain to an infinitely perfect being, when we profess that we do not speak according to the common parlance? As if God needs to consult his wisdom so that what he wills is wise? As if his will is not his wisdom? As if everything that he wills is not essentially wise as soon as he wills it. (OA.39.578)⁶

Arnauld also objects to Malebranche's claim that God's "wisdom renders him impotent":⁷

⁴ Malebranche makes such claims often, for example, at OC.V.38/R.121.

⁵ Translation: Nadler (2008a: 529–530). ⁶ Some of the translation is from Nadler (2008a: 531).

⁷ OA.39.747. Arnauld cites the *Addition* to 1.38 of the *Traité*, see OC.V.47.

Can one have thoughts of God more unworthy than to imagine such a disagreement between his wisdom and his will? As if his wisdom and his will were not the same thing. (OA.39.748)⁸

A second theme is Arnauld's criticism that Malebranche's account of God leaves God with too little freedom and indifference. Arnauld claims:

It is worth pointing out how little liberty and indifference the author leaves to God with respect to what he brings about outside himself. I have added, *and indifference*: for we know that the ancient Scholastics believed that God enjoyed a freedom without indifference and without contingency; as in the case of the love he necessarily bears for himself. (OA.39.598)

Arnauld cites Aquinas and continues:

It is not of that sort of freedom that I mean to speak [the scholastic freedom without indifference], but rather that freedom God has with respect to what he brings about outside himself, which must be joined with indifference, because God "loves only his own substance invincibly and necessarily" as S. Thomas teaches. (OA.39.598)

Arnauld concludes that he is "persuaded that [the way Malebranche represents that God acts] is to conceive of God in an altogether human way, and that we would not have these thoughts, if we consulted only the idea of the infinitely perfect being."⁹

In these passages, Arnauld seems to hold an austere form of divine simplicity and a conception of God's will as indifferent. Nadler relies on these and similar passages in his interpretation of Arnauld as endorsing a metaphysical version of the creation doctrine.¹⁰ Nadler suggests, "this talk of God's wisdom (or understanding) being identical with His will and of the 'indifference' of that will should, of course, sound familiar to anyone acquainted with Descartes's doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths."¹¹ So, the similarity between these views and Descartes's might be evidence that Arnauld held the metaphysical creation doctrine. Further, one might suggest that Arnauld is at least committed to the metaphysical creation doctrine because of his commitments to divine simplicity and divine indifference. I argue in this section that Arnauld's epistemic position outlined above offers a principled method for blocking the inference from either simplicity or indifference to the metaphysical creation doctrine. I begin with divine indifference and then consider divine simplicity.

⁸ See also AT.I.146/CSMK.III.23 and Descartes's claim that he wants people to speak of God in a manner "plus dignement."

⁹ OA.39.600. See also Carraud (1996: 98–99). ¹⁰ Nadler (2008a: 529–531). ¹¹ Ibid., 531.

II.2.1 *Divine Indifference*

God's indifferent will with respect to creation is central to Descartes's account of the creation doctrine. In fact, Descartes seems to argue from God's indifferent freedom to the truth of the creation doctrine. In the *Sixth Replies*, Descartes claims:

It is self-contradictory to suppose that the will of God was not indifferent from eternity with respect to everything which has happened or will ever happen . . . God did not will the creation of the world in time because he saw that it would be better this way than if he had created it from eternity; nor did he will that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two right angles because he recognized that it could not be otherwise, and so on. On the contrary, it is because he willed to create the world in time that it is better this way than if he had created it from eternity; and it is because he willed that the three angles of a triangle should necessarily equal two right angles that this is true and cannot be otherwise. (AT.VII.431–432/CSM.II.291)¹²

In the passages cited above, Arnauld seems to endorse a similar view of God's freedom. Arnauld claims that God's will is indifferent to things outside of God. This claim suggests that God has no reasons whatsoever with respect to what and whether to create. It is hard to imagine Arnauld invoking God's indifferent will in an objection to Malebranche without having Descartes's comments in mind. So Arnauld endorses a key component of, or even motivation for, the metaphysical creation doctrine. This might suggest that Arnauld holds the metaphysical creation doctrine, or at least that he is committed to it. To support this interpretation, one might offer the following plausible argument from God's indifferent freedom to the metaphysical creation doctrine:

1. If God has indifferent freedom and there are eternal truths, then God freely creates the eternal truths.
2. God has indifferent freedom and there are eternal truths.

Therefore,

3. God freely creates the eternal truths.¹³

With respect to premise 1, if God's will is indifferent, then God cannot be compelled or determined to will anything, not even by things internal to

¹² See also my discussion in the Preface to Part II, and AT.IV.118–119/CSMK.III.235.

¹³ Descartes seems to make an argument like this at AT.VII.435–436/CSM.II.293–294. See also Kaufman (2003b: 403).

God. Nadler suggests that for Arnauld “God’s will is not guided by anything whatsoever external to the will itself, not even by the dictates of His own wisdom.”¹⁴ One might suggest that, if eternal truths exist and God has indifferent freedom, then they must be indifferently willed by God. Therefore, an indifferent will and the existence of eternal truths entail a free creation of the eternal truths. Arnauld holds that there are necessary or eternal truths.¹⁵ So, if Arnauld is committed to the view that God’s will is indifferent, one might think he is committed to the metaphysical creation doctrine.

Arnauld, however, has the means to block this argument. Specifically, while he does hold that God has indifferent freedom with respect to at least some things, he does not think we can know whether God has complete indifferent freedom – Arnauld would deny that we can know premise 2 is true in the relevant sense. In his objections to Malebranche on divine freedom, he accuses Malebranche of denying God freedom of indifference in what “God brings about outside himself.” He then goes on to state explicitly that he is restricting himself to things outside of God because the Scholastics, notably Aquinas, thought that God has a freedom without indifference and gives the example of “the love he necessarily bears for himself.”¹⁶ In fact, in the Aquinas passage Arnauld cites (*De Potentia*, Question 10, Article 2, Response to the Fifth Objection), Aquinas cites Augustine (*The City of God*, V, 10). Thus, in his discussion of divine indifference, Arnauld is following his method: He is relying on Catholic authority figures in order to answer the question of the nature of divine freedom. Arnauld does not offer a philosophical or reason-based argument to limit God’s will in this exchange with Malebranche, but he is careful to respect the scholastic sources. Arnauld uses the Scholastics not to defend the claim that God has a liberty without indifference, but to defend the claim that God has a freedom of indifference to all things outside of God. It is not clear that he actually endorses Aquinas’s claim about God’s freedom without indifference, but simply invokes it as a consideration and to argue against Malebranche’s claim of additional limits to God’s will.

Earlier in his responses to Malebranche, Arnauld approaches a similar question with respect to reason and our idea of God. Arnauld claims:

¹⁴ Nadler (2011c: 173).

¹⁵ For example, in the *Logic*: “it is necessary to draw a sharp distinction between two sorts of truths. First are truths that concern merely the nature of things and their immutable essence . . . The others concern existing things, especially human and contingent events” (OA.41.398/B.263/CG.339).

¹⁶ This is, perhaps, an odd use of Aquinas. See Carraud (1996: 98–100); and Moreau (1999: 286–292).

“There is nothing more contrary to the idea of a sovereign being than to make him act with a kind of necessity in all he does outside of himself.”¹⁷ This is true, Arnauld claims, because it is at odds with or contrary to the idea of a sovereign being. Any external compulsion or restriction on God is not consonant with our idea of God. We absolutely should not claim that there are external restrictions on God on account of our idea of God. Arnauld suggests that we should not “provide arbitrary boundaries to the freedom of God.”¹⁸ Note, however, that in the discussion based on God’s sovereignty Arnauld concludes not that God’s will is indifferent to things external to God, but only that God’s will is not necessitated. The reason for this is no doubt that he is responding to Malebranche’s view that God’s action is at times governed by a “kind of necessity,” but it is important that Arnauld is careful not to overstate what we can learn about God from God’s sovereignty.

If premise 2 is taken to mean that God is completely indifferent with respect to anything whatsoever, Arnauld does not think we can know whether it is true. Arnauld holds that we know that God’s will is not necessitated with respect to anything God does outside of God, that God’s will is indifferent with respect to things outside of God, and that there are some grounds in tradition to hold that God might not be completely indifferent as God “loves only his own substance invincibly and necessarily.” So, we cannot know whether God’s will is wholly indifferent. And, we should absolutely not provide arbitrary limits to the will of God and reason gives us no basis to give any limits to God’s will. However, our understanding of God is not sufficient to allow us to fully comprehend the nature of God’s freedom, especially with respect to things internal to God.¹⁹

We are not in a position to rule out, through reason, that there is any sense in which God’s will is perhaps guided by reasons or principles. Although we can know by reason that if any such principles exist, then they are internal to the will of God itself, they do not in any way constrain God’s will, and they are not in any way analogous to what it is for a finite mind to be guided by reasons or principles. In sum, we cannot know that premise 2 is true and that God’s will is indifferent to all things, especially those things internal to God, and so we cannot know whether the above argument is sound.

¹⁷ OA.39.204. See also Moreau (2000: 103).

¹⁸ OA.39.603. Translation: Moreau (2000: 103).

¹⁹ Here perhaps the scope problem is again relevant.

11.2.2 *Divine Simplicity*

Descartes's account of divine simplicity is also intimately related to the creation doctrine. Descartes explicitly ties the creation doctrine directly to divine simplicity – for example, in the *Sixth Replies* passage cited in the Preface to Part II. Nadler argues that “the assumption behind [the creation doctrine] is that, in an absolutely simple and omnipotent being such as God, will and understanding are one and the same thing.”²⁰ In the passages cited above, Arnauld seems to embrace a similar conception of divine simplicity, which once again suggests that Arnauld embraces a doctrine central to Descartes's conception of the creation doctrine. This fact might at least suggest that Arnauld holds the metaphysical version of the creation doctrine or even commit him to it. To support this, one might offer the following argument:

4. If God is simple, then there is only a conceptual distinction and no conceptual priorities among God's willing, knowing, and creating.
5. If there is only a conceptual distinction and no conceptual priorities among God's willing, knowing, and creating, then God freely creates the eternal truths.
6. God is simple.

Therefore,

7. God freely creates the eternal truths.

Unlike with divine indifference, in this case I agree that Arnauld's account of divine simplicity is essentially the same as Descartes's. Arnauld holds premises 4 and 6 to be true. To block this argument, Arnauld's only option is to reject 5,²¹ and, premise 5 is intuitive. If all distinction between God's will and understanding is merely a product of our thought, then if God wills something, God understands it and if God understands it, God wills it. There is no room on this system, it seems, for some facts or truths to be grounded in God's understanding and not in God's will. So, God freely creates the eternal truths. Nevertheless, I argue Arnauld's system gives us sufficient means to deny that we can know premise 5.

In the debate with Malebranche, Arnauld objects that it cannot be said of God that God consults in making decisions, denying that the word ‘consult’ could pertain to an infinitely perfect being. One consults, Arnauld claims, only when one doubts or only when there could be some

²⁰ Nadler (2008a: 532).

²¹ Or perhaps to give up validity with respect to arguments about God.

difficulty in achieving what one desires. Arnauld rejects that either of these are consonant with our idea of God. From Arnauld's perspective, Malebranche's suggestion that God consults is based on a violation of the no-proportio principle. To claim that God consults in being wise is to treat God after the manner of a created thing and is not worthy of God. In so doing, we are trying to apply principles that apply to human reasoning – for example, that wise created beings are beings who consult their understanding and follow the best reasons they have – to God. We can know that God is wise – this is grounded in tradition and our idea of God for Arnauld. However, we absolutely should not use principles discovered by studying finite beings to understand in what this wisdom consists. In fact, Arnauld makes a special point to deny that God consults God's wisdom and "*it is from there* that it happens that all that he wills is wise" (emphasis mine). This is very much the way in which we would treat a person's decision-making based on the relation between understanding and will. God is an infinite and simple being who does not have different faculties interacting with each other as is the case in finite persons.

For Arnauld, we can know that Malebranche's account is false because he anthropomorphizes God. We can also know that God is absolutely simple and that God's will and understanding are identical. Arnauld's objection to Malebranche is not that there is no sense in which we can say that God's will is guided by anything or even rational, but that there is nothing in any sense external to that will that compels it. Recall Arnauld's claim to Malebranche: "Who would dare to say that God created all things without reason?"²² As discussed in Chapter 9, Arnauld does not say that God creates with reason, but only that we dare not say God creates without reason. Arnauld would grant that if *per impossibile* God's will and understanding function similarly to the way they function in finite beings, then their being identical would perhaps entail a fully indifferent will with respect to everything. But God's will and God's understanding are infinite. And, for Arnauld, to be infinite is not simply a difference in degree but in kind. We simply cannot fully understand how God operates. It is consistent with what we know about God that there is some way in which God's will and understanding are identical and yet that at least some eternal truths are not created. We can know that any non-created eternal truths (should they exist) are not external constraints on God, but we cannot understand God's *modus operandi* enough to rule out any sense in which God's action is principled. While we can know that God's will and

²² OA.39.431. Cited in Moreau (1999: 295 note 2).

understanding are identical in the strongest sense and that God is not motivated to will things by anything external to that will, we simply do not fully understand how an infinite will/understanding operates. It is possible, as far as we know, that there is some sense in which God's will is rational and/or guided by or constitutive of principles (which might include some eternal truths); therefore, we cannot know whether premise 5 is true.

11.2.3 *The Epistemic Creation Doctrine and Arnauld's Actualism*

Arnauld holds that God's will is indifferent to all things external to God, but we are not in an epistemic position to know whether God's will is fully indifferent with respect to everything. Similarly, we know that God's will and understanding are identical in the strongest sense, but we are not in an epistemic position to fully understand God's *modus operandi*. Asserting the metaphysical creation doctrine transgresses our epistemic position. We should not put arbitrary limits on God's will, and we cannot know whether God's will is limited by anything. Thus, Arnauld holds an epistemic version of the creation doctrine.

A possible objection looms over my account here.²³ In Chapter 7, I argued that Arnauld held an actualist theory of possibility. As noted there, Nelson also attributes an actualism to Arnauld. In Nelson's words, Arnauld "espoused a strongly actualist doctrine. This means [he] thought that all philosophically interesting uses of possibles were analyzable into facts about actually existing things."²⁴ We might think that if Arnauld is an actualist, there is good reason to think that he held the metaphysical creation doctrine.²⁵ If all facts about possibility are analyzable into facts about actual things, and God creates all actual things, then it might seem that God creates all possibility. If God creates all possibility, this might suggest the metaphysical creation doctrine.

In my view, actualism, as defended by Arnauld, does not commit him to the metaphysical creation doctrine. In fact, I think the readings mutually support each other. As noted in Nelson's description of his view, Arnauld's actualism amounts to the fact that all *philosophically interesting* uses of possibles are based on actually existing and created things. According to the epistemic creation doctrine, we cannot know whether God freely

²³ I thank an anonymous referee for bringing this point to my attention.

²⁴ Nelson (1993: 676).

²⁵ Nelson, I think, would agree that actualism does not entail the metaphysical creation doctrine. Nelson and Cunning (1999) argue that Descartes holds an ontological actualism and a version of what I have called the epistemic creation doctrine.

creates the eternal truths. If there are any uncreated eternal truths, that they are so is in principle epistemically cut off from finite beings and thereby philosophically uninteresting; therefore, they do not violate the actualist claim that all philosophically interesting uses of possibles are grounded in actual things. Thus, Arnauld's commitment to actualism does not require thinking that he also endorses the metaphysical creation doctrine.

In fact, Arnauld's discussion of actualism in the correspondence with Leibniz suggests that Arnauld holds only the epistemic version of the creation doctrine. When Arnauld defends actualism, it is in the context of rejecting Leibniz's account of creation. On Leibniz's view, God first surveys possible worlds in God's understanding, which grounds possibility, and then chooses to actualize one. Among Arnauld's responses considered earlier, he notes: "I also find many uncertainties in the way in which we normally represent God as acting. We imagine that before he willed the creation of the world he envisaged an infinite number of possible things amongst which he chose some and rejected others."²⁶ Rather than embrace Leibniz's account, Arnauld offers an actualist account of possibility, including noting that "what we call possible, purely possible, substances cannot be anything other than God's omnipotence, which being a pure act does not permit the existence in it of any possibility," and that we "can conceive of possibilities in the natures which he [God] has created."²⁷ Arnauld rejects Leibniz's account because passive possibility cannot exist in God. Divine simplicity precludes our conceiving of God's acting in a way where there is a passive aspect to God and according to which any of God's faculties are conceptually prior to any other. Suggesting that it is possible for God to have created some particular thing does not entail for Arnauld that that thing was a purely possible substance prior to God's creating it. Rather, God creates it by an active potency. Arnauld's claims here do not entail a specific view on the metaphysical creation doctrine. God's power could create possibility by an active free volition, or possibility could somehow be grounded in God's active power (but not passively in God, as Leibniz holds) or some combination of both.

Arnauld's motivation for his rejection of Leibniz's account, which occurs just before the above passages, is illuminating. I briefly mentioned it at the end of Chapter 7, but it warrants in-depth discussion here:

²⁶ G.II.31/M.31. See Chapter 7 for a more thorough discussion of these passages.

²⁷ G.II.32/M.31–32.

I find it hard to believe that good philosophy consists in seeking out the way God knows things . . . Divine understanding is the rule of the truth of things, as they are in themselves, but so long as we are in this life it does not seem to me that it can be the rule as far as we are concerned. For what do we know at present of God's knowledge? We are aware that he knows all things, and knows them all by a single and very simple act which is his essence. When I say that we are aware of it, I mean that we are assured that it must be so. But do we understand it? And must we not recognize that however assured we are that that is the case, it is impossible for us to conceive how that can be so? Similarly, can we conceive that whereas God's knowledge is his very essence, wholly necessary and immutable, he nevertheless knows an infinite number of things he might not have known, because these things might not have been? The same holds true for his will, which is also his very essence and contains nothing that is not necessary. And yet he wills and has willed from all eternity things that he might not have willed. (G.II.31/M.30–31)

And just after defending his actualism, he notes:

Be that as it may, all that I wish to infer from this obscurity and from the difficulty of knowing in what way things exist in God's knowledge and the nature of the connexion between them and whether it is intrinsic or extrinsic . . . is that it is not in God, who dwells in a light inaccessible to us, that we must seek out the true concepts, specific or individual, of the things that we know, but in the notions of them that we find in ourselves. (G.II.32/M.32)

Arnauld insists that, when approaching questions about the nature of possibility, we focus on concepts in us and not the way God knows things because the way God knows things is epistemically cut off from creatures. Arnauld openly expresses his doubts about the extent to which we understand God, divine simplicity, and the nature of the divine will. We can know that accounts like Leibniz's that passively ground possibility in God or that treat possible substances as somehow possible prior to God's free decrees are false. Arnauld then suggests his actualism as a preferable way of understanding possibility. Central to Arnauld's account is that the way God knows things is cut off from finite beings. Arnauld's actualism is motivated by epistemological concerns as much as by metaphysical ones. Anything beyond the concepts we have of actual things is beyond our epistemic position and of no use philosophically; therefore, we must seek out possibility in the essences created by God. Arnauld's actualism goes hand in hand with his epistemic creation doctrine.

11.3 Silence, Faith, and the Eternal Truths

The interpretation I am offering reveals a straightforward answer to why Arnauld never explicitly rejects the creation doctrine nor explicitly embraces it; we cannot know if it is true. Yet, it does not immediately explain why Arnauld did not simply claim that the creation doctrine is beyond our epistemic position. But Arnauld does offer us enough to put together a plausible explanation. In this section, I argue that Arnauld thinks that the two different sources of knowledge about whether the creation doctrine is true are *prima facie* in tension. Arnauld's considered view, as we see below, is that if we use both sources properly, there will be no conflicts. But the creation doctrine is beyond our epistemic position, so we cannot understand how they are consistent. Arnauld thinks that calling attention to these potential conflicts is the "path to heresy" and will accomplish little, other than turning people away from the Church; therefore, it is best to leave those conflicts unstated.

In an exchange noted by Kremer, while commenting on Malebranche's claim that "the wisdom of God renders him in a sense impotent," Arnauld offers examples from tradition of things that "all the theologians" would agree God cannot do (in some sense at least), including: "to raise someone from the dead in answer to the prayer of a false prophet who would lead an entire people into a false religion by means of this miracle."²⁸ While Kremer suggests that this exchange shows Arnauld denies the creation doctrine, I suggest he is simply following the method I outlined in Chapters 2 and 8. Arnauld is considering Malebranche's claim that God is "powerless" to do certain things and Arnauld acknowledges that there is *prima facie* ground in tradition to limit God's will, but he does not explicitly endorse these limitations. Rather he holds that there is ground for them in tradition as "all the theologians" would accept these examples. He does not claim that God could not do those things absolutely, but focuses on the fact that there is room in tradition for limiting God's power in these specific ways. He then goes on to consider whether Malebranche extends these limits more than is necessary. This gives us at least some reason to think that Arnauld is engaging with his interlocutor in terms of what tradition allows, while simultaneously remaining personally agnostic with respect to the truth of the extent of the limitations on God.

²⁸ OA.39.208. Translation: Kremer (1996: 86). Moreau offers several reasons why this passage does not undermine his account of Arnauld as having held the creation doctrine (1999: 275–279).

To fill out Arnauld's systematic picture, it is helpful to turn again to the *Logic*. As discussed earlier in the book (Chapter 2.1.3), Arnauld and Nicole defend the view that divine faith should have more power over the mind than reason. However Arnauld and Nicole add that divine faith "is never opposed" to what we see by reason, "But we believe it is because we do not pay attention to the limits of the evidence of reason and the senses."²⁹ Divine faith (which Arnauld treats authorities in the Catholic tradition as an extension of) should have more power over the mind than reason. But again, all this claim amounts to for him is that whatever God reveals is true. It gives us no guidance for knowing when some aspect of scripture or tradition is in fact relaying God's message literally or exactly. And, the Port-Royalists hold that reason and divine faith when used appropriately do not conflict, so they do not endorse the view that in tensions between faith and reason, faith wins out.

An example will clarify Arnauld's view. In his debate with Malebranche, Arnauld considers claims from scripture that he says we must not take literally. Arnauld gives examples of God having a body, a throne, and the passions of joy, sadness, and anger. He tells us these are "manifestly unworthy of God." While it might not seem that interesting for Arnauld to deny that God has a body, his discussion helps to illuminate his view about the relation between these two sources. Scripture has passages that suggest, or even assert, that God has a body and human passions. If Arnauld gave absolute priority to scripture over reason in these matters and denied that reason should be used to understand scripture, he ought to accept that God has a body. But, Arnauld claims, using the exact language he uses in his objections to Malebranche, that God's having a body and being subject to human passions are unworthy of God. He adds: "there is nothing . . . more clearly repugnant to the idea of the perfect being than to be corporeal or subject to human passions."³⁰ So, if we take the scriptural passages literally, they are in tension with our idea of God. In this instance, Arnauld uses his idea of God to argue that the scriptural passages must not be interpreted literally. Arnauld thinks this is an easy case where reason informs scripture. What is interesting about it in my judgment is that, as I argue below, the creation doctrine is in a somewhat analogous situation. It is in an analogous position insofar as tradition and the idea of God are in tension. It is disanalogous in that the resolution of the tension is not clear.

All told, Arnauld's account demands that we combine reason and authority in pursuit of questions about God and God's action. Tradition

²⁹ OA.41.396–397/B.262/CG.337.

³⁰ OA.39.237.

and scripture need to be weighed against reason and our idea of God to be properly understood. So, his claim that divine faith should have priority over reason does not entail that we should give up on what reason tells us about God when it seems to conflict with scripture or tradition. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing and we need to weigh the sources against each other. Faith and reason are consistent, but we often mistake overly ambitious pursuits of reason for inconsistencies. Reconciliation is not found by submitting reason to faith, however, but in a give and take between the two.

When there is an apparent tension that is unresolvable, Arnauld seems to think it best to not draw attention to it. After a discussion of the “mystery of Transubstantiation,” the Port-Royalists claim:

Likewise, reason shows us that a single body is not in different places at the same time, nor two bodies in the same place. But this should be understood as a natural condition of bodies, because it would be a defect of reason to suppose that, given that the mind is finite, it could understand the extent of God’s power, which is infinite. Hence when, in order to destroy the mysteries of faith such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Eucharist, heretics set in opposition these alleged impossibilities derived from reason, in doing so they visibly depart from reason, claiming that their minds are able to understand the infinite extent of God’s power. (OA.41.397/B.262/CG.338)³¹

Supposed conflicts between reason and faith are often the result of reasoning beyond what is well grounded and are the path to heresy. God’s power is among the things that we ought not to expect to understand.

While the creation doctrine is not a mystery of faith, as is the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Eucharist, Arnauld holds that it is in a similar position. The latter three are all things that we know to be true based on tradition and scripture, but that reason seems unable to account for. The metaphysical creation doctrine, conversely, is one we do not know whether it is true based on tradition, but reason if pushed beyond its limits might cause unnecessary tensions. Highlighting such tensions is the path to heresy and it is best, all else being equal, to not draw attention to such *prima facie* tensions. In the examples pointed to by Kremer, Arnauld seems to allow at least some situations in which it is permissible to say of something that God cannot do it, or believe of something that God

³¹ The Eucharist and its relation to Cartesian views of matter was an obstacle to Arnauld’s embracing Cartesianism early in his career. See Nadler (1988a) and Schmaltz (2002: 53–67).

cannot do it; however, the cases pointed to by Kremer are grounded in faith and tradition and not in reason.³² Arnauld acknowledges that there is some ground in tradition for these limits to God's will, but does not treat them as attaining the level of knowledge.

11.4 Conclusion

At one point in their exchange, Leibniz suggests that he does not think that Arnauld holds the creation doctrine: "I agree with you against the Cartesians that possible things are possible prior to all the actual decrees of God," (G.II.51/M.56/RL.37). Rather than acknowledge that he disagrees with the Cartesians or defend the creation doctrine, Arnauld claims:

I see no other difficulties remaining except on the possibility of things, and this way of conceiving of God as having chosen the universe that he has created amongst an infinite number of other possible universes that he saw at the same time and did not wish to create. But as that strictly has no bearing upon the concept of the individual nature, and since I should have to ponder too long to make clear what my views on the subject are, or rather what I take exception to in the ideas of others, because they do not

³² One other potential exception is that Arnauld claims that God cannot be a deceiver and/or that God cannot deceive us. In *VFI*, for example: "it is certain, either by reason, assuming that God is not a deceiver, or at least by faith, that I have a body" (OA.38.201/K.22), and in the *Logic*: "God can never deceive us" (OA.41.395/B.260/CG.336). Arnauld sometimes treats these claims as grounded in faith, and sometimes – as in the *VFI* passage – associates them with reason. This might be a case of a belief grounded in reason that limits God's will, which might suggest that there is at least one piece of philosophical knowledge had by Arnauld that puts a limit on God's will. Two considerations are relevant here. First, Descartes makes similar claims about God, for example: "I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me" (AT.VII.54/CSM.II.37). And as noted in the last chapter, given Descartes's holding of some form of the creation doctrine, these sorts of claims should not be used as a litmus test for holding the doctrine. Second, and more importantly, when relating the question to reason, Arnauld often hedges as above where he suggests that we must *assume* that God is not a deceiver. Arnauld seems to believe that God cannot be a deceiver, but he is careful to hedge about whether this can be *known*. One final consideration can point to a way to settle the question. Arnauld associates God's not being a deceiver with God's perfection and goodness, and the absence of limitation on God's will with God's omnipotence and nonpassivity. Although I cannot make the case here, one potential account is that Arnauld holds that God *qua* omnipotent being has no limits, and that God *qua* perfect being does not deceive. Given these two perspectives on divine action (which our finite minds cannot reconcile), we do not know absolutely that God cannot deceive us – hence Arnauld's hedging. In some contexts – for example, while doing epistemology – we can claim that God is not a deceiver. One way to make sense of such a set of claims is that Arnauld could argue that our confidence in God's not being able to deceive us is restricted to the scope of what God in fact willed and the idea of God that God gave us. But we cannot know whether this is an *absolute* restriction on God's will. Perhaps this is another *prima facie* tension in our understanding of God that Arnauld hopes to avoid explicitly engaging with. See also OA.38.354/K.175 and Kremer (1996a).

seem to me to be worthy of God, you will think it advisable, Sir, that I say nothing about it. (G.II.64/M.77)

Arnauld does not directly reply to Leibniz's suggestion. Yet, I think that Arnauld gives us more here than may initially seem. After suggesting it would take too long to make clear his view on God's creation and possibility, he adds: "or rather what I take exception to in the ideas of others, because they do not seem to me to be worthy of God." Arnauld claims that making his views clear on the matter would amount to an account of what he objects to in the thought of others because their accounts are not worthy of God.

The account offered in this part of the book explains these remarks. Arnauld's considered position on this issue is that, outside of tradition and authority, we can know things about God's nature and God's *modus operandi* only if those things are contained in our idea of God. Arnauld holds that we should not endeavor to offer subsequent theories on how God acts from this idea and we should absolutely not conceive of God after the manner of created things; such conceptions are not worthy of God. We can know from our idea of God that God is simple and that God is sovereign. We can further know that many accounts of the relation between God and possibility, such as Leibniz's and Malebranche's, are false.

Arnauld is adamant that we should not make claims about God beyond our knowledge base. Our knowledge base for the creation doctrine is only scripture, tradition, and our idea of God. Our idea of God does not give us an answer to whether the metaphysical creation doctrine is true. While tradition and scripture might suggest some limits to God's power, we are in an epistemic position where we cannot adjudicate whether they are, all things considered, limits, especially when considering our idea of God. So, we cannot know whether the metaphysical creation doctrine is true. These sources might seem in tension; therefore, it's best to not focus on these *prima facie* tensions. And we absolutely should not make claims about God unworthy of an infinite being, as Leibniz and especially Malebranche routinely do.

Nevertheless, there is grounded in tradition some claims of things that God (in some sense) cannot do.³³ Perhaps there is a way in which there are some eternal truths that are not independent of the divine will and yet are

³³ These are often (if not always) moral examples for Arnauld. Such moral constraints on God are at least plausible instances of things that God cannot (in some sense) do. Why Arnauld focuses on moral but not logical constraints is a topic deserving of more study.

not freely and indifferently willed by God. Simply because God's will and understanding are identical, we cannot assume that our finite minds can comprehend God's *modus operandi*.

I suggest that Arnauld would advise that asserting the metaphysical creation doctrine transgresses our epistemic position and is too bold for finite beings, but it is not contrary to our knowledge base with respect to God, at least in the way the accounts of Malebranche and Leibniz are. The creation doctrine does not undermine God's worthiness by conceiving of God after the fashion of a created being. All told, Arnauld holds an epistemic version of the creation doctrine and that calling attention to the *prima facie* tensions in our sources of knowledge in this regard is "the path to heresy."³⁴ Arnauld's position on the creation doctrine is thus an intentional one, and his relative silence is not an indication of disinterest. Appreciating the subtleties of Arnauld's account requires considering him not merely through the lens of Descartes, but as an original thinker worthy of study in his own right.

³⁴ See also Descartes's discussion of preordination and freedom of the will at AT.VIIIa.20/CSM.I.206.

Afterword

Despite his relative lack of celebrity, Antoine Arnauld is a figure of considerable significance. Why Arnauld's philosophical thought is not more often studied is a difficult question, and there are a host of causes that contribute. In these brief concluding remarks, I shall try to alleviate two of them.

I concluded the last chapter by noting that, in order to properly interpret Arnauld's account of the creation doctrine, we must consider him not merely through the lens of Descartes, but as an original thinker worthy of study in his own right. Arnauld has often been treated as an uncritical, albeit shrewd, Cartesian (or Jansenist, or Augustinian). Arnauld himself invites his reputation as a dogmatic follower of Descartes at times, as in a letter to Descartes in 1648 where he describes himself: "As one who agrees with almost everything you have taught in first philosophy."¹ And this association has been made not only by scholars, but also by his peers. Leibniz wrote to Paul Pellison in 1691, for example, that:

Several years ago I exchanged three or four letters with Arnauld . . . It is true he did not want to decide anything, having been in all ways for Descartes for a long time. (A.1.7.196)²

I agree with much contemporary scholarship that rejects this characterization of Arnauld. To be sure, Arnauld is a Cartesian. But, as I think this book makes clear, while Arnauld is greatly influenced in philosophy by Descartes and others, in order to understand and appreciate his thought, we must think of him as an original thinker.

A second reason why Arnauld has not received as much scholarly attention from philosophers as one would expect is that he is often viewed primarily as a theologian whose own philosophical positions are not especially valuable or consistent. While a skilled interlocutor and sharp

¹ OA.38.67/AT.V.186/K.185.

² Translation: Sleigh (1990: 31).

critic of other philosophical systems, his import is limited to that. Voltaire, in 1751, rather harshly expresses some of this, writing of Arnauld that:

No one was born with a more philosophical mind, but his philosophy was corrupted by the faction [*la faction*] which swept him away [Jansenism], and immersed a mind made to enlighten men into 60 years of miserable doctrinal disputes [*disputes de l'école*] and misfortunes that come with stubbornness. (*Siecle de Louis XIV*, p. 492)

There is no doubt that the bulk of Arnauld's intellectual energy concerned theological matters. But, I take the arguments of this book to push against much of the rest of the above picture. While not a system builder, Arnauld's philosophical project is principled and consistent from text to text, with the caveat that his philosophical work spans more than fifty years and, to his credit, some of his views change over the course of his life. The key to appreciating the consistency of his thought is careful attention to his method. Indeed, often when he may seem inconsistent, I think he is simply employing his method carefully. The nature of his texts and the fact that his philosophical texts are often engaging another system invite the impression of an unsystematic thinker. However, an appreciation of his method and ontology, which is central to appreciating his views in these various exchanges, reveals him to be a careful systematic thinker.

Arnauld was a major figure in Europe in the seventeenth century. He was considered an astute and important thinker by his peers and immediate successors. His reputation was well-deserved.

References

Primary Sources

- André, Y.M. 1886. *La vie du R.P. Malebranche*. Paris: Ingold.
- Aquinas, Thomas. 1995. *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*, edited by Anton Pegis. New York: McGraw-Hill [IA].
- Arnauld, Angélique. 1757. *Entretiens ou conférences de la Révérende Mère Marie-Angélique Arnauld, abbesse et réformatrice de Port-Royal*. Brussels: A. Boudet [C].
- Arnauld, Antoine. 1699. *Causa Arnaldina*, edited by Pasquier Quesnel. Apud Hoyoux: Leodici Eburonium [CA].
1775. *Oeuvres de Messire Antoine Arnauld*, 43 vols. Paris: Sigismond D'Arnay [OA].
1781. *La Perpétuité de la foi de l'église Catholique touchant l'eucharistie*, tome premier. Paris: Sigismond D'Arnay [PF].
- 1990a. *On True and False Ideas*, translated by Elmar Kremer. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press [K].
- 1990b. *On True and False Ideas*, translated by Stephen Gaukroger. Manchester: Manchester University Press [SG].
1999. *Examen du traité de l'essence du corps contre Descartes*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard [E].
2001. *Textes philosophiques*, translated and edited by Denis Moreau. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France [TP].
2003. *Oeuvres philosophiques d'Arnauld*, edited by Elmar Kremer and Denis Moreau. Bristol: Thoemmes Press [KM].
2011. *Des varies et des fausses idées*, edited by Denis Moreau. Paris: Vrin.
- Arnauld, Antoine, and Claude Lancelot. 1975. *The Port Royal Grammar*, translated by Jacques Rieux and Bernard E. Rollin. The Hague: Mouton [RR].
- Arnauld, Antoine, and Pierre Nicole. 1981. *La logique ou l'art de penser*, edited by Pierre Clair and François Girbal. Paris: Vrin [CG].
1996. *Logic or the Art of Thinking*, translated by Jill Vance Buroker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [B].
- Baillet, Adrien. 1691. *La vie de Monsieur Descartes*, volume 1. Paris: Daniel Horthemels.

- Biel, Gabriel. 1973–1992. *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*, 5 vols., edited by Wilfridus Werbeck and Udo Hofman. Tübingen: Mohr [GB].
2001. *The Conimbricenses. Some Questions on Signs*, translated by John P. Doyle. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press.
- Cordemoy, Géraud de. 1968. *Oeuvres philosophiques*, edited by Pierre Clair and François Girbal. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France [OP].
2015. *Six Discourses on the Distinction between the Body and the Soul and Treatises on Metaphysics*, translated by Steven Nadler. New York: Oxford University Press [N].
- Cusanus, Nicolaus. 1932–2007. *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia jussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis*. Leipzig/Hamburg: Meiner [OO].
2001. *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism*, translated by Jasper Hopkins. Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning Press [DM].
- Descartes, René. 1954. *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, translated by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company [DPW].
- 1964–1974. *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 11 vols, edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery. Paris: Vrin [AT].
1967. *Discours de la méthode: texte et commentaire par Étienne Gilson*. Paris: Vrin.
- 1984–1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2 vols., translated and edited by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Douglas Murdoch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [CSM].
1991. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*: vol. 3, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugland Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [CSMK].
- Desgabets, Dom Robert. 1983. *Oeuvres philosophiques inédites*, 7 vols., edited by J. Beaudé. Amsterdam: Quadratures [OPD].
- Duns Scotus, John. 1950–2013. *Opera Omnia*, edited by C. Balić and others. Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis [Vatican].
1987. *Philosophical Writings*, translated by Allan Wolter. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett [DSPW].
- Fonseca, Pedro da. 1615. *Commentariorum in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae*, tomus secundus. Cologne: Sumptibus Lazari Zetzneri [F].
- Galen. 1998. *Galen on Antecedent Causes*, translated by R. J. Hankinson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [CP].
- Al-Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid. 2000. *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, translated by Michael E. Marmura. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press [MM].
- Habert, Isaac. 1644. *La défense de la foy de l'église et de l'ancienne doctrine de Sorbonne, touchant les principaux points de la grâce*. Paris: Thomas Blaise.
- Hurtado de Mendoza, Pedro. 1624. *Universa Philosophia*, nova editio. Lyon: Ludovici Prost, Haeredis Roville [H].
- La Forge, Louis de. 1974. *Oeuvres philosophiques, avec une étude bio-bibliographique*, edited by Pierre Claire. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France [T].

1997. *Treatise on the Human Mind*, translated by Desmond M. Clarke. Dordrecht: Kluwer [THM].
- Leibniz, Gottfried. 1875–1890. *Die Philosophischen Schriften von G.W. Leibniz*, 7 vols., edited by C. I. Gerhardt. Berlin: Weidman [G].
- 1923–. *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, edited by German Academy of Sciences of Berlin. Darmstadt and Berlin: Akademie-Verlag [A].
1989. *Philosophical Essays*, edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett [AG].
1997. *Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology*, translated by George Montgomery. La Salle: Open Court Publishing [GM].
- Leibniz, Gottfried, and Antoine Arnauld. 1952. *Lettres de Leibniz à Arnauld: d'après un manuscrit inédit*, edited by Geneviève (Rodis-)Lewis. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France [RL].
1957. *Discours de métaphysique et correspondance avec Arnauld*, edited by Georges Le Roy. Paris: Vrin [LR].
1967. *The Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence*, translated by H. T. Mason. Manchester: Manchester University Press [M].
2016. *The Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence: With Selections from the Correspondence with Ernst, Landgrave of Hessen-Rheinfels*, edited and translated by Stephen Voss. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press [V].
- Malebranche, Nicolas. 1958–1986. *Oeuvres complètes de Malebranche*, 20 vols., edited by André Robinet. Paris: Vrin [OC].
1992. *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, translated by Patrick Riley. Oxford: Clarendon Press [R].
- 1997a. *The Search after Truth*, translated by Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp. New York: Cambridge University Press [LO].
- 1997b. *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion*, edited by Nicholas Jolley and translated by David Scott. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [JS].
- Mastrius, Bartholomew. 1688. *Cursus philosophicus*, tomus V. Venice: Apud Nicolaum Pezzana.
- Molina, Luis de. 1988. *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, translated by Alfred J. Freddoso. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Pascal, Blaise. 1963. *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Louis Lafuma. Paris: Éditions du Seuil [L].
1967. *The Provincial Letters*, translated by A. J. Krailsheimer. London: Penguin Classics.
1995. *Pensées and Other Writings* translated by Honor Levi. Oxford: Oxford University Press [P].
- Pascal, Blaise, Antoine Arnauld, and François de Nonancourt. 2009. *Géométries de Port-Royal*, edited by Dominique Descotes. Paris: Honoré Champion [DD].
- Régis, Pierre-Sylvain. 1690. *Cours entier de philosophie, ou système général selon les principes de M. Descartes*. Amsterdam: Huguetan [PSG].
1704. *L'usage de la raison et de la foi*. Paris: Chez Jean Cusson.

- Reid, Thomas. 2002. *Thomas Reid: Essays on the Intellectual Power of Man*, edited by Derek Brookes. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press [EIP].
- Soto, Domingo de. 1589. *De iustitia et iure, Libri decem*. Medina del Campo: excudebat Fraciscus a Canto [S].
- Suárez, Francisco. 1944. *Selections from Three Works of Francisco Suárez, S.J.*, edited by Thomas Pink and translated by Gwladys L. Williams, Ammi Brown, and John Waldron. Oxford: Clarendon Press [SFTW].
- Vásquez, Gabriel. 1631. *Commentariorum ac Disputationum in Primam Partem Sancti Thomae*. Lyon: Sumptibus Jacob Cardon [GV].
- Voltaire, François-Marie de. 1872. *Siècle de Louis XIV*. Paris: Librairie Hachette.
- William of Ockham. 1967–1988. *Opera Theologica*, 10 vols., edited by Gedeon Gál. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute [OTh].
1969. *Medieval Philosophy: from St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, edited by John F. Wippel and Allan B. Wolter. Toronto, ON: Collier-Macmillan [WW].
1974. *Ockham's Theory of Terms: Part I of the Summa Logicae*, translated by Michael J. Loux. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press [SL].
- 1974–1988. *Opera Philosophica*, 7 vols., edited by Philotheus Boehner. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute [OPh].
1990. *Philosophical Writings*, translated by Philotheus Boehner. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett [OPW].
1991. *Quodlibetal Questions*, translated by Alfred Freddoso and Francis Kelley. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press [FK].

Secondary Sources

- Abercrombie, Nigel. 1936. *The Origins of Jansenism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ablondi, Fred. 2005. *Gerauld de Cordemoy: Atomist, Occasionalist, Cartesian*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press.
- Adams, Marilyn McCord. 1987. *William Ockham*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Adams, Robert Merrihew. 2013. "Malebranche's Causal Concepts." In Watkins (2013): 67–104.
- Adorno, Francesco Paolo. 2005. *Arnauld*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Alanen, Lilli. 1985. "Descartes, Duns Scotus and Ockham on Omnipotence and Possibility." *Franciscan Studies* 45 (1): 157–188.
- Alanen, Lilli, and Simo Knuuttila. 1988. "The Foundations of Modality and Conceivability in Descartes and His Predecessors." In Knuuttila (1988): 1–69.
- Alston, William P. 1991. *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Arbib, Dan. 2019. "The Creation of Eternal Truths: Issues and Context." In Nadler, Schmaltz, and Antoine-Mahut (2019): 531–546.
- Ariew, Roger. 2011. *Descartes among the Scholastics*. Leiden: Brill.

- Ariew, Roger, and Yuval Avnir. 2025. *The Blackwell Companion to Pascal*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ariew, Roger, and Marjorie Grene, eds. 1995. *Descartes and His Contemporaries*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Armogathe, Jean-Robert. 2018. *Études sur Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694)*. Paris: Garnier.
- Ashworth, E. Jennifer. 1990. "Domingo de Soto (1494–1560) and the Doctrine of Signs." In Bursill-Hall, Ebbesen, and Koerner (1990): 35–48.
2017. "Philosophy of Language: Words, Concepts, Things, and Non-Things." In Lagerlund and Hill (2017): 350–372.
- Ashworth, E. Jennifer, and Domenic D'Ettore. 2021. "Medieval Theories of Analogy." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/analogy-medieval/>.
- Auroux, Sylvain. 1985. "The Analytic and the Synthetic as Linguistic Topics." *Topoi* 4 (2): 193–199.
1993. *La logique des idées*. Montreal and Paris: Bellarmin and Vrin.
- Bardout, Jean-Christophe. 1999. *Malebranche et la métaphysique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
2002. "Occasionalism: La Forge, Cordemoy, Geulincx." In Nadler (2002): 140–151.
- Belgioioso, Giulia. 2003. "Arnauld's Posthumous Defense of the 'Philosophie Humaine' against Heretics and Sceptics." In Paganini (2003): 167–196.
- Bennett, Jonathan. 1994. "Descartes's Theory of Modality." *Philosophical Review* 103: 639–667.
- Bernecker, Sven, and Duncan Pritchard, eds. 2011. *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*. New York: Routledge.
- Bolton, Martha Brandt. 1992. "The Epistemological Status of Ideas: Locke Compared to Arnauld." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 9 (4): 409–424.
- Bouchilloux, Hélène. 2006. "Descartes et Saint Augustin: la création des vérités éternelles." *Revue Philosophique* 131: 147–161.
- Bouillier, Francisque. 1868. *Histoire de la philosophie Cartésienne, Tome Second*. Paris: Delagrave.
- Boyle, Deborah. 2009. *Descartes on Innate Ideas*. London: Continuum.
- Bricker, Phillip. 2008. "Concrete Possible Worlds." In Sider, Hawthorne, and Zimmerman (2008): 111–134.
- Broadie, Alexander. 2009. *A History of Scottish Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Brockliss, L. W. B. 1981. "Aristotle, Descartes and the New Science: Natural Philosophy at the University of Paris, 1600–1740." *Annals of Science* 38 (1): 33–69.
- Broughton, Janet. 1986. "Adequate Causes and Natural Change in Descartes' Philosophy in Human Nature and Natural Knowledge." *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 89: 107–127.
2002. *Descartes's Method of Doubt*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Broughton, Janet, and John Carriero, eds. 2007. *A Companion to Descartes*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Brown, Deborah. 2011. "The Duck's Leg: Descartes's Intermediate Distinction." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 35 (1): 26–45.
- Brueckner, Anthony. 2001. "Chalmers's Conceivability Argument for Dualism." *Analysis* 61 (3): 187–193.
- Bueno, Otávio, and Scott A. Shalkowski, eds. 2020. *The Routledge Handbook of Modality*. New York: Routledge.
- Buroker, Jill Vance. 1993. "The Port-Royal Semantics of Terms." *Synthese* 96 (3): 455–475.
1994. "Judgment and Predication in the Port Royal Logic." In Kremer (1994c): 3–27.
- 1996a. "Arnauld on Judging and the Will." In Kremer (1996b): 3–12.
- 1996b. "Introduction." In Arnauld and Nicole (1996): ix–xxvi.
- Bursill-Hall, Geoffrey L., Sten Ebbesen, and E. F. K. Koerner, eds. 1990. *De Ortu Grammaticae: Studies in Medieval Grammar and Linguistic Theory in Memory of Jan Pinborg*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Carraud, Vincent. 1995. "Arnauld: From Ockhamism to Cartesianism." In Ariew and Grene (1995), 110–128.
1996. "Arnauld: A Cartesian Theologian? Omnipotence, Freedom of Indifference, and the Creation of the Eternal Truths." In Kremer (1996b): 91–110.
- Carriero, John. 2009. *Between Two Worlds: A Reading of Descartes' Meditations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Chalmers, David. 1996. *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chamberlain, Colin, Eric Stencil, and Julie Walsh, eds. Forthcoming. *The Oxford Handbook of Malebranche*. Oxford University Press.
- Chappell, Vere, ed. 1997. *Descartes's Meditations: Critical Essays*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Chédozeau, Bernard. 1995. "Antoine Arnauld et Pierre Nicole: le conflit de la grâce générale." *Chronique de Port-Royal* 44: 113–143.
- Chignell, Andrew. 2009. "Descartes on Sensation: A Defense of the Semantic-Causation Model." *Philosophers' Imprint* 9: 1–22.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2009. *Cartesian Linguistics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Clarke, Desmond. 2003. *Descartes' Theory of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, Desmond, and Catherine Wilson, eds. 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, Randolph, Justin Capes, and Philip Swenson. 2021. "Incompatibilist (Nondeterministic) Theories of Free Will." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/incompatibilism-theories/>.

- Clatterbaugh, Kenneth. 1999. *The Causation Debate in Modern Philosophy (1637–1739)*. New York: Routledge.
- Cognet, Louis. 1968. *Le Jansénisme*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Conley, John. 2009. *Adoration and Annihilation: The Convent Philosophy of Port-Royal*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
2016. “Angélique Arnauld.” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by James Fieser and Bradley Dowden. <https://iep.utm.edu/angelique-arnauld/>.
2019. *The Other Pascals: The Philosophy of Jacqueline Pascal, Gilberte Pascal Périer, and Marguerite Périer*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Connolly, Patrick J. 2015. “Henry of Ghent’s Argument for Divine Illumination Reconsidered.” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 89 (1): 47–68.
- Cook, Monte. 1974. “Arnauld’s Alleged Representationalism.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 12 (1): 53–62.
1991. “Malebranche versus Arnauld.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 29 (2): 183–199.
1998. “The Ontological Status of Malebranchian Ideas.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (4): 525–544.
2005. “Desgabets on the Creation of Eternal Truths.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43 (1): 21–36.
- Coombs, Jeffrey. 1996. “Modal Voluntarism in Descartes’s Jesuit Predecessors.” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 7: 237–247.
2003. “The Ontological Source of Logical Possibility in Catholic Second Scholasticism.” In Friedman and Nielson (2003): 191–229.
- Correia, Fabrice. 2008. “Ontological Dependence.” *Philosophy Compass* 3 (5): 1013–1032.
- Cottingham, John, ed. 2008. *Cartesian Reflections: Essays on Descartes’s Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Courtenay, William. 2008. *Ockham and Ockhamism*. Leiden: Brill.
- Crane, Tim. 2001. *Elements of Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cross, Richard. 1999. *Duns Scotus*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cuneo, Terence, and René van Woudenberg, eds. 2004. *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cunning, David. 2022. “Descartes’ Modal Metaphysics.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/descartes-modal/>.
- Curley, Edwin M. 1978. *Descartes Against the Skeptics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
1984. “Descartes on the Creation of Eternal Truths.” *Philosophical Review* 93: 569–597.
- Davies, Brian. 2002a. “Aquinas on What God Is Not.” In Davies (2002b), 227–242.

- ed. 2002b. *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2004. "Anselm and the Ontological Argument." In Davies and Leftow (2004): 157–178.
- Davies, Brian, and Brian Leftow, eds. 2004. *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Davies, Brian, and Eleonore Stump, eds. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Della Rocca, Michael. 2005. "Descartes, the Cartesian Circle, and Epistemology Without God." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70 (1): 1–33.
- Descotes, Dominique. 2009. "Introduction." In Pascal, Arnauld, and Nonancourt (2009): 7–90.
- Di Bella, Stefano, and M. Tad Schmaltz, eds. 2017. *The Problem of Universals in Early Modern Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dijksterhuis, E. J. et al., eds. 1950. *Descartes et le Cartésianisme hollandais: études et documents*. Amsterdam: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Divers, John. 2002. *Possible Worlds*. New York: Routledge.
- Dominicy, Marc. 1984. *La naissance de la grammaire moderne*. Brussels: Pierre Mardaga.
- Downing, Lisa. 2014. "Efficient Causation in Malebranche and Berkeley." In Schmaltz (2014a): 198–230.
- Doyle, John. 1996. "Mastri and Some Jesuits on Possible and Impossible Objects of God's Knowledge and Power." In Forlivesi (1996): 439–468.
2001. "Introduction." In The Conimbricenses (2001): 15–29.
- Doyle, William. 2000. *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- ed. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Duncan, Stewart, and Antonia LoLordo, eds. 2012. *Debates in Modern Philosophy: Essential Readings and Contemporary Responses*. New York: Routledge.
- Easton, Patricia. 2009. "What Is at Stake in the Cartesian Debates on the Eternal Truths?" *Philosophy Compass* 4 (2): 348–362.
- Ekstrom, Laura. 2003. "Free Will, Chance, and Mystery." *Philosophical Studies* 113 (2): 153–180.
- Embry, Brian. 2017. "Francisco Suárez on Eternal Truths, Eternal Essences, and Extrinsic Being." *Ergo* 4: 557–578.
- Fakhry, Majid. 1958. *Islamic Occasionalism and Its Critique in Averroës and Aquinas*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Faye, Emmanuel. 2000a. "Arnauld défenseur de Descartes dans l'Examen du traité de l'essence du corps." *Corpus* 37: 131–159.
- 2000b. "Arnauld l'existence des corps: la controverse avec Malebranche et l'argument du langage." *Rivista di Storia Della Filosofia* 55 (3): 417–433.
2005. "The Cartesianism of Desgabets and Arnauld and the Problem of Eternal Truths." In Garber and Nadler (2005): 193–210.

- Fine, Kit. 1994. "Essence and Modality." In Tomberlin (1994): 1–16.
- 1995a. "Ontological Dependence." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 95: 269–290.
- 1995b. "Senses of Essence." In Sinnott-Armstrong, Raffman, and Asher (1995): 53–73.
- Forlivesi, Marco, ed. 1996. *Rem in seipsa cernere: Saggi sul Pensiero Filosofico di Bartolomeo Mastri (1602–1673)*. Padua: Il Poligrafo.
- Fraenkel, Carlos, Dario Perinetti, and Justin Smith, eds. 2011. *The Rationalists: Between Tradition and Innovation*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Frankfurt, Harry. 1977. "Descartes on the Creation of the Eternal Truths." *The Philosophical Review* 86: 36–57.
- Freddoso, Alfred J. 1988. "Introduction." In Molina (1988): 1–84.
1994. "God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Pitfalls and Prospects." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (2): 131–156.
- Friedman, Russell. 2013. *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250–1350*. Boston, MA: Brill.
- Friedman, Russell, and Lauge Nielson, eds. 2003. *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400–1700*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Frigo, Alberto. 2022. "Remarques sur les origines juridiques de la distinction du fait et du droit." *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 72: 33–46.
- Gabbay, Dov M., and John Woods, eds. 2008. *Handbook of the History of Logic, Volume 2: Mediaeval and Renaissance Logic*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Gallagher, David M. 1994. "Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 76 (3): 247–277.
- Garber, Daniel, and Michael Ayers, eds. 2000. *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garber, Daniel, and Steven Nadler, eds. 2003. *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press.
- eds. 2005. *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- García-Gómez, Sara F. 1988. "Arnauld's Theory of Ideative Knowledge: A Proto-Phenomenological Account." *The Monist* 71 (4): 543–559.
- Gaukroger, Stephen, ed. 2006. *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Gendler, Tamar, and John Hawthorne, eds. 2002. *Conceivability and Possibility*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gilson, Etienne. 2013. *La liberté chez Descartes et la théologie*. Paris: Vrin.
- Goldmann, Lucien. 1959. *Le Dieu caché: Étude sur la vision tragique dans les Pensées de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine*. Paris: Gallimard.
1964. *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine*, translated by Philip Thody. London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Gorham, Geoffrey. 2002. "Descartes on the Innateness of All Ideas." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 32: 355–388.

- Gouhier, Henri. 1971. *Blaise Pascal: commentaires*. Paris: Vrin.
1978. *Cartésianisme et Augustinisme au XVII^e siècle*. Paris: Vrin.
- Greco, John. 2012. "Recent Work on Testimonial Knowledge." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 49 (1): 15–28.
- Grene, Marjorie. 1998. *Descartes*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- Gueroult, Martial. 1953. *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons*, 2 vols. Paris: Aubier.
- 1984–1985. *Descartes' Philosophy Interpreted according to the Order of Reasons*, 2 vols, translated by Roger Ariew. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hatfield, Gary. 2006. "The Cartesian Circle." In Gaukroger (2006): 122–141.
- Hause, Jeffrey. 1997. "Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists." *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 6 (2): 167–182.
- Heider, Daniel. 2014. *Universals in Second Scholasticism*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
2016. "The Notitia Intuitiva and Notitia Abstractiva of the External Senses in Second Scholasticism: Suárez, Poinsett and Francisco de Oviedo." *Vivarium* 54 (2–3): 173–203.
- Hoenen, M. J. F. M. 1993. *Marsilius of Inghen: Divine Knowledge in Late Medieval Thought*. New York: Brill.
2003. "Via Antiqua and Via Moderna in the Fifteenth Century: Doctrinal, Institutional, and Church Political Factors in the *Wegestreit*." In Friedman and Nielsen (2003): 9–36.
- Hoffman, Paul. 1986. "The Unity of Descartes's Man." *The Philosophical Review* 95: 339–370.
2002. "Descartes' Theory of Distinction." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64 (1): 57–78.
2009. *Essays on Descartes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hoffman, Tobias, and Cyrille Michon. 2017. "Aquinas on Free Will and Intellectual Determinism." *Philosophers Imprint* 17 (10): 1–36.
- Hunter, Grame. 1996. "Arnauld's Defense of Miracles and Its Context." In Kremer (1996b): 111–126.
2013. *Pascal the Philosopher*. Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press.
- Ingham, Mary Beth, and Dreyer, Mechthild. 2004. *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus: An Introduction*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
- Jacques, Emile. 1976. *Les années d'exil d'Antoine Arnauld. (1679–1694)*. Leuven: Publications Universitaires de Louvain.
- James, Edward Donald. 1973. *Pierre Nicole, Jansenist and Humanist: A Study of His Thought*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Jolley, Nicholas. 1990. *The Light of the Soul: Theories of Ideas in Leibniz, Malebranche, and Descartes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kambouchner, Denis. 1995. "Des vraies et des fausses ténèbres: la connaissance de l'âmes d'après la controverse avec Malebranche." In Pariente (1995): 153–190.
- Kane, Robert. 1998. *The Significance of Free Will*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Karofsky, Amy. 2001. "Suarez' Doctrine of Eternal Truths." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 39: 23–47.
- Kaufman, Dan. 2002. "Descartes's Creation Doctrine and Modality." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1): 24–41.
- 2003a. "Divine Simplicity and the Eternal Truths in Descartes." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 11 (4): 553–579.
- 2003b. "Infimus gradus libertatis? Descartes on Indifference and Divine Freedom." *Religious Studies* 39 (4): 391–406.
- ed. 2018. *The Routledge Companion to Seventeenth Century Philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Kenny, Anthony. 1968. *Descartes: A Study of His Philosophy*. New York: Random House.
- Kilcullen, John. 1988. *Sincerity and Truth: Essays on Arnauld, Bayle and Toleration*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kirk, Robert. 2021. "Zombies." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/zombies/>.
- Klima, Gyula. 2012. "Being." In Marenbon (2012): 403–420.
- Knuuttila, Simo, ed. 1988. *Modern Modalities: Studies of the History of Modal Theories from Medieval Nominalism to Logical Positivism*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
1993. *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
2001. "Time and Creation in Augustine." In Stump and Kretzmann (2001): 103–115.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. 1995. *God Owes Us Nothing: A Brief Remark on Pascal's Religion and on the Spirit of Jansenism*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Koslicki, Kathrin. 2013. "Ontological Dependence: An Opinionated Survey." In Schnieder, Hoeltje, and Steinberg (2013): 31–64.
- Kostroun, Daniella. 2011. *Feminism, Absolutism, and Jansenism: Louis XIV and the Port-Royal Nuns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kotevska, Laura. 2021. "Moral Improvement through Mathematics: Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole's Nouveaux éléments de géométrie." *Synthese* 199 (1–2): 1727–1749.
- Kremer, Elmar. 1994a. "Arnauld's Philosophical Notion of an Idea." In Kremer (1994c): 89–107.
- 1994b. "Grace and Free Will in Arnauld." In Kremer (1994c): 219–239.
- ed. 1994c. *The Great Arnauld and Some of His Philosophical Correspondents*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- 1996a. "Arnauld's Interpretation of Descartes as a Christian Philosopher." In Kremer (1996b): 76–90.
- ed. 1996b. *Interpreting Arnauld*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
2002. "Antoine Arnauld." In Nadler (2002): 113–128.
2021. "Antoine Arnauld." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/arnauld/>.

- Lackey, Jennifer. 2011. "Testimonial Knowledge." In Bernecker and Pritchard, (2011): 316–325.
- Laerke, Mogens. 2007. "Quod non omnia possibilia ad existentiam perveniant: Leibniz's Ontology of Possibility, 1668–1678." *The Leibniz Review* 17: 1–30.
- Lagerlund, Henrik. 2017. "Trends in Logic and Logical Theory." In Lagerlund and Hill (2017): 99–120.
- Lagerlund, Henrik, and Benjamin Hill, eds. 2017. *The Routledge Companion to Sixteenth Century Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
- Laird, John. 1924. "The 'Legend' of Arnauld's Realism." *Mind* 33 (130): 176–179.
- Lähteenmäki, Vili, and Jani Sinokki, eds. 2026. *Cartesianism and Philosophy of Mind*. Routledge.
- Laporte, Jean. 1922. *La doctrine de la grâce chez Arnauld*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
1938. "La liberté selon Malebranche." *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 45 (3): 339–410.
1950. *Le Rationalisme de Descartes*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Le Guern, Michel. 2003. *Pascal et Arnauld*. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Lee, Sukjae. 2008. "Necessary Connection and Continuous Creation: Malebranche's Two Arguments for Occasionalism." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46: 539–565.
- Lehner, Ulrich L., Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber, eds. 2016. *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600–1800*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lennon, Thomas M. 1977. "Jansenism and the Crise Pyrrhonienne." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (2): 297–306.
1978. "Occasionalism, Jansenism and Scepticism; Divine Providence and the Order of Grace." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 45 (3): 185–190.
1996. "Arnauld and Scepticism: Questions de fait and Questions de droit." In Kremer (1996b): 51–63.
2000. "Malebranche and Method" In Nadler (2000): 8–30.
2008. *The Plain Truth: Descartes, Huet, and Skepticism*. Leiden: Brill.
2011. "Volition: Malebranche's Thomist Inclination." *Modern Schoolman* 88 (3): 171–189.
2019. *Sacrifice and Self-interest in Seventeenth-Century France: Quietism, Jansenism, and Cartesianism*. Leiden: Brill.
- Lesaulnier, Jean. 1995. "De la fréquente communion d'Antoine Arnauld. Genèse d'une œuvre." *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 44: 61–81.
- Lesaulnier, Jean, and Anthony McKenna, eds. 2004. *Le dictionnaire de Port-Royal*. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Lewis, David. 1986. *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lolordo, Antonia. 2005. "'Descartes' One Rule of Logic: Gassendi's Critique of Clear and Distinct Perception." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 13 (1): 51–72.

2006. *Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of Early Modern Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Loux, Michael J. 1979a. "Introduction." In Loux (1979b): 15–64.
- ed. 1979b. *The Possible and the Actual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Loux, Michael J., and Dean W. Zimmerman, eds. 2003. *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lovejoy, A. O. 1923. "'Representative Ideas' in Malebranche and Arnauld." *Mind* 32 (128): 449–461.
1924. "Reply to Professor Laird." *Mind* 33 (130): 180–181.
- Macdonald, Scott. 1998. "Aquinas's Libertarian Account of Free Choice." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52 (204): 309–328.
- Mann, William E. 2003. "Duns Scotus on Natural and Supernatural Knowledge of God." In Williams (2003): 238–262.
- Marenbon, John, ed. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. 1981. *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Marrone, Steven P. 1988. "Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus on the Knowledge of Being." *Speculum* 63 (1): 22–57.
2001. *The Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*. Boston, MA: Brill.
- Martin, John N. 2020. *The Cartesian Semantics of the Port Royal Logic*. New York: Routledge.
2024. "The Port Royal Logic." *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by James Fieser and Bradley Dowden. <https://iep.utm.edu/portroyl>.
- Marušić, Jennifer Smalligan. 2014. "Propositions and Judgements in Locke and Arnauld: A Monstrous and Unholy Union?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 52 (2): 255–280.
- Matava, Robert J. 2016. *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Báñez, Physical Premotion and the Controversy de Auxiliis Revisited*. Boston, MA: Brill.
- Matthews, Gareth B. 2001. "Knowledge and Illumination." In Stump and Kretzmann (2001): 171–185.
- Maurer, Armand. 1962. *Medieval Philosophy*. New York: Random House.
1999. *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in Light of its Principles*. Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.
- McKenna, Antony. 1986. "La composition de la 'logique' de Port-Royal." *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 176 (2): 183–206.
- Mele, Alfred R. 1995. *Autonomous Agents: From Self Control to Autonomy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Menzel, Christopher. 2020. "In defense of the possibilism–actualism distinction." *Philosophical Studies* 177: 1971–1997.
2022. "Actualism." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/actualism/>.

- Michon, Cyrille. 2013. "The Thomist Compatibilism of Antoine Arnauld." *Dix-Septième Siècle* 259 (2): 265–279.
- Miller, Clyde L. 2021. "Cusanus, Nicolaus [Nicolas of Cusa]." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/cusanus/>.
- Moreau, Denis. 1999. *Deux cartésiens: la polémique entre Antoine Arnauld et Nicolas Malebranche*. Paris: Vrin.
2000. "The Malebranche–Arnauld Debate." In Nadler (2000): 87–111.
2004. *Malebranche: Une philosophie de l'expérience*. Paris: Vrin.
- Moriarty, Michael. 2006. *Fallen Nature, Fallen Selves: Early Modern French Thought II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moyal, George, ed. 1991. *René Descartes: Critical Assessments*, vol. 3. New York: Routledge.
- Muhtaroglu, Nazif, ed. 2017. *Occasionalism Revisited: New Essays from the Islamic and Western Philosophical Traditions*. Abu Dhabi: Kalam Research and Media.
- Murdoch, Dugald. 1993. "Exclusion and Abstraction in Descartes' Metaphysics." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 43 (170): 38–57.
- Nadler, Steven. 1988a. "Arnauld, Descartes, and Transubstantiation: Reconciling Cartesian Metaphysics with Real Presence." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (2): 229–246.
- 1988b. "Cartesianism and Port-Royal." *The Monist* 71 (4): 573–584.
1989. *Arnauld and the Cartesian Philosophy of Ideas*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
1992. *Malebranche and Ideas*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- ed. 1993. *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy: Cartesianism, Occasionalism, and Preestablished Harmony*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
1995. "Occasionalism and the Question of Arnauld's Cartesianism." In Ariew and Grene (1995): 129–144.
1996. "'Tanges montes et fumigabunt': Arnauld on the Theodicies of Malebranche and Leibniz." In Kremer (1996b): 147–163.
- ed. 2000. *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ed. 2002. *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*. Malden: Blackwell.
2006. "The Doctrine of Ideas." In Gaukroger (2006): 86–103.
- 2008a. "Arnauld's God." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46: 517–538.
- 2008b. *The Best of All Possible Worlds*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- 2011a. *Occasionalism: Causation among the Cartesians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2011b. "Conceptions of God." In Clark and Wilson (2011): 525–547.
- 2011c. "Spinoza, Leibniz, and the Gods of Philosophy." In Fraenkel, Perinetti, and Smith (2011): 167–182.
2018. "Consciousness." In Kaufman (2018): 310–333.
- Nadler, Steven, Tad M. Schmaltz, and Delphine Antoine-Mahut, eds. 2019. *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Nawar, Tamer. 2022. "The Roots of Occasionalism? Causation, Metaphysical Dependence, and Soul–Body Relations in Augustine." *Vivarium* 60: 1–27.
- Ndiaye, Aloyse-Raymond. 1991. *La philosophie d'Antoine Arnauld*. Paris: Vrin.
1996. "The Status of Eternal Truths in the Philosophy of Antoine Arnauld." In Kremer (1996b): 64–75.
- Nelson, Alan. 1993. "Cartesian Actualism in the Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 23: 675–694.
1997. "Descartes's Ontology of Thought." *Topoi* 16 (2): 163–178.
2013. "Conceptual Distinctions and the Concept of Substances in Descartes." *ProtoSociology* 30: 192–205.
2020. "Modality in Descartes's Philosophy." In Bueno and Shalkowski (2020): 355–363.
- Nelson, Alan, and Jill Buroker. 2022. "Port Royal Logic." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/port-royal-logic/>.
- Nelson, Alan, and David Cunnig. 1999. "Cognition and Modality in Descartes." *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 64: 137–154.
- Newman, Lex. 2007. "Descartes on the Will in Judgment." In Broughton and Carriero (2007): 334–352.
2009. "Ideas, Pictures, and the Directness of Perception in Descartes and Locke." *Philosophy Compass* 4 (1): 134–154.
2011. "Sensory Doubts and the Directness of Perception in the Meditations." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 25 (1): 205–222.
2012. "Frankfurt and the Cartesian Circle." In Duncan and LoLordo (2012): 18–30.
2018. "Theories of Ideas." In Kaufman (2018): 195–223.
2023. "Defense of a Libertarian Interpretation of Descartes' Account of Judgment." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 104 (3): 597–621.
- Newman, Lex, and Alan Nelson. 1999. "Circumventing Cartesian Circles." *Noûs* 33 (3): 370–404.
- Nichols, Ryan, and Gideon Yaffe. 2023. "Thomas Reid." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/reid/>.
- Nolan, Lawrence. 1997a. "Reductionism and Nominalism in Descartes's Theory of Attributes." *Topoi* 16: 129–140.
- 1997b. "The Ontological Status of Cartesian Natures." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 78: 169–194.
1998. "Descartes' Theory of Universals." *Philosophical Studies* 89: 161–180.
2022. "Malebranche's Theory of Ideas and Vision in God." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/malebranche-ideas/>.
- Normore, Calvin. 1991. "Descartes's Possibilities." In Moyal (1991): 68–83.
2017. "Nominalism." In Lagerlund and Hill (2017): 121–136.
- Novotný, Daniel D. 2013. *Ens rationis from Suárez to Caramuel: A Study in Scholasticism of the Baroque Era*. New York: Fordham University Press.

- Oberman, Heiko Augustinus. 1960. "Some Notes on the Theology of Nominalism: With Attention to its Relation to the Renaissance." *Harvard Theological Review* 53 (1): 47–76.
1963. *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- O'Connell, Marvin R. 1997. *Blaise Pascal: Reasons of the Heart*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- O'Connor, Thomas. 2012. "Jansenism." In Doyle (2012): 318–336.
- O'Daly, Gerard. 1987. *Augustine's Theory of Mind*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- O'Neil, Eileen. 1993. "Influxus Physicus." In Nadler (1993): 27–56.
2013. "Margaret Cavendish, Stoic Antecedent Causes, and Early Modern Occasional Causes," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 138 (3): 311–326.
- Osler, Margaret J. 1994. *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy: Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity in the Created World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ott, Walter. 2002. "Propositional Attitudes in Modern Philosophy." *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 41 (3): 551–568.
2009. *Causation and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
2017. *Descartes, Malebranche, and the Crisis of Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Paganini, Gianni. 2003. *The Return of Scepticism: From Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle*. Dordrecht and Boston, MA: Kluwer.
- Panaccio, Claude. 2023. *Ockham's Nominalism: A Philosophical Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pariente, Jean-Claude. 1985. *L'analyse du langage à Port-Royal*. Paris: C.N.R.S. Les Éditions du Minuit.
- ed. 1995. *Antoine Arnauld: philosophie du langage et de la connaissance*. Paris: Vrin.
- Parish, Richard. 1989. *Pascal's Lettres Provinciales: A Study in Polemic*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Parkinson, G. H. R. 1967. "Introduction." In Leibniz (1967): xi–xlviii.
- Pasnau, Robert. 2020. "Divine Illumination." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/illumination/>.
2022. "Thomas Aquinas." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/aquinas/>.
- Pasnau, Robert, and Christopher Shields. 2016. *The Philosophy of Aquinas*. Second edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pearce, Kenneth. 2016. "Arnauld's Verbal Distinction between Ideas and Perceptions," *History and Philosophy of Logic* 37 (4): 375–390.

2019. "Locke, Arnauld, and Abstract Ideas." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27 (1): 75–94.
2021. "Ideas and Explanation in Early Modern Philosophy." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 103 (2): 252–280.
2022. "Thinking with the Cartesians and Speaking with the Vulgar: Extrinsic Denomination in the Philosophy of Antoine Arnauld." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 60 (2): 227–252.
- Pécharman, Martine. 1995. "La signification dans la philosophie du langage d'Antoine Arnauld." In Pariente (1995): 65–97.
- Perler, Dominik. 2019. "Suárez on Intellectual Cognition and Occasional Causation." In Perler and Bender (2019): 18–38.
- Perler, Dominik, and Sebastian Bender, eds. 2019. *Causation and Cognition in Early Modern Philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Pessin, Andrew. 2006. "Malebranche's 'Vision in God.'" *Philosophy Compass* 1 (1): 36–47.
2010. "Divine Simplicity and the Eternal Truths: Descartes and the Scholastics." *Philosophia* 38 (1): 69–105.
- Phemister, Pauline. 2011. "Ideas." In Clarke and Wilson (2011): 142–159.
- Popkin, Richard, ed. 1996. *Scepticism in the History of Philosophy: A Pan-American Dialogue*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
2003. *The History of Skepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Priarolo, Mariangela. 2017. "Universals and Individuals in Malebranche's Philosophy." In Di Bella and Schmaltz (2017): 142–165.
- Pyle, Andrew. 2003. *Malebranche*. New York: Routledge.
- Radner, Daisie. 1976. "Representationalism in Arnauld's Act Theory of Perception." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14 (1): 96–98.
1978. *Malebranche: A Study of a Cartesian System*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum.
- Radner, Ephraim. 2016. "Early Modern Jansenism." In Lehner, Muller, and Roeber (2016): 436–450.
- Reid, Jasper. 2003. "Malebranche on Intelligible Extension." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 11 (4): 581–608.
- Richardson, Kara. 2017. "Averroism." In Lagerlund and Hill (2017): 137–156.
- Robinet, André. 1974. "Aux sources Jansénistes de la première œuvre de Malebranche." *Les Études Philosophiques* 4: 465–479.
- Rodis-Lewis, Geneviève. 1950. "Augustinisme et Cartésianisme à Port-Royal." In Dijksterhuis et al. (1950): 131–182.
1963. *Nicolas Malebranche*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
1971. "Descartes aurait-il eu un professeur nominaliste?" *Archives de Philosophie* 34 (1): 37–46.
- Rosenthal, David M. 1997. "Will and the Theory of Judgment." In Chappell (1997): 129–158.
- Rozemond, Marleen. 1998. *Descartes' Dualism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

1999. "Descartes on Mind–Body Interaction: What's the Problem?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37 (3): 435–467.
- Rutherford, Donald. 2000. "Malebranche's Theodicy." In Nadler (2000): 165–189.
- Sangiaco, Andrea. 2014. "Louis de La Forge and the 'Non-Transfer Argument' for Occasionalism." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22 (1): 60–80.
- Schmal, Daniel. 2020. "Virtual Reflection: Antoine Arnauld on Descartes' Concept of *Conscientia*." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 28 (4): 714–734.
- Schmaltz, Tad M. 1996. *Malebranche's Theory of the Soul: A Cartesian Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
1999. "What Has Cartesianism to Do with Jansenism?" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1): 37–56.
2000. "Malebranche on Ideas and the Vision in God." In Nadler (2000): 59–86.
2002. *Radical Cartesianism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
2008. *Descartes on Causation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ed. 2014a. *Efficient Causation: A History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 2014b. "Efficient Causation: From Suárez to Descartes." In Schmaltz (2014a): 139–164.
2017. *Early Modern Cartesianisms: Dutch and French Constructions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schnieder, Benjamin, Miguel Hoeltje, and Alex Steinberg, eds. 2013. *Varieties of Dependence: Ontological Dependence, Grounding, Supervenience, Response-dependence*. Munich: Philosophia Verlag.
- Scribano, Emanuela. 1996. "Le 'Spinozisme' d'Arnauld." In Van Bunge and Klever (1996): 291–304.
- Secada, Jorge. 2000. *Cartesian Metaphysics: The Scholastic Origins of Modern Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sedgwick, Alexander. 1977. *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
1998. *The Travails of Conscience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Shiokawa, Tetsuya. 1995. "A propos de la distinction Arnauldienne de la 'foi divine' et de la 'foi humaine': signification de cette dichotomie." *Chronique de Port-Royal* 44: 187–198.
- Sidelle, Alan. 1998. "A Sweater Unraveled: Following One Thread of Thought for Avoiding Coincident Entities." *Noûs* 32 (4): 423–448.
- Sider, Ted. 2003. "Reductive Theories of Modality." In Loux and Zimmerman (2003): 180–208.
- Sider, Ted, John Hawthorne, and Dean Zimmerman, eds. 2008. *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Simmons, Alison. 2003. "Descartes on the Cognitive Structure of Sensory Experience." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67 (3): 549–579.

2017. "Mind–Body Union and the Limits of Cartesian Metaphysics." *Philosophers Imprint* 17 (14): 1–36.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter, Diana Raffman, and Nicholas Asher, eds. 1995. *Modality, Morality, and Belief*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Skirry, Justin. 2005. *Descartes and the Metaphysics of Human Nature*. London: Continuum.
- Sleigh, Robert C. Jr. 1990. *Leibniz and Arnauld: A Commentary on Their Correspondence*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- 1996a. "Arnauld on Efficacious Grace and Free Choice." In Kremer (1996b): 164–176.
- 1996b. "Arnauld versus Leibniz and Malebranche on the Limits of Theological Knowledge." In Popkin (1996): 75–85.
- Sleigh, Robert C. Jr., Vere Chappell, and Michael Della Rocca. 2000. "Determinism and Human Freedom." In Garber and Ayers (2000): 1193–1278.
- Smith, Kurt. 2024. "Descartes' Theory of Ideas." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2024 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/enries/descartes-ideas/>.
- Solère, Jean-Luc. 1996. "Arnauld versus Nicole: A Medieval Dispute." In Kremer (1996b): 127–146.
- Sosa, Ernest. 1997. "Reflective Knowledge in the Best Circles." *Journal of Philosophy* 94: 410–430.
- Sowaal, Alice. 2007. "Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal*: Mind, Method, and Custom." *Philosophy Compass* 2 (2): 227–243.
- Steinberg, Justin, ed. 2025. *Humility: A History*. Oxford University Press.
- Stencil, Eric. 2016. "Essence and Possibility in the Leibniz–Arnauld Correspondence." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 97 (1): 2–26.
- 2019a. "Arnauld's God Reconsidered." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 36 (1): 19–38.
- 2019b. "Arnauld's Silence on the Creation of Eternal Truths." *Res Philosophica* 96 (4): 445–470.
2023. "Elisabeth of Bohemia on the Soul." *Journal of Modern Philosophy* 5 (4): 1–16.
- 2025 c. "Pascals, Arnaulds, and Port-Royals." In Ariew and Avnur (forthcoming).
- 2026 b. "Descartes, Elisabeth and Arnauld on Thought's Dependence on the Body." In Lähteenmäki and Sinokki (forthcoming).
- Forthcoming a. "Malebranche on Occasionalism." In Chamberlain, Stencil, and Walsh (forthcoming).
- Stencil, Eric, and Julie Walsh. 2016. "Arnauld, Power, and the Fallibility of Infallible Determination." *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 33 (3): 237–256.
2023. "Pensées Imperceptibles in Arnauld and Nicole." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 306 (4): 39–58.
- Forthcoming. "Malebranche and Arnauld." In Chamberlain, Stencil, and Walsh (forthcoming).

- Stump, Eleonore. 1997. "Aquinas's Account of Freedom." *The Monist* 80 (4): 576–597.
2003. *Aquinas*. New York: Routledge.
- Stump, Eleonore, and Norman Kretzmann, eds. 2001. *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tahko, Tuomas E., and E. Jonathan Lowe. 2020. "Ontological Dependence." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/dependence-ontological/>.
- Tomberlin, James E., ed. 1994. *Logic and Language (Philosophical Perspectives 8)*. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview.
- Torrijos, David. 2022. "De Auxiliis Controversy." *Conimbricenses.org Encyclopedia*, edited by Mário Santiago de Carvalho and Simone Guidi. <https://www.conimbricenses.org/encyclopedia/de-auxiliis-controversy/>.
- Vaidya, Anand. 2013. "The Epistemology of Modality." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/modality-epistemology/>.
- Van Bunge, Wiep, and Wim Klever, eds. 1996. *Disguised and Overt Spinozism around 1700*. Leiden: Brill.
- Van Cleve, James. 1979. "Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle." *The Philosophical Review* 88 (1): 55–91.
1983. "Conceivability and the Cartesian Argument for Dualism." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64: 35–45.
2004. "Reid's Theory of Perception." In Cuneo and Woudenberg (2004): 101–133.
2015. *Problems from Reid*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van der Schaar, Maria. 2008. "Locke and Arnauld on Judgment and Proposition." *History and Philosophy of Logic* 29 (4): 327–341.
- Visser, Sandra, and Thomas Williams. 2009. *Anselm*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wahl, Russell. 1988. "The Arnauld–Malebranche Controversy and Descartes' Ideas." *The Monist* 71 (4): 560–572.
1995. "How Can What I Perceive Be True?" *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12 (2): 185–194.
2008. "Port Royal: The Stirrings of Modernity." In Gabbay and Woods (2008): 667–699.
- Wallace, R. Jay. 2020. "Practical Reason." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/practical-reason/>.
- Walsh, Julie. 2019. "Amo on the Heterogeneity Problem." *Philosophers Imprint* 19 (41): 1–18.
- Walsh, Julie, and Thomas M. Lennon. 2012. "Malebranche, the Quietists, and Freedom." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 20 (1): 69–108.

- Walsh, Julie, and Eric Stencil. 2016. "Malebranche on the Metaphysics and Epistemology of Particular Volitions." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54 (2): 227–255.
2019. "The Protestant and the Pelagian: Arnauld and Malebranche on Grace and Power." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 93 (3): 497–526.
2025. "'Say not that you are a light unto yourself: Seventeenth Century Conceptions of Humility in Epistemology, Ethics, and Politics.'" In Steinberg.
- Walski, Gregory. 2003. "The Cartesian God and the Eternal Truths." In Garber and Nadler (2003): 23–44.
- Watkins, Eric, ed. 2013. *The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Watson, Richard A. 1987. *The Breakdown of Cartesian Metaphysics*. Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press.
- Weigel, Peter. 2008. *Aquinas on Simplicity: An Investigation into the Foundations of His Philosophical Theology*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Wells, Norman J. 1981. "Suárez on the Eternal Truths." *The Modern Schoolman* 58 (2): 73–104.
1994. "Objective Reality of Ideas in Arnauld, Descartes, and Suárez." In Kremer (1994c): 138–183.
1999. "Jean DuHamel, the Cartesians, and Arnauld on Idea." *The Modern Schoolman* 76 (4): 245–271.
- Williams, Bernard. 1978. *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*. London: Routledge.
- Williams, Thomas, ed. 2003. *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2012. "Human Freedom and Agency." In Davies and Stump (2012): 199–208.
- Williamson, Timothy. 2015. *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson, Catherine. 1989. *Leibniz's Metaphysics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wilson, Margaret D. 1978. *Descartes*. New York: Routledge.
- Wippel, John. 1981. "The Reality of Nonexisting Possibles according to Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Godfrey of Fontaines." *Review of Metaphysics* 34 (4): 729–758.
- Wolter, Allan B. 2003. *Scotus and Ockham: Selected Essays*. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications.
- Worley, Sara. 2003. "Conceivability, Possibility and Physicalism." *Analysis* 63 (1): 15–23.
- Yablo, Stephen. 1990. "The Real Distinction between Mind and Body." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16 (1): 149–201.
1993. "Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53 (1): 1–42.
- Yagisawa, Takashi. 2023. "Possible Objects." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri

- Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/possible-objects/>.
- Yolton, John W. 1984. *Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Zupko, Jack. 2003. *John Buridan: Portrait of a Fourteenth-century Arts Master*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Index

- accidents, 51–52, 148–149, 203, 222, *See also* mode(s)
- actualism, 142–144, 157–164, 254–256, *See also* modality
- and possibilism, 142, 151–157
- Amo, Anton Wilhelm, 73
- animal spirits, 76–77, 86–88
- Aquinas, Thomas
- and the doctrine of analogy, 8, 222
- on God's freedom, 248, 250
- on God's omnipotence, 231
- on human freedom, 20–22, 118–119, 126–127, 137–138
- on knowledge of God, 184–185, 201, 211–213, 221–222
- argument from Pyrrhonism, 40–41, *See also* skepticism
- Ariew, Roger, 6
- Aristotle, 71
- Arnauld, Angélique, 11, 188, 194
- Arnauld, Antoine
- account of ideas, 16, 26, 29–31, 37–42, 45–49, 91–95, 98–117, 170–171
- account of the mind–body union, 70–71, 78–90, *See also under* occasionalism
- and the clear ideas principle (CIP), 26, 38–48, 107, 162, 192–195
- Conclusiones Philosophicae*, 5–8, 219, 221–229, 234–240
- controversies with Catholic Church, 12–14, 198
- distinction between *questions de droit* and *questions de fait*, 12–14, 198
- dual dualisms, 51–55, 147
- Examen du traité de l'essence du corps contre Descartes*, 17, 51, 56, 66, 70, 81–88, 193–194, 196–197
- Fourth Objections to Descartes's Meditations*, 5, 8–11, 28, 50–51, 58–62, 74–76, 126, 219, 230–234, 242–243
- Logic or the Art of Thinking*, 17, 28–42, 46, 52–55, 67–73, 78–81, 83, 89, 107, 114, 148–149, 162, 190–193, 203–205, 258, *See also under* Nicole, Pierre
- methodology of, 26–37, 55, 98–101, 126, 210
- on the mind–body distinction, 58–60, 66–69
- The New Objections to Descartes's Meditations*, 12, 66, 74, 219, 240–243
- partially hidden conception of God, 167–168, 180–183, 189–196, 199–215, *See also under* God
- The Port-Royal Grammar*, 14–15, 51–52
- Réflexions philosophiques et théologiques sur le nouveau système de la nature et de la grâce*, 19, 201–213
- Règles du bon sens*, 21, 28, 37, 234
- relation to voluntarism and/or Ockhamism. *See* William of Ockham
- and Thomism, 4, 20–22, 118–119, 135–140, 201, 221–223, *See also* Aquinas, Thomas
- On True and False Ideas*, 46–47, 56, 66–67, 85–88, 98–114, 161
- view of human freedom, 118–122, 125–141
- Arnauld, Antoine (père), 4
- Arnauld, Catherine, 4
- Ashworth, E. Jennifer, 222
- Astell, Mary, 15
- attribute(s), 52–54, 64, 67–69, 111–112, 147–149, 158–159, 169–172, 200–208, *See also under* substance
- Augustine of Hippo, 36, 82, 87, 250
- grace and freedom, 9–10, 134
- on knowledge of God, 186, 211–213, 221
- Augustinianism, 221–223, 229, *See also* Augustine of Hippo
- Averroism, 6
- Baillet, Adrien, 235
- Bañez, Domingo, 119, 122–124
- La Barde, Léonore de, 234–237
- Bayle, Pierre, 18, 187

- Bennett, Jonathan, 241
 Bernard of Clairvaux, 134
 Biel, Gabriel, 6, 224–227
 body, 147–149. *See also* substance, extended
 substance
 and divisibility, 33, 53
 essence/nature of, 30, 53–54, 143, 162
 idea of, 58, 65
 relation to mind, 17, 50–51, 55–60, 64–71, 78–90, 133
 body–mind occasionalism. *See under* occasionalism
 Bouillier, Francisque, 235
 Brockliss, L. W. B., 6
 Buridan, John, 6
 Buroker, Jill Vance, 47–48
- Carraud, Vincent, 5, 222–223, 244
 Cartesian circle, 10, 56
 Catusus, Johannes, 59, 230
 Catholic Church, 124, 139, 198, 210–213, 258,
 See also under Arnauld, Antoine
 causation, 30, 99–101
 and Aristotle, 71
 causality between body and mind, 70–71, 74–90
 efficient causation, 70–72, 78–81, 86, 230–233, 243
 occasional causation, 71–73, 78–81, 88–89,
 See also occasionalism
 Cavendish, Margaret, 73
 Charron, Pierre, 130
 Du Chevreul, Jacques, 6, 225
 Chomsky, Noam, 15
 Clair, Pierre, 15
 Clauberg, Johannes, 73
 clear and distinct ideas. *See under* ideas
 clear ideas principle (CIP). *See under* Arnauld, Antoine
 Clerselier, Claude, 15
 compatibilism. *See* freedom
 conceivability. *See under* possibility
 Cook, Monte, 93
 Coombs, Jeffrey, 223–229
 creation doctrine. *See* doctrine of creation of
 eternal truths
 Cross, Richard, 236
 Cunning, David, 241
- Descartes, René, 126, 130
 account of ideas, 43, 73, 92, 112
 account of the mind–body union, 71, 74–77,
 See also interactionism
 and Arnauld on God, 26, 230–233, 240–243
 and Arnauld on judgment, 48
 and Arnauld on knowledge and ideas, 28, 40, 48, 92
 and Arnauld on mind, 74–77, 84, 86–87
 the *Cogito*, 35, 64, 133
 conception of God, 57–58, 168–174, 181, 187, 190, 196, 232, 235, 240–242, 248, 252, *See also* God, voluntarist conception of
 on divine simplicity, 167–172, 252
 influence on Arnauld, 5, 8–11, 15, 17, 26, 33, 37, 50, 55, 92, 103, 106, 201
 position on eternal truths doctrine. *See under* doctrine of creation of eternal truths
 substance dualism of, 50, 55–58, 63–66
 theory of distinction, 50, 57–58, 63–66, 169–172, 204
 theory of judgment. *See under* judgment
 truth rule of, 26, 42–48
 Desgabets, Robert, 217, 232
 determinism. *See* freedom
 Dieu caché (hidden God), 183, 193–196, 199,
 See also God, Arnauld's partially hidden conception of
 Jansenist conception of, 167, 181, 189
 divine illumination, 183, 185–186, 196–198, *See also* God, sources of knowledge of
 divine indifference. *See under* God
 divine innatism, 187, 189–196, 212–213, *See also* God, sources of knowledge of
 divine simplicity. *See under* God
 doctrine of analogy, 8, 222
 doctrine of creation of eternal truths, 62, 167–169
 actualism and, 254–256
 Arnauld's silence on, 216, 244, 257–260
 conceptualist version of, 175, 178
 Descartes's position, 173–174, 216–221, 232, 239, 241
 epistemic version of, 180, 216–221, 238–243, 247–262
 metaphysical version of, 216–221, 233, 248–254
 doctrine of equivocity, 222
 doctrine of univocity, 8, 222, 234–240
 dualism
 Arnauld's dual dualisms. *See under* Arnauld, Antoine
 Descartes's dualism. *See under* Descartes, René
 Duns Scotus, John, 176, 184, 222, 236
- epistemology. *See under* knowledge
 eternal truths. *See* doctrine of creation of eternal truths
 D'Ettore, Domenic, 222
 Euclid, 15

- faith, 30, 258, *See also* God, sources of knowledge of
as source of knowledge. *See under* knowledge
- Fonseca, Pedro da, 223–227
- La Forge, Louis de, 73, 88
- Fredosso, Alfred, 123
- free will. *See* freedom
- freedom
divine, 144–147, *See also under* God
human, 118–141
- Fronde, the, 12
- Gassendi, Pierre, 184
- Gendler, Tamar Szabó, 50
- al-Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid, 73
- Gibieuf, Guillaume, 235
- Gilson, Étienne, 169, 172
- Girbal, François, 15
- God, 35–36
anthropomorphization of, 38, 191, 207, 232, 247, 258
attributes of, 152, 169–172, 175–177, 179, 187, 200–208
and causality, 74, 81–90, 230–233, 243, *See also* occasionalism
divine simplicity of, 151–152, 155–156, 167–172, 175–180, 200–208, 214, 252–256
freedom of, 144–147, 172–174, 179, 208–209, 219–221, 248–251
idea of, 36, 38, 42, 48, 138, 167, 181–183, 187, 189–196, 198
indifference of, 179, 208–209, 249–251
Jansenist conception of. *See under* *Dieu caché* (hidden God)
omnipotence of, 7, 132, 138–141, 144–146, 154–157, 228, 230, 238–243, 247
partially hidden conception of. *See* *Dieu caché* (hidden God)
and possibility, 146, 150–157, 177, 221–229, 238–243
rationalist conception of, 174–180
rationality of, 167–169, 172–181, 200, 208–215, 252–254
sensory experience of, 182–185
sources of knowledge of, 7, 167, 180–199, 205–215, 236, 246
voluntarist conception of, 168–174
will of, 146, 153–157, 213, 219, 246, 251
wisdom of, 176–177, 179, 195, 201–203, 206–208, 212, 228, 246–248, 253
- Gorham, Geoffrey, 80
- Gouhier, Henri, 244
- grace
efficacious grace, 118–127, 133–141, 188
non-efficacious grace, 123
- Gregory of Remini, 6
- Gueroult, Martial, 231
- Habert, Isaac, 11
- Hawthorne, John, 50
- Henry of Ghent, 225
- Hoffman, Paul, 93–115
- Hurtado de Mendoza, Pedro, 223–227, 229
- Huygens, Gommaire, 21
- ideas, 16, 78–81
adequate, 58–60, 63, 67, 161, 192
Arnauld's account of. *See under* Arnauld, Antoine
clear and distinct, 27–31, 42–48, 58, 60–69, 162, 171, 191–195, 199, *See also* Arnauld, Antoine, and the clear ideas principle (CIP)
confused, 39–40, 190
Descartes and Arnauld on. *See under* Descartes, René
innate, 37–38, 167, 181–183, 187, 189–196, 199, 206, 212–213, *See also* God, sources of knowledge of
Malebranche–Arnauld debate on. *See under* Malebranche, Nicolas
and sensation, 91–98, 101–117
indifference and freedom, 127–131, *See also* freedom
infinity, 33, 48, 193–196, 203–204, 214, 246, *See also* no-proportion principle
Innocent X, Pope, 12
interactionism, 51, 70, 74–81
- Jansen, Cornelius, 10–11, 198
Augustinus, 10–13, 124–125
freedom and grace, 118–119, 122–125, 132, 134–137, 139–141
- Jansenism, 3, 10–11, 118–119, 181, 187–189, *See also* Jansen, Cornelius
- judgment, 16, 79–80, 88–89
Arnauld's theory of, 34, 45–48
Descartes's theory of, 44–48
- Kambouchner, Denis, 107
- Kaufman, Dan, 172
- knowledge
Arnauld's account of, 26–28, 37–49, 210–215
empirical knowledge of God, 183–185, 191, 196–197
faith as source of, 26, 33–37, 181–183, 210–213
intelligence as source of, 26, 28–31
limits of, 32–33, 37, 55, 154, 180, 193–196, 205, 213, 237, 259–262
reason as source of, 26, 31–33, 181–183, 210–212, 258
scientific knowledge, 31–33

- Knuuttila, Simo, 228
- Kremer, Elmar
 on Arnauld's view of the eternal truths
 doctrine, 216, 221, 231, 257, 259
 on freedom, 119–121, 124, 135–136
- Laird, John, 93
- Lamy, François, 21
- Lancelot, Claude, 15, 51, *See also* Arnauld,
 Antoine, *The Port-Royal Grammar*
- Laporte, Jean, 176
- De Larrière, Noël, 4
- Leibniz, Gottfried, 4, 25, 55, 71, 263
 Complete Concept Theory of Substance
 (CCS), 20, 144–147
 conception of God, 146, 150–157, 168, 174,
 181, 195, 247, 255–256, *See also* God,
 rationalist conception of
 correspondence with Arnauld, 4, 17, 19–20,
 89, 144, 218, 255, 260
 debate with Arnauld on possibility, 144–157,
 255–256
- Leibniz–Arnauld correspondence. *See under*
 Leibniz, Gottfried
- Lennon, Thomas, 14, 130–131
- Lescot, Jacques, 226
- libertarianism. *See under* freedom
- Locke, John, 15–16, 18, 130
- Lovejoy, A. O., 93
- Mair, John, 6, 224
- Malebranche, Nicolas, 18–19, 25, 218
 conception of God, 168, 174–178,
 181–182, 186, *See also* God, rationalist
 conception of
 debate with Arnauld on God, 196–199,
 201–215, 254, 257
 debate with Arnauld on grace,
 18, 126
 debate with Arnauld on ideas, 18, 46, 66,
 91–92, 97–104
 debate with Arnauld on theodicy, 18, 176,
 197, 201
 on ideas, 95–98
 occasionalism of, 74, 82, 85–86
 vision in God doctrine, 22, 91, 95–98,
 101–103, 186, 197
- Marsilius of Inghen, 6
- Martin, John, 78
- matter. *See* body
- Maurer, Armand, 226, 236
- Mersenne, Marin, 8, 171–173, 220, 231, 235
- Mesland, Denis, 130, 171, 174
- method. *See under* Arnauld, Antoine
- Michon, Cyrille, 119, 129
- mind, 92–105, 108–117, 147–149
 distinct from body, 50–51, 55–60, 64–71,
 74–77
 essence/nature of, 117, 133–135, 143, 162
 finite minds, 26, 30–36, 45–49, 74, 86–88,
 94, 103–105, 132, 193–196, 259–262
 mental states, 34, 78, 82–84
 union with body, 70–71, 81–90
 mind–body interaction. *See* interactionism
 mind–body occasionalism. *See* occasionalism
 mind–body substance dualism. *See under*
 ontology
- modality, 52–55, 142–144, 147–149
 Arnauld's account of. *See* actualism
 modal conceptualism, 223–227
 modal profiles, 158–161
 modal transcendentalism, 219, 223–229, 231
 modal voluntarism, 218, 223–229, 231, 238
- mode(s), 52–54, 94, 101–105, 111–114,
 159–164
- Le Moine, M., 17, 82–87
- Molina, Luis de, 119, 122–124, 130, 141
- Molinism, 119, 122–124, 141, *See also* freedom
- Moreau, Denis, 18, 21, 93, 176, 201
 on Arnauld's conception of God, 126, 168,
 178–179, 207–210, 213, 215
 on Arnauld's view of eternal truths, 216–218,
 222–223, 238, *See also under* doctrine of
 creation of eternal truths
- Murdoch, Dugald, 170
- Nadler, Steven, 242
 on Arnauld's account of ideas, 91–93,
 104–105, 115
 on Arnauld's conception of God, 168,
 178–180, 201–203, 207–209, 213, 215,
 248–252
 on Arnauld's view of eternal truths, 216–218,
 221
 on causation, 71–73, 78
 on God's reasons, 169, 208–209, 213
- Ndiaye, A. R., 93, 116, 221, 233
- Nelson, Alan, 155–156, 241, 254–255
- Newman, Lex, 45, 93, 115
- Nicole, Pierre, 13
 co-author of *Logic*, 14–17, 28–42, 52–55, 67,
 72, 78–81, 89, 114, 190–193, 203–205,
 258
 debate with Arnauld on grace,
 21–22
- Nominalism, 5–8, 218, 222–229, 235–240
- no-proportio principle, 192–196, 212–213, 247,
 253
- Normore, Calvin, 6, 225
- Novotný, Daniel, 227

- occasionalism, 17, 30, 51, 70–71, 73–74
 body-to-body occasionalism, 74
 body-to-mind occasionalism, 74, 81–90
 mind-to-body occasionalism, 73–74, 85–87
 Ockhamism. *See* William of Ockham
 ontology, 142–144
 mind–body substance dualism, 50, 55–69, 82,
 147–149, 160
 substance–mode ontology, 51–55, 104,
 111–114, 147–149
 Ott, Walter, 93, 113–114, 116
- Parkinson, G. H. R., 146
 Pascal, Blaise, 14, 188–189, 194
 Pasnau, Robert, 185
 Paul V, Pope, 124
 Pearce, Kenneth, 93, 98, 107
 Pelagianism, 10, 125
 semi-Pelagianism, 13, 125
 Plato, 75
 Platonism, 51, 75
 Poinsot, John, 223
 Port-Royal Abbeys, 3, 11, 188
 possibility, 142–144, 146–151, 221–229,
 254–256. *See also* God, and possibility
 Arnauld's positive account of, 143, 157–164
 and conceivability, 50, 58–62, 66. *See also*
 ideas, clear and distinct
 possibilism. *See under* actualism
 purely possible substances, 143, 151–157, 255
 predestination, 125–126
 principle of non-contradiction, 218, 222–225,
 231, 234, 238–239, 243
 propositions, 16, 26, 28–29, 42–49, 194
 Pyle, Andrew, 198
 Pyrrhonism. *See* skepticism
 Pythagorean proportion argument, 61–62
- Quesnel, Pasquier, 234, 237
- Radner, Daisie, 93
 rationalism, 37–42
 real distinction argument, 56–58, 63–66, 75. *See also* Descartes, René
 Arnauld's endorsement of, 51, 67–69
 reason, 15–17
 divine reason. *See under* God
 and faith, 35–37, 81, 87, 258–260
 limits of, 31–33, 139–141, 181–183, 193,
 232, 245, 250–254. *See also* knowledge,
 limits of
 as source of knowledge of. *See under*
 knowledge
- Régis, Pierre-Sylvain, 217
 Reid, Thomas, 18, 92
- Rodis-Lewis, Geneviève, 19
 De Roucy, Marquis, 18
- De Saint Jean, Angélique, 17
 Saint-Cyran (Jean Duvergier de Hauranne), 4
 Schmaltz, Tad, 78, 80, 92, 217, 231
 Scholasticism
 second Scholasticism, 223–227
 Scotism, 6, 222. *See also* Duns Scotus, John
 scripture, 139
 as source of knowledge, 183, 188, 198–199,
 210–213, 258
- Sedgwick, Alexander, 11
 sensation, 38, 78–85, 91–98, 101–117, 133
 skepticism, 41, 55, 67, 190
 Sleigh, R. C. Jr., 119–121, 135–136, 146
 Sorbonne, the, 3–5, 12, 14, 218, 223, 225
 Soto, Domingo de, 224
 soul. *See* mind
 Stump, Eleonore, 131
 Suárez, Francisco, 73, 223–227
 substance, 51–52, 64, 66, 82–83, 144–147,
 222
 attributes and modes of, 52–54, 111–114,
 148–151, 158–164, 169–172, 203–204
 extended substance, 8, 53–54, 64, 68, 143,
 242
 infinite substance. *See* God
 purely possible substances. *See under*
 possibility
 thinking substance, 56–58, 64, 68–69,
 100–101, 143
 substance–mode ontology. *See under* ontology
- theodicy. *See under* Malebranche, Nicolas
 theory of distinction, 52–53
 conceptual, 149, 168–172, 200–208, 252
 modal, 53–54, 169, 172
 real, 50, 55–69, 169, 171–172, 175
 Thomism, 6, 221–223, 229. *See also* Aquinas,
 Thomas
 tradition. *See* God, sources of knowledge of
 trilemma objection, 58–62, 66
- Urban VIII, Pope, 11
- vacuum, possibility of, 240–242
 Vaidya, Anand, 50, 61
 Van Cleve, James, 64, 93, 110
 Vásquez, Gabriel, 226
 Du Vaucel, Louis-Paul, 118, 127, 129, 134
 Voltaire, 264
- Wahl, Russell, 45
 Wallace, R. Jay, 212

- Wallon de Beupuis, Charles, 5, 12, 234, 237
Walsh, Julie, 119, 129, 136, 140
William of Ockham, 5–8, 184
 on God and the eternal truths, 219, 222–229,
 231–234
 and the univocity doctrine, 8, 236–237,
 See also doctrine of univocity
Williams, Bernard, 44
Williams, Thomas, 131
Wilson, Catherine, 147
Wilson, Margaret, 44
Wolter, Allan, 225
Yablo, Stephen, 59