Antoine Arnauld (1612-94) Antoine Arnauld, a leading theologian and Cartesian philosopher, was one of the most important and interesting figures of the seventeenth century. As the most prominent spokesperson and defender of the Jansenist community based at Port-Royal, almost all Arnauld's efforts were devoted to theological matters. But early on, with his largely constructive objections to Descartes' Meditations in 1641, he established a reputation as an analytically rigorous and insightful philosophical thinker. He went on to become perhaps Descartes' most faithful and vociferous defender. He found Cartesian metaphysics, particularly mind-body dualism, to be of great value for the Christian religion. In a celebrated debate with Nicolas Malebranche, Arnauld advanced something like a direct realist account of perceptual acquaintance by arguing that the representative ideas that mediate human knowledge and perception are not immaterial objects distinct from the mind's perceptions, but are just those perceptions themselves. His criticisms of Leibniz gave rise to another important debate. He also co-authored the so-called 'Port-Royal Logic', the most famous and successful logic of the early modern period. The underlying motives in all Arnauld's philosophical writings were, however, theological, and his greatest concern was to safeguard God's omnipotence and to defend what he took to be the proper Catholic view on questions of grace and divine providence. 1 Life and works Antoine Arnauld was born in Paris on 6 February 1612, one of the many children of an established and well-connected family. He intended to become a lawyer, but the Abbé St Cyran who was spiritual director of Port-Royal (where Arnauld's sister was abbess) convinced him to follow the ecclesiastical life (see Port-Royal). He was ordained and received his doctorate in theology in 1641, and was admitted to the faculty of the Sorbonne in 1643. Most of Arnauld's work throughout his life was theological, devoted to, among other things, an explanation and defence of what he took to be the orthodox Augustinian doctrine of grace and a strict contritionism (see Augustine §5, 7). But he was also responsible for a significant and influential philosophical output, mostly polemical. In 1640, Arnauld was asked by Mersenne to comment upon Descartes' Meditations, and his objections were published, with Descartes' responses, as the fourth set in the first edition of the work (1641) (see Descartes, R. §1, 7). The most important of Arnauld's religious works, De la fréquent communion, appeared in 1643. This was a defence of the ethical principles of St Cyran and an indication of what he saw as the indulgent morals of the Jesuits. In the early 1660s, Arnauld co-authored two important works on language and method: the Grammaire générale et raisonnée (1660, with Claude Lancelot) and La Logique, ou l'art de penser (1662, written with Pierre Nicole, adopting some ideas of Pascal). Better known as the 'Port-Royal Logic', the latter was a treatise on method and reasoning that drew heavily on Descartes' epistemological and methodological doctrines, particularly those found in the Rules for the Direction of the Mind. Meanwhile, Arnauld, as the most prominent representative of the Jansenist movement centred at Port-Royal, continued to be persecuted for his religious views and, like all Jansenists, was suspected of Protestant persuasions and of harbouring politically subversive opinions. In 1656 he was excluded from the Sorbonne for his refusal to submit to the Church on the issue of whether or not Jansenius' Augustinus contained heretical propositions. After years of harassment and fearing for his safety, Arnauld left France for the Netherlands in 1679. From there he continued his theological and philosophical polemics. In 1683 he composed Des vraies et des fausses idées (On True and False Ideas), a philosophical attack upon Nicolas Malebranche's De la recherche de la vérité (The Search After Truth). This was followed two years later by his Réflexions philosophiques et théologiques sur le nouveau système de la nature et de la grace (Philosophical and theological reflection on the new system of nature and grace), in which he addressed Malebranche's theodicy and views on providence and grace. The debate with Malebranche, one of the great intellectual events of its day, continued until the end of Arnauld's life, often in harsh and highly personal terms. He also began a brief but philosophically rich correspondence with Leibniz in 1686 over Leibniz's metaphysical views. Arnauld died in exile in 1694. 2 Arnauld and Descartes Arnauld's attraction to Descartes' philosophy began early. His objections to the Meditations are clearly offered in a constructive spirit by an ally who hopes to see the system move towards greater consistency. Descartes, in fact, found Arnauld's comments to be the most reasonable and serious of all. Arnauld divided his objections into three parts: the first two dealing with 'philosophical' issues, the third concentrating on 'points which may cause difficulty for theologians'. In the first part, 'The Nature of the Human Mind', he questions Descartes' claim that, since it is possible to form a concept of oneself embodying nothing but the certain knowledge that one is a thinking thing, thought alone constitutes one's essence. The most that can be concluded with certainty from such a premise, Arnauld insists, is 'that I can obtain some knowledge of myself without knowledge of the body'; not, however, that there is a 'real distinction in existence between mind and body'. In the second part, 'Concerning God', Arnauld raises his famous objection to the circularity of Descartes' attempts to draw epistemic warrant from demonstrations of God's existence: '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. 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' (Arnauld 1641: 32). In the final part, Arnauld's most important remark concerns the consequences of Descartes' metaphysics for the Catholic doctrine of Eucharistic transubstantiation. Descartes has emptied the material world of sensible qualities (colour, taste, smell and so on), leaving behind only extension and its properties, modes which necessarily inhere in a substance. His ontology thus appears to Arnauld to be inconsistent with faith, which has traditionally been aligned with the view that the substance of the bread of the Eucharist is either converted into, or annihilated and replaced by, Christ's body, and only the accidents of the bread (colour, taste, smell) remain. Such a real existence of accidents, independent of any underlying substance, is ruled out on Cartesian principles. Descartes responded with one of his tentative reinterpretations of transubstantiation. Ironically, it would be on just this issue of the compatibility of Cartesian metaphysics with the Catholic dogma of the Eucharist that Arnauld would become Descartes' most loyal and vociferous defender over the next fifty years. He generally approved of Cartesianism not just because it seemed closer to the truth than any other system - especially the Aristotelian - but also because its doctrines were the most supportive of Christian piety. Arnauld believed that Descartes 'has demonstrated the existence of God better than anyone else', and that his mind-body