
BOOK ONE: THE SENSES

Chapter One



I. The nature and properties of the understanding. II. The nature and properties of the will, and what freedom is.

Error is the cause of men's misery; it is the sinister principle that has produced the evil in the world; it generates and maintains in our soul all the evils that afflict us, and we may hope for sound and genuine happiness only by seriously laboring to avoid it.

Sacred Scripture teaches us that men are miserable only because they are sinners and criminals, and they would be neither if they had not enslaved themselves to sin by consenting to error.

If it is true, then, that error is the origin of men's misery, it is fitting that men make an effort to deliver themselves from it. Certainly their effort will by no means be useless and without recompense, even though it might not have the complete result they may desire. If men do not become infallible, they will err much less; and if they do not deliver themselves entirely from their ills, they will at least avoid some of them. Complete felicity must not be hoped for in this life, because on earth we must not lay claim to infallibility. But we must always labor to avoid error, since we always desire to be delivered from our miseries. In a word, as we eagerly desire happiness without hoping for it, we must strive for infallibility without laying claim to it.

It should not be imagined that there is much to be endured in the search after truth. All that is required is to become attentive to the clear ideas that each of us finds in himself and to follow precisely the several rules that we shall give later on.^a Precision of mind has almost nothing irksome about it; it is not at all a servitude as the imagination represents it, and if at first we find it somewhat difficult, we soon obtain results that amply reward our pains, for ultimately it alone produces light and discloses the truth to us.

But without pausing further to prepare the mind of the reader, of whom it is much more appropriate to believe that he is sufficiently inclined by himself to the search after truth, let us examine the causes and the nature of our errors; and

^aBk. 6 [pt. 2, ch. 1].

since the method that examines things by considering them in their birth and origin is more orderly and illuminating, and makes them known more thoroughly than any other, let us try to put it into practice here.

I. The nature and properties of the understanding.

Being neither material nor extended, the mind of man is undoubtedly a simple, indivisible substance without composition of parts; but nonetheless, it is customary to distinguish two faculties in it, to wit, the *understanding* and the *will*, which first need to be explained so that we can attach a precise notion to these two words, for it seems that our notions or ideas of these two faculties are neither clear nor distinct enough.

But because these ideas are quite abstract and do not fall within the scope of the imagination, it seems appropriate to express them by comparison with the properties that belong to matter. These properties, being more easily imagined, will make the notions properly attached to the two words *understanding* and *will* more distinct and even more familiar. It should be noted only that these comparisons between mind and matter are not entirely appropriate, and that I compare them only in order to make the mind more attentive, and, as it were, to illustrate my meaning to others.

Matter or extension contains two properties or faculties. The first faculty is that of receiving different figures, the second, the capacity for being moved. The mind of man likewise contains two faculties; the first, which is the *understanding*, is that of receiving various *ideas*, that is, of perceiving various things; the second, which is the *will*, is that of receiving *inclinations*, or of willing different things. We shall first of all explain the analogies found between the first of the two faculties belonging to matter, and the first of those that belong to the mind.

Extension can receive two kinds of figure. Some are external only, like the roundness of a piece of wax; others are internal, and characterize all the particles of which the wax is composed, for all the particles that make up a piece of wax undoubtedly have figures quite different from those that make up a piece of iron. Figure that is external, then, I call simply *figure*, and I call *configuration* that figure which is internal and which is necessary to all the parts of the wax in order for it to be what it is.

We can likewise say that the soul's perceptions of ideas are of two kinds. The first, which are called pure perceptions, are, as it were, superficial to the soul: they do not make an impression on it and do not sensibly modify it. The second, which are called sensible, make a more or less vivid impression on it. Such are pleasure and pain, light and colors, tastes, odors, and so on. For it will be seen later on that sensations are nothing but modes of the mind [*manieres d'être de l'esprit*], and it is for this reason that I call them *modifications* of the mind.

Inclinations of the soul might also be called *modifications* of the soul. For since it is certain that the inclination of the will is a mode of the soul [*maniere d'être de l'ame*], it can be called a *modification* of the soul, just as motion in bodies being a mode of those bodies, we might say that motion is a *modification* of matter. Nevertheless, I do not call inclinations of the will or motion in matter

modifications, because these inclinations and instances of motion are ordinarily related to something external, for inclinations are related to the good, and motion is related to some foreign body. But the figures and configurations of bodies and the sensations of the soul have no necessary relation to anything external. For just as a figure is round when all the exterior parts of a body are equally distant from one of its parts called its center, independently of any external body, so all the sensations of which we are capable could subsist without there being any object outside us. Their being contains no necessary relation to the bodies that seem to cause them (as will be proved elsewhere), and they are nothing but the soul modified in this or that fashion; consequently, they are indeed *modifications* of the soul. Let me therefore so name them in order to clarify matters.

The first and principal agreement found between the faculty that matter has of receiving different figures and configurations and that which the soul has of receiving different *ideas* and *modifications* is that just as the faculty of receiving different figures and configurations in bodies is entirely passive and contains no action, so the faculty of receiving different ideas and modifications in the mind is entirely passive and contains no action; and I call that faculty, or that capacity which the soul has of receiving all these things, UNDERSTANDING.

From this it must be concluded that it is the understanding that perceives or that knows, since only it receives ideas of objects; for it is the same thing for the soul to perceive an object as to receive the idea that represents the object. Also, it is the understanding that perceives modifications of the soul, or that senses them, since I understand by this word *understanding* that passive faculty of the soul by means of which it receives all the modifications of which it is capable. For it is the same thing for the soul to receive the mode called pain as to perceive or sense pain, since it cannot receive pain in any other way than by perceiving it. From this it can be concluded that it is the understanding that imagines absent objects and senses those that are present, and that the *senses* and the *imagination* are nothing but the understanding perceiving objects through the organs of the body, as we shall explain later on.

But because when we sense pain, or anything else, we ordinarily perceive it through the mediation of the *sense* organs, men ordinarily say that the senses do the perceiving, without knowing distinctly what they mean by the word *sense*. They think there is some faculty distinct from the soul that enables it or the body to sense, for they believe that the sense organs really take part in our perceptions. They imagine that the body so aids the mind in sensing that if the mind were separated from the body, it could never sense anything. But they believe all these things only through prejudice, and because in our present state we never sense anything without the use of the sense organs, as we shall explain elsewhere at greater length.

In order to conform to the ordinary way of speaking, we shall say in what follows that the senses do sense; but by the word *sense* we mean nothing other than that passive faculty of the soul we have just spoken about, that is, the understanding perceiving something upon occasion of the appropriate natural events taking place in the organs of its body, as will be explained elsewhere.

The other agreement between the passive faculty of the soul and that of matter is that as matter is not really altered by any change in its figure—I mean, for example, that as wax receives no considerable change for being round or square—so the mind receives no significant change through the diversity of ideas that it has, i.e., though in perceiving a square or a circle it receives the idea of a square or a circle, the mind is not thereby significantly changed.

Furthermore, as matter can be said to receive significant change when a piece of wax changes into fire and smoke by losing the configuration appropriate to the parts of wax in order to receive the configuration appropriate to fire and smoke, so the soul might be said to receive quite significant change when it alters its modifications and suffers pain after having sensed pleasure. From this it must be concluded that pure perceptions are to the soul roughly what figures are to matter, and that configurations are to matter roughly what sensations are to the soul. But it must not be imagined that the analogy is exact; I propose it only in order to make the notion of this word *understanding* perceptible to the senses. The nature of ideas I shall explain in the third book.

II. *The nature and properties of the will, and freedom.*

The other faculty of matter is that it is capable of receiving various *instances of motion*, whereas the other faculty of the soul is that it is capable of receiving various *inclinations*. Let us compare these *faculties*.

Just as the Author of nature is the universal cause of all *motion* found in matter, so is He also the general cause of all natural *inclinations* found in minds; and just as all motion proceeds in a straight line [*en ligne droite*] unless it encounters particular external causes that influence its course and that by their opposition alter it so that it proceeds in a curved path, so all the inclinations that we have from God are right [*droites*] and could have no other end but the possession of good and of truth were there not some external cause that directed the impression of nature toward evil ends. Now it is this external cause that is the cause of all our evils, and that corrupts all our inclinations.

For a proper understanding of this, it must be realized that there is a very significant difference between the impression or motion that the Author of nature produces in matter, and the impression or impulse [*mouvement*] toward the good in general that the same Author of nature continuously impresses in the mind. For matter is altogether without action; it has no force to arrest its motion or to direct it and turn it in one direction rather than another. Its motion, as has just been said, always proceeds in a straight line; and when it is impeded from continuing in this way, it describes the greatest possible circular path and consequently most approximates a straight line, because God impresses its motion on it and controls its direction. But such is not the case with the will,^a which in a sense can be said to be active, because our soul can direct in various ways the inclination or impression that God gives it. For although it cannot arrest this impression, it can in a sense turn it in the direction that pleases it, and thus cause all the disorder

^aSee the *Elucidations* [1].

found in its inclinations, and all the miseries that are the certain and necessary results of sin.

Consequently, I propose to designate by the word *WILL*, or capacity the soul has of loving different goods, *the impression or natural impulse that carries us toward general and indeterminate good*; and by *FREEDOM*, I mean nothing else but *the power that the mind has of turning this impression toward objects that please us so that our natural inclinations are made to settle upon some particular object*, which inclinations were hitherto vaguely and indeterminately directed toward universal or general good, that is, toward God, who alone is the general good because He alone contains in Himself all goods.

From this it is easy to see that although natural inclinations are voluntary, they are still not free with the freedom of indifference of which I speak, which contains the potential of willing or not willing, or even of willing the contrary of what our natural inclinations carry us toward. For although it is voluntarily and freely, or without constraint, that we love good in general (since we can love only by the will, and since it is a contradiction that the will should ever be constrained), we nonetheless do not love it freely in the sense I have just explained, since it is not in the power of our will not to wish to be happy.

But it must be carefully noted that insofar as a mind is thrust toward good in general, it cannot direct its impulse toward a particular good unless that same mind, insofar as it is capable of ideas, has knowledge of that particular good. In plain language, I mean that the will is a blind power, which can proceed only toward things the understanding represents to it. As a result, the will can direct both the impression it has for good, and all its natural inclinations in various ways, only by ordering the understanding to represent to it some particular object.^a The power our soul has of directing its inclinations therefore necessarily contains the power of being able to convey the understanding toward the objects that please it.

I shall clarify by an example what I have just said about the will and freedom. A person represents some honor to himself as a good that he might hope for; the will immediately wills this good; that is, the *impression* toward indeterminate and universal good that the mind is continuously receiving conveys it toward this honor. But as this honor is not the universal good, and is not considered as the universal good by a clear and distinct perception of the mind, for the mind never sees clearly what is not universal, the *impression* that we have toward the universal good is not entirely brought to rest by this particular good. The mind tends to proceed still further; it does not necessarily and indomitably love this honor, and it is free with regard to it. Now its *freedom* consists in the fact that not being fully convinced that this honor contains all the good it is capable of loving, it can suspend its judgment and love, and then, as we shall explain in the third book, by its union with the universal being, or the being that contains all good, it can think about other things and consequently love other goods. Finally, it can compare all goods, love them according to order to the extent to which they

^aSee the *Elucidations* [2].

ought to be loved, and relate them all to that which contains all goods and which, being alone capable of fulfilling our total capacity of loving, is alone worthy of limiting our love.

It is roughly the same thing with the knowledge of truth as with love of good. We love knowledge of truth, like enjoyment of good, by a natural impression; and this impression, like the one that conveys us toward the good, is not indomitable—only through clarity or through complete and perfect knowledge of the object is it indomitable; and we are as free in our false judgments as in our inordinate loves, as will be shown in the next chapter.

BOOK THREE

PART TWO: THE PURE UNDERSTANDING.

THE NATURE OF IDEAS

Chapter One



I. What is meant by ideas. That they really exist and are necessary in order to perceive any material object. II. A classification of all the ways external objects can be seen.

<I. 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.

It should be carefully noted that for the mind to perceive an object, it is absolutely necessary for the idea of that object to be actually present to it—and about this there can be no doubt; but there need not be any external thing like that idea. For it often happens that we perceive things that do not exist, and that even have never existed—thus our mind often has real ideas of things that have never existed. When, for example, a man imagines a golden mountain, it is absolutely necessary that the idea of this mountain really be present to his mind. 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, and that therefore the idea of this animal really does exist, though the golden mountain and the animal have never existed.

Yet given that men are naturally led, as it were, to believe that only corporeal objects exist, they judge of the reality and existence of things other than as they should. For as soon as they perceive an object, they would have it as quite certain that it exists, although it often happens that there is nothing external. In addition, they would have the object be exactly as they see it, which never happens. But as for the idea that necessarily exists, and that cannot be other than as it is seen, they

ordinarily judge unreflectingly that it is nothing—as if ideas did not have a great number of properties, as if the idea of a square, for example, were not different from that of a circle or a number, and did not represent completely different things, which can never be the case for nonbeing, since nonbeing has no properties. It is therefore indubitable that ideas have a very real existence. But now let us examine their nature and essence, and let us see what there can be in the soul that might represent all things to it.

Everything the soul perceives belongs to either one of two sorts: either it is in the soul, or outside the soul. The things that are in the soul are its own thoughts, i.e., all its various modifications—for by the words *thought*, *mode of thinking*, or *modification of the soul*, I generally understand all those things that cannot be in the soul without the soul being aware of them through the inner sensation it has of itself—such as its sensations, imaginings, pure intellections, or simply conceptions, as well as its passions and natural inclinations. Now, our soul has no need of ideas in order to perceive these things in the way it does, because these things are in the soul, or rather because they are but the soul itself existing in this or that way—just as the actual roundness and motion of a body are but that body shaped and moved in this or that way.

But as for things outside the soul, we can perceive them only by means of ideas, given that these things cannot be intimately joined to the soul. Of these, there are two sorts: spiritual and material. As for the spiritual, there is reason to believe they can be revealed to the soul by themselves and without ideas. For although experience teaches us that we cannot communicate our thoughts to one another immediately and by ourselves, but only through speech or some other sensible sign to which we have attached our ideas, still it might be said that God has established this state of affairs only for the duration of this life in order to prevent the disorder that would now prevail if men could communicate as they pleased. But when order and justice reign, and we are delivered from the captivity of our body, we shall perhaps be able to communicate through the intimate union among ourselves, as the angels seem to be able to do in heaven. Accordingly, it does not seem to be absolutely necessary to have ideas in order to represent spiritual things to the soul, because they might be seen through themselves, though in imperfect fashion.

I shall not inquire^a here how two minds can be united, or whether they can in this way reveal their thoughts to each other. I believe, however, that the only purely intelligible substance is God's, that nothing can be revealed with clarity except in the light of this substance, and that a union of minds cannot make them visible to each other. For although we may be closely joined together, we are and shall be unintelligible to each other until we see each other in God, and until He presents us with the perfectly intelligible idea He has of our being contained in His being. Thus, although I may seem to allow that angels can by themselves show to each other both what they are and what they are thinking (which I really do not believe), I warn that it is only because I have no desire to dispute the

^aThis paragraph is italicized because you may omit it as being too difficult to understand unless you know my views about the soul and the nature of ideas.

point—provided that you grant me what cannot be disputed, to wit, that you cannot see material things by themselves and without ideas.

In the seventh chapter I shall explain my view on how we know minds, and I shall show that for the moment we cannot know them entirely by themselves, although they might be capable of union with us. But here I am speaking mainly about material things, which certainly cannot be joined to our soul in the way necessary for it to perceive them, because with them extended and the soul unextended, there is no relation between them. Besides which, our souls do not leave the body to measure the heavens, and as a result, they can see bodies outside only through the ideas representing them. In this everyone must agree.

II. A classification of all the ways external objects can be seen.

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.

We can know objects in only one of these ways. Let us examine, without prejudice, and without fear of the difficulty of the question, which is the likeliest way. Perhaps we can resolve the question with some clarity though we do not pretend to give demonstrations that will seem incontrovertible to everyone; rather, we merely give proofs that will seem very persuasive to those who consider them carefully, for one would appear presumptuous were one to speak otherwise.

BOOK THREE: PART TWO

Chapter Two



That material objects do not transmit species resembling them.

The most commonly held opinion is that of the Peripatetics, who hold that external objects transmit species that resemble them, and that these species are carried to the common sense by the external senses. They call these species *impressed*, because objects impress them on the external senses. These impressed species, being material and sensible, are made intelligible by the *agent*, or *active intellect*, and can then be received in the *passive intellect*. These species, thus spiritualized, are called *expressed* species, because they are expressed from the impressed species, and through them the *passive intellect* knows material things.

We shall not pause here to further investigate these lovely things and the different ways different philosophers conceive of them. For although they disagree about the number of faculties they attribute to the interior sense and to the understanding, and although there are many of them who doubt whether an *agent intellect* is needed in order to know sensible objects, still they practically all agree that external objects transmit species or images that resemble them, and with only this as their basis, they multiply their faculties and defend their *agent intellect*. As this basis has no solidity, as will be shown, it is not necessary to pause further in order to overthrow everything that has been built upon it.

We assert, then, that it is unlikely that objects transmit images, or species, that resemble them, and here are some reasons why. The first is drawn from the impenetrability of bodies. All objects (such as the sun, the stars, as well as those closer to our eyes) are unable to transmit species of a nature other than their own. This is why philosophers commonly say that these species are gross and material as opposed to the expressed species, which are spiritualized. These impressed species are therefore little bodies. They therefore cannot penetrate each other or the whole of the space between the earth and the heavens, which must be full of them. From this it is easy to conclude that they must run against and batter each other from all directions, and that hence they cannot make objects visible.

Furthermore, a great number of objects located in the sky and on earth can be seen from the same place or the same point; the species of all these objects would

then have to be capable of being reduced to a point. Now since they are extended they are impenetrable; therefore, . . . and so on.

But not only can a great number of very large objects be seen from the same point; there is no point in the universe's vast stretches from which an almost infinite number of objects cannot be discovered, and even objects as large as the sun, moon, and heavens. In the entire world there is no point^a where the species of all these things ought not meet—which is contrary to all indications of the truth.

The second reason is based on the change that occurs in the species. It is certain that the closer an object is, the larger its species must be, since we see the object as larger. Now, I do not see what can make this species diminish or what can become of the parts composing it when it was larger. But what is even harder to understand on their view is how, if we look at this object with magnifying glasses or a microscope, the species suddenly becomes five or six hundred times larger than it was before, for still less do we see with what parts it can so greatly increase its size in an instant.

The third reason is that when we look at a perfect cube, all the species of its sides are unequal, and yet we see all its sides as equally square. And likewise when we look at a picture of ovals and parallelograms, which can transmit only species of the same shape, we see in it only circles and squares. This clearly shows that the object we are looking at need not produce species that resemble it in order for us to see it.

Finally, it is inconceivable how a body that does not sensibly diminish could continually emit species in all directions, or how it could continually fill the vast spaces around it with them—and all this with inconceivable speed. For a hidden object can be seen at the very moment of its discovery from several million leagues away and from every direction. And, what seems stranger still, very active bodies, such as air and a few others, lack the force to emit images resembling them—as coarser and less active bodies, such as earth, stones, and almost all hard bodies do.

But I do not wish to linger to adduce all the reasons opposed to this view, since it would be an endless task and the least mental effort will yield an inexhaustible number of them. Those we have just given are enough, and even they are not necessary after what was said about this subject in the first book, where the errors of the senses were explained. But so many philosophers hold this view that I thought it necessary to say something about it in order to provoke them to reflect on their thoughts.

^aTo see how the impressions of visible objects, however opposed, can be communicated without being diminished, read the last two Elucidations found at the end of this work.

BOOK THREE: PART TWO

Chapter Three



That the soul does not have the power to produce ideas. The cause of our error in this matter.

The second view belongs to those who believe that our souls have the power of producing the ideas of the things they wish to think about, and that our souls are moved to produce them by the impressions that objects make on the body, though these impressions are not images resembling the objects causing them. According to them, it is in this that man is made after the image of God and shares in His power. Further, just as God created all things from nothing, and can annihilate them and create new things in their place, so man can create and annihilate ideas of anything he pleases. But there is good reason to distrust all these views that elevate man. These are generally thoughts that come from his pride and vanity, and not from the Father of lights.

This share in God's power that men boast of for representing objects to themselves and for several other particular actions is a share that seems to involve a certain independence (as it is generally explained). But it is also an illusory share, which men's ignorance and vanity makes them imagine. Their dependence upon the power and goodness of God is much greater than they think, but this is not the place to explain the matter. Let us try only to show that men do not have the power to form ideas of the things they perceive.

Since ideas have real properties, no one can doubt that they are real beings, or that they differ from one another, and that they represent altogether different things. Nor can it be reasonably doubted that they are spiritual and are very different from the bodies they represent. This seems to raise a doubt whether the ideas by means of which bodies are seen are not more noble than the bodies themselves. Indeed, the intelligible world must be more perfect than the material, terrestrial world, as we shall see in what follows. Thus, when it is claimed that men have the power to form such ideas as please them, one runs the risk of claiming that men have the power of creating beings worthier and more perfect than the world God has created. Yet this is never thought about, because an idea is fancied to be nothing since it cannot be sensed—or if it is considered as a

being, it is only as a meager and insignificant being, because it is thought to be annihilated as soon as it is no longer present to the mind.

But even if it were true that ideas were only lesser and insignificant beings, still they are beings, and spiritual beings at that, and given that men do not have the power of creation, it follows that they are unable to produce them. For the production of ideas in the way they explain it is a true creation, and although they may try to palliate the temerity and soften the harshness of this view by saying that the production of ideas presupposes something whereas creation presupposes nothing, still they have not resolved the fundamental difficulty.

For it ought to be carefully noted that it is no more difficult to produce something from nothing than to produce it by positing another thing from which it cannot be made and which can contribute nothing to its production. For example, it is no more difficult to create an angel than to produce it from a stone, because given that a stone is of a totally contrary kind of being, it can contribute nothing to the production of an angel. But it can contribute to the production of bread, of gold, and such, because stone, gold, and bread are but the same extension differently configured, and they are all material things.

It is even more difficult to produce an angel from a stone than to produce it from nothing, because to make an angel from a stone (insofar as it can be done), the stone must first be annihilated and then the angel must be created, whereas simply creating an angel does not require anything to be annihilated. If, then, the mind produces its own ideas from the material impressions the brain receives from objects, it continuously does the same thing, or something as difficult, or even more difficult, as if it created them. Since ideas are spiritual, they cannot be produced from material images in the brain, with which they are incommensurable.

But if it be said that an idea is not a substance, I would agree—but it is still a spiritual thing, and as it is impossible to make a square out of a mind, though a square is not a substance, so a spiritual idea cannot be formed from a material substance, even though an idea is not a substance.

But even if the mind of man were granted a sovereign power of annihilating and creating the ideas of things, still it would never use it to produce them. For just as a painter, no matter how good he is at his art, cannot represent an animal he has never seen and of which he has no idea—so that the painting he would be required to produce could not be like this unknown animal—so a man could not form the idea of an object unless he knew it beforehand, i.e., unless he already had the idea of it, which idea does not depend on his will. But if he already has an idea of it, he knows the object, and it is useless for him to form another idea of it. It is therefore useless to attribute to the mind of man the power of producing its ideas.

It might be said that the mind has general and confused ideas that it does not produce, and that those of its own making are clearer, more distinct, particular ideas. But this amounts to the same thing. For just as an artist cannot draw the portrait of an individual in such fashion that he could be certain of having done a

proper job unless he had a distinct idea of the individual, and indeed unless the subject were to sit for it—so a mind that, for example, has only the idea of being or of animal in general cannot represent a horse to itself, or form a very distinct idea of it, or be sure that the idea exactly resembles a horse, unless it already has an initial idea against which it compares the second. Now if it already has one idea, it is useless to form a second, and therefore the question about the first idea, . . . , and so on.

It is true that when we conceive of a square through pure intellection, we can still imagine it, i.e., perceive it by tracing an image of it for ourselves in the brain. But it should be noted, first, that we are neither the true nor the principal cause of the image (but this is too long a matter to be explained here), and second, that far from being more distinct and more accurate than the first idea, the second idea accompanying the image is accurate only because it resembles the first, which serves as a model [*regle*] for the second. For ultimately, the imagination and the senses themselves should not be taken as representing objects to us more distinctly than does the pure understanding, but only as affecting and moving the mind more. For the ideas of the senses and of the imagination are distinct only to the extent that they conform to the ideas of pure intellection.⁴ The image of a square that the imagination traces in the brain, for example, is accurate and well formed only to the extent that it conforms to the idea of a square we conceive through pure intellection. It is this idea that governs the image. It is the mind that conducts the imagination and requires it, as it were, to consider occasionally whether the image it depicts is a figure composed of four straight and equal lines, and exactly right-angled—in a word, whether what one is imagining is like what one conceives.

After what has been said, I do not think anyone can doubt that those who claim the mind can form its own ideas of objects are mistaken, since they attribute to the mind the power of creating, and even of creating wisely and with order, although it has no knowledge of what it does—which is inconceivable. But the cause of their error is that men never fail to judge that a thing is the cause of a given effect when the two are conjoined, given that the true cause of the effect is unknown to them. This is why everyone concludes that a moving ball which strikes another is the true and principal cause of the motion it communicates to the other, and that the soul's will is the true and principal cause of movement in the arms, and other such prejudices—because it always happens that a ball moves when struck by another, that our arms move almost every time we want them to, and that we do not sensibly perceive what else could be the cause of these movements.

But when an effect does not so frequently follow something not its cause, there are still people who believe it to be caused by that thing, though not everyone falls into this error. For example, a comet appears and a prince dies, stones are

⁴ "Tanto meliora esse judico quae oculis cerno, quanto pro sui natura viciniora sunt iis quae animo intelligo." Aug. *Vera religio*, ch. 3. "Quis bene se inspicies non expertus est, tanto se aliquid intellexisse sincerius, quanto removere atque subducere intentionem mentis a corporis sensibus potuit." Aug. *De immortalitate animae*, ch. 10.

exposed to the moon and are eaten by worms, the sun is in conjunction with Mars at the birth of a child and something extraordinary happens to the child. This is enough to convince many people that the comet, the moon, and the conjunction of the sun and Mars are the causes of the effects just noted and others like them; and the reason why not everyone is of the same belief is that these effects are not always observed to follow these things.

But given that all men generally have ideas of things present to the mind as soon as they want them, and that this occurs many times daily, practically everyone concludes that the will attending the production, or rather, the presence of ideas is their true cause, because at the time they see nothing they can assign as their cause, and because they believe that ideas cease to exist as soon as the mind ceases to perceive them and begin to exist again when they are represented to the mind. This is also why some people judge that external objects transmit images resembling them, as we have just pointed out in the preceeding chapter. Unable to see objects by themselves, but only through their ideas, they judge that the object produces the idea—because as soon as it is present, they see it; as soon as it is absent, they no longer see it; and because the presence of the object almost always attends the idea representing it to us.

Yet if men were not so rash in their judgments, they would conclude from the fact that the ideas of things are present to their mind as soon as they wish, only this, that in the order of nature their will is generally necessary for them to have these ideas, but not that the will is the true and principal cause that presents ideas to their mind, and still less that the will produces them from nothing or in the way they explain it. They should conclude not that objects transmit species resembling them because the soul ordinarily perceives them only when they are present, but only that the object is ordinarily necessary for the idea to be present to the mind. Finally, because a ball does not have the power to move itself, they should not judge that a ball in motion is the true and principal cause of the movement of the ball it finds in its path. They can judge only that the collision of the two balls is the occasion for the Author of all motion in matter to carry out the decree of His will, which is the universal cause of all things. He does so by communicating to the second ball part of the motion of the first, i.e., to speak more clearly, by willing that the latter ball should acquire as much motion in the same direction as the former loses, for^a the motor force of bodies can only be the will of Him who preserves them, as we shall show elsewhere.

^aSee chapter 3 of the second part on Method, and the Elucidation of this chapter [15].

BOOK THREE: PART TWO

Chapter Four



That we do not perceive objects by means of ideas created with us. That God does not produce ideas in us each time we need them.

The third view is held by those who would have it that all ideas are innate or created with us.

To see the implausibility of this view, it should be considered that there are in the world many totally different things of which we have ideas. But to mention only simple figures, it is certain that their number is infinite, and even if we fix upon only one, such as the ellipse, the mind undoubtedly conceives of an infinite number of different kinds of them when it conceives that one of its diameters may be infinitely lengthened while the other remains constant.

Likewise, an infinite number of different kinds of triangles can be conceived, given that the altitude can be infinitely increased or decreased while the base remains the same; moreover, and this is what I ask be noted here, the mind to some extent perceives this infinite number of triangles, although we can imagine very few of them and cannot simultaneously have particular and distinct ideas of many triangles of different kinds. But it should be especially noted that the mind's general idea of this infinite number of different kinds of triangles suffices to prove that if we do not conceive of all these different triangles by means of particular ideas, in short, if we do not comprehend the infinite, the fault does not lie with our ideas, and that our failure to grasp the infinite is only for lack of capacity and scope of mind. If a man were to apply himself to an investigation of the properties of all the different kinds of triangles, and even if he should continue his investigation forever, he would never want for further particular ideas. But his mind would exhaust itself for no purpose.

What I have just said about triangles is applicable to figures of five, six, a hundred, a thousand, of ten thousand sides, and so on to infinity. And if the sides of a triangle can have infinite relations with each other, making an infinity of different kinds of triangles, it is easy to see that figures of four, five, or a million sides can have even greater differences, since they can have a greater number of relations and combinations of their sides than can simple triangles.

The mind, then, perceives all these things; it has ideas of them; it is certain that

it will never want for ideas should it spend countless centuries investigating even a single figure, and that if it does not perceive these figures in an instant, or if it does not comprehend the infinite, this is only because of its very limited scope. It has, then, an infinite number of ideas—what am I saying?—it has as many infinite numbers of ideas as there are different figures; consequently, since there is an infinite number of different figures, the mind must have an infinity of infinite numbers of ideas just to know the figures.

Now, I ask whether it is likely that God created so many things along with the mind of man. My own view is that such is not the case, especially since all this could be done in another, much simpler and easier way, as we shall see shortly. For as God always acts in the simplest ways, it does not seem reasonable to explain how we know objects by assuming the creation of an infinity of beings, since the difficulty can be resolved in an easier and more straightforward fashion.

But even if the mind had a store of all the ideas necessary for it to perceive objects, yet it would be impossible to explain how the soul could choose them to represent them to itself, how, for example, the soul could make itself instantly perceive all the different objects whose size, figure, distance and motion it discovers when it opens its eyes in the countryside. Through this means it could not even perceive a single object such as the sun when it is before the body's eyes. For, since the image the sun imprints in the brain does not resemble the idea we have of it (as we have proved elsewhere), and as the soul does not perceive the motion the sun produces in the brain and in the fundus of the eyes, it is inconceivable that it should be able to determine precisely which among the infinite number of its ideas it would have to represent to itself in order to imagine or see the sun and to see it as having a given size. It cannot be said, then, that ideas of things are created with us, or that this suffices for us to see the objects surrounding us.

Nor can it be said that God constantly produces as many new ideas as there are different things we perceive. This view is refuted well enough by what has just been said in this chapter. Furthermore, we must at all times actually have in us the ideas of all things, since we can at all times will to think about anything—which we could not do unless we had already perceived them confusedly, i.e., unless an infinite number of ideas were present to the mind; for after all, one cannot will to think about objects of which one has no idea. Furthermore, it is clear that the idea, or immediate object of our mind, when we think about limitless space, or a circle in general, or indeterminate being, is nothing created. For no created reality can be either infinite or even general, as is what we perceive in these cases. But all this will be seen more clearly in what follows.

BOOK THREE: PART TWO

Chapter Five



That the mind sees neither the essence nor the existence of objects by considering its own perfections. That only God sees them in this way.

The fourth view is that the mind needs only itself in order to see objects, and that by considering itself and its own perfections, it can discover all external things.

It is certain that the soul sees in itself, and without ideas, all the sensations and passions that affect it at the moment—pleasure, pain, cold, heat, colors, sounds, odors, tastes, its love and hatred, its joy and sadness, and all the rest—because none of the soul's sensations and passions represent anything resembling them outside the soul, and are but modifications of which a mind is capable.^a But the difficulty lies in knowing whether the ideas representing something outside the soul and resembling them to some extent (such as the ideas of the sun, of a house, a horse, a river, etc.) are merely modifications of the soul, as a result of which the mind would need only itself in order to represent all things external to itself.

There are some people who do not hesitate to affirm that with the soul made for thinking, it has within itself all that it needs to perceive objects, i.e., by considering its own perfections, because given that the soul is indeed more noble than anything it distinctly conceives of, it can to some extent be said to contain them *eminently*, as the School would put it, i.e., in a way more noble and sublime than they are in themselves. They would have it that higher things contain the perfections of lower things in this way. Thus, given that they are the noblest creature they know of, these people claim to have within themselves in a spiritual way all that exists in the visible world, and to be able to modify themselves in such fashion as to perceive all that the human mind is capable of knowing. In a word, they would have the soul be like an intelligible world, which contains in itself all that the material and sensible world contains, and indeed, infinitely more.

But it seems to me rash to wish to maintain this view. Unless I am mistaken, it is natural vanity, love of independence, and the desire to be like Him who contains in Himself all beings that confound the mind and lead us to fancy that

^aSee Arnauld's *Dex vrayes et des fausses idées* [ch. 27].

we possess what in fact we do not. "Say not that you are a light unto yourself," says Saint Augustine,^a for only God is a light unto Himself and can see all that He has produced and might produce by considering Himself.

It cannot be doubted that only God existed before the world was created and that He could not have produced it without knowledge or ideas; consequently, the ideas He had of the world are not different from Himself, so that all creatures, even the most material and terrestrial, are in God, though in a completely spiritual way that is incomprehensible to us.^b God therefore sees within Himself all beings by considering His own perfections, which represent them to Him. He also knows their existence perfectly, because given that they depend for their existence on His will, and given that He cannot be ignorant of his own volitions, it follows that He cannot be ignorant of their existence, and consequently, God sees in Himself not only the essence of things but also their existence.

But such is not the case with created minds, which can see in themselves neither the essence nor the existence of things. They cannot see the essence of things within themselves since, given their own limitations, created minds cannot contain all beings as does God, who might be termed universal being, or simply, *He Who is*,^c as He calls Himself. 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. For the mind not only sees things one after another in temporal succession, but it also perceives the infinite, though it does not comprehend it, as we have said in the preceding chapter. 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.

Nor does it see their existence in itself, because they do not depend for their existence upon its will, and because the ideas of things can be present to the mind though the things themselves might not exist. For everyone can have the idea of a golden mountain without there being a golden mountain in nature, and although one may rely on the reports of the senses to judge the existence of objects, nevertheless reason does not assure us that we should always believe our senses, since we clearly detect that they deceive us. When a man's blood is heated, for example, or simply when he is asleep, he sometimes sees country scenes, battles, and other such things before his eyes that are not present nor perhaps ever were. Undoubtedly, then, it is not in itself or through itself that the mind sees the existence of things, but rather it depends on something else for this.

^aSee the *Réponse aux vraies & aux fausses idées*, & the *Réponse à une 3e Lettre de M. Arnauld*, in the fourth volume of my *Replies*. "Dic quia tu tibi lumen non es." Serm. 8, *De verbis Domini*.

^b"Cum essentia Dei habeat in se quiddam perfectionis habet essentia cujusque rei alterius, & adhuc amplius, Deus in se ipso potest omnia propria cognitione cognoscere. Propria enim natura cujusque consistit, secundum quod per aliquem modum naturam Dei participat." St. Thomas, I. P. q. 14. art. 6.

^cExod. 3:14.

BOOK THREE: PART TWO

Chapter Six



That we see all things in God.

In the preceding chapters we have examined four different ways in which the soul might see external objects, all of which seem to us very unlikely. There remains only the fifth, which alone seems to conform to reason and to be most appropriate for exhibiting the dependence that minds have on God in all their thoughts.

To understand this fifth way, we must remember what was just said in the preceding chapter—that God must have within Himself the ideas of all the beings He has created (since otherwise He could not have created them), and thus He sees all these beings by considering the perfections He contains to which they are related. We should know, furthermore, that through His presence God is in close union with our minds, such that He might be said to be the place of minds as space is, in a sense, the place of bodies. Given these two things, the mind surely can see what in God represents created beings, since what in God represents created beings is very spiritual, intelligible, and present to the mind. Thus, the mind can see God's works in Him, provided that God wills to reveal to it what in Him represents them. The following are the reasons that seem to prove that He wills this rather than the creation of an infinite number of ideas in each mind.

Not only does it strictly conform to reason, but it is also apparent from the economy found throughout nature that God never does in very complicated fashion what can be done in a very simple and straightforward way. For God never does anything uselessly and without reason. His power and wisdom are not shown by doing lesser things with greater means—this is contrary to reason and indicates a limited intelligence. Rather, they are shown by doing greater things with very simple and straightforward means. Thus, it was with extension alone that He produced everything admirable we see in nature and even what gives life and movement to animals. For those who absolutely insist on substantial forms, faculties, and souls in animals (different from their blood and bodily organs) to perform their functions, at the same time would have it that God lacks intelligence, or that He cannot make all these remarkable things with extension alone. They measure the power and sovereign wisdom of God by the pettiness of

their own mind. Thus, since God can reveal everything to minds simply by willing that they see what is in their midst, i.e., what in Him is related to and represents these things, there is no likelihood that He does otherwise, or that He does so by producing as many infinities of infinite numbers of ideas as there are created minds.

But it should be carefully noted that we cannot conclude from their seeing all things in God in this way that our minds see the essence of God. God's essence is His own absolute being, and minds do not see the divine substance taken absolutely but only as relative to creatures and to the degree that they can participate in it. What they see in God is very imperfect, whereas God is most perfect. They see matter that is shaped, divisible, and so on, but there is nothing divisible or shaped in God, for God is all being, since He is infinite and comprehends everything; but He is no being in particular. Yet what we see is but one or more particular beings, and we do not understand this perfect simplicity of God, which includes all beings. In addition, it might be said that we do not so much see the ideas of things as the things themselves that are represented by ideas, for when we see a square, for example, we do not say that we see the idea of the square, which is joined to the mind, but only the square that is external to it.

The second reason for thinking that we see beings because God wills that what in Him representing them should be revealed to us (and not because there are as many ideas created with us as there are things we can perceive) is that this view places created minds in a position of complete dependence on God—the most complete there can be. For on this view, not only could we see nothing but what He wills that we see, but we could see nothing but what He makes us see. "Non sumus sufficientes cogitare aliquid a nobis, tamquam ex nobis, sed sufficientia nostra ex Deo est."^a It is God Himself who enlightens philosophers in the knowledge that ungrateful men call natural though they receive it only from heaven. "Deus enim illis manifestavit."^b He is truly the mind's light and the father of lights. "Pater luminum"^c—it is He who teaches men knowledge—"Qui docet hominem scientiam."^d In a word, He is the true light that illumines everyone who comes into the world: "Lux vera quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum."^e

For after all, it is difficult enough to understand distinctly the dependence our minds have on God in all their particular actions, given that they have everything we distinctly know to be necessary for them to act, or all the ideas of things present to their mind. And that general and confused term *concourse*, by means of which we would explain creatures' dependence on God, rouses not a single distinct idea in an attentive mind; and yet it is good that men should distinctly know that they are capable of nothing without God.

^a2 Cor. 3:5.

^bRom. 1:19.

^cJames 1:17.

^dPs. 93:10.

^eJohn 1:9.

But the strongest argument of all is the mind's way of perceiving anything. It is certain, and everyone knows this from experience, that when we want to think about some particular thing, we first glance over all beings and then apply ourselves to the consideration of the object we wish to think about. Now, it is indubitable that we could desire to see a particular object only if we had already seen it, though in a general and confused fashion. As a result of this, given that we can desire to see all beings, now one, now another, it is certain that all beings are present to our mind; and it seems that all beings can be present to our mind only because God, i.e., He who includes all things in the simplicity of His being, is present to it.

It even seems that the mind would be incapable of representing universal ideas of genus, species, and so on, to itself had it not seen all beings contained in one. For, given that every creature is a particular being, we cannot say that we see a created thing when, for example, we see a triangle in general. Finally, I think that sense can be made of the way the mind knows certain abstract and general truths only through the presence of Him who can enlighten the mind in an infinity of different ways.

Finally, of the proofs of God's existence, the loftiest and most beautiful, the primary and most solid (or the one that assumes the least)^a is the idea we have of the infinite. For it is certain that (a) the mind perceives the infinite, though it does not comprehend it, and (b) it has a very distinct idea of God, which it can have only by means of its union with Him, since it is inconceivable that the idea of an infinitely perfect being (which is what we have of God) should be something created.

But not only does the mind have the idea of the infinite, it even has it before that of the finite. For we conceive of infinite being simply because we conceive of being, without thinking whether it is finite or infinite. In order for us to conceive of a finite being, something must necessarily be eliminated from this general notion of being, which consequently must come first. Thus, the mind perceives nothing except in the idea it has of the infinite, and far from this idea being formed from the confused collection of all our ideas of particular beings (as philosophers think), all these particular ideas are in fact but participations in the general idea of the infinite; just as God does not draw His being from creatures, while every creature is but an imperfect participation in the divine being.

Here is an argument that may prove demonstrative for those accustomed to abstract reasoning. It is certain that ideas are efficacious, since they act upon the mind and enlighten it, and since they make it happy or unhappy through the pleasant or unpleasant perceptions by which they affect it. Now nothing can act immediately upon the mind unless it is superior to it—nothing but God alone; for only the Author of our being can change its modifications. All our ideas, therefore, must be located in the efficacious substance of the Divinity, which alone is intelligible or capable of enlightening us, because it alone can affect intelligences. "Insinuavit nobis Christus," says Saint Augustine.^b "animam

^aThis proof will be found treated at greater length in chapter 11 of the following book.

^b*Tract.* 23 on St. John.

humanam & mentem rationalem non vegetari, non beatificari, NON ILLUMINARI NISI AB IPSA SUBSTANTIA DEI."

Finally, God can have no other special end for His actions than Himself. This is a notion common to all men capable of a little reflection, and Sacred Scripture allows no doubt that God made all things for Himself. Therefore, not only must our natural love, i.e., the impulse He produces in our mind, tend toward Him but also the knowledge and light He gives it must reveal to us something in Him, for everything coming from God can be only for God. If God had made a mind and had given the sun to it as an idea, or immediate object of knowledge, it seems to me God would have made this mind and its idea for the sun and not for Himself.

God can make a mind in order for it to know His works, then, only if that mind to some extent sees God in seeing His works. As a result, it might be said that if we do not to some extent see God, we see nothing, just as if we do not love God, i.e., if God were not continuously impressing upon us the love of good in general, we would love nothing.^a For, given that this love is our will, we could neither love nor will anything without it, since we can love particular goods only by directing toward these goods the impulse of love that God gives us for Himself. Thus, as we love something only through our necessary love for God, we see something only through our natural knowledge of God; and all our particular ideas of creatures are but limitations of the idea of the Creator, as all the impulses of the will toward creatures are only determinations of its impulse toward the Creator.

I do not think there are any theologians who will disagree that the impious love God with this natural love I am speaking about, and Saint Augustine and several other Fathers maintain as indubitable that the impious see eternal truths and moral rules in God. Accordingly, the view I am expounding should upset no one.^b Here is how Saint Augustine expresses it:

Ab illa incommutabilis luce veritatis etiam impius, dam ab ea avertitur, quodammodo tangitur. Hinc est quod etiam impii cogitant aeternitatem, & multa recte reprehendunt, recteque laudant in hominum moribus. Quibus ea tandem regulis judicant, nisi in quibus vident, quemadmodum quisque vivere debeat, etiam si nec ipsi eodem modo vivant? Ubi autem eas vident? Neque enim in sua natura. Nam cum procul dubio mente ista videantur, eorumque mentes constet esse mutabiles, has vero regulas immutabiles videat, quisquis in eis & hoc videre potuerit. . . ubinam ergo sunt istae regulae scriptae, nisi in libro lucis illius, quae veritas dicitur, unde lex omnis justa describitur. . . in qua videt quid operandum sit, etiam qui operatur injustitiam, & ipse est qui ab illa luce avertitur a qua tamen tangitur.^c

Saint Augustine has an infinity of such passages by which he proves that we already see God in this life through the knowledge we have of eternal truths. The truth is uncreated, immutable, immense, eternal, and above all things. It is true by itself. It draws its perfection from no other thing. It renders creatures more

^aBk. 1, ch. 1.

^bSee the preface to the *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, and the *Réponse aux vraies & fausses idées* chs. 7 & 21.

^cBook 14, *De Trin.* ch. 15.

perfect, and all minds naturally seek to know it. Only God can have all these perfections. Therefore, truth is God. We see some of these immutable, eternal truths. Therefore, we see God. These are the arguments of Saint Augustine—ours are somewhat different, and we have no wish to make improper use of the authority of so great a man in order to support our own view.

We are of the opinion, then, that truths (and even those that are eternal, such as that twice two is four) are not absolute beings, much less that they are God Himself. For clearly, this truth consists only in the relation of equality between twice two and four. Thus, we do not claim, as does Saint Augustine, that we see God in seeing truths, but in seeing the *ideas* of these truths—for the ideas are real, whereas the equality between the ideas, which is the truth, is nothing real. When we say, for example, that the cloth we are measuring is three ells long, the cloth and the ells are real. But the equality between them is not a real being—it is only a relation found between the three ells and the cloth. When we say that twice two is four, the ideas of the numbers are real, but the equality between them is only a relation. Thus, our view is that we see God when we see eternal truths, and not that these truths are God, because the ideas on which these truths depend are in God—it might even be that this was Saint Augustine's meaning. We further believe that changeable and corruptible things are known in God, though Saint Augustine speaks only of immutable and incorruptible things, because for this to be so, no imperfection need be placed in God, since, as we have already said, it is enough that God should reveal to us what in Him is related to these things.

But although I may say that we see material and sensible things in God, it must be carefully noted that I am not saying we have sensations of them in God, but only that it is God who acts in us; for God surely knows sensible things, but He does not sense them. When we perceive something sensible, two things are found in our perception: *sensation* and pure *idea*. The sensation is a modification of our soul, and it is God who causes it in us. He can cause this modification even though He does not have it Himself, because He sees in the idea He has of our soul that it is capable of it. As for the idea found in conjunction with the sensation, it is in God, and we see it because it pleases God to reveal it to us. 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.

We believe, finally, that all minds see eternal laws, as well as other things, in God, but with a certain difference. They know order and eternal truths, and even the beings that God has made according to these truths or according to order, through the union these minds necessarily have with the Word, or the wisdom of God, which enlightens them, as has just been explained. But it is through the impression they constantly receive from the will of God, who leads them toward Him and who tries, as it were, to make their will entirely like His own, that they realize that the immutable order is their own indispensable law, an order which thus includes all eternal laws, such as that we ought to love good and avoid evil, that justice should be prized more than all riches, that it is better to obey God than

to command men, and an infinity of other natural laws. For the knowledge of all these laws, or of the obligation minds are under to conform to the immutable order, is not different from the knowledge of this impression, which they always feel in themselves, though they do not always follow it through the free choice of their will, and which they know to be common to all minds, though it is not equally strong in all minds.

It is through this dependence, this relation, this union of our mind with the Word of God, and of our will with His love, that we are made in the image and likeness of God. And though this image may be greatly effaced through sin, yet it must subsist as long as we do. But if we bear the image of the Word humiliated upon earth, and if we follow the impulses of the Holy Ghost, this union of our mind with the Word of the Father, and with the love of the Father and the Son, will be reestablished and made indelible. We shall be like God if we are like the God-man. Finally, God will be entirely in us, and we in Him in a way much more perfect than that by which we must be in Him and He in us that we might subsist.

These are some of the reasons that might lead one to believe that minds perceive everything through the intimate presence of Him who comprehends all in the simplicity of His being. Each of us will judge^a the matter according to the inner conviction he receives after seriously considering it. But I do not think there is any plausibility in any of the other ways of explaining these things, and this last way seems more than plausible. Thus, our souls depend on God in all ways. For just as it is He who makes them feel pain, pleasure, and all the other sensations, through the natural union He has established between them and our bodies, which is but His decree and general will, so it is He who makes them know all that they know through the natural union He has also established between the will of man and the representation of ideas contained in the immensity of the Divine being, which union is also but His general will. As a result of this, only He can enlighten us, by representing everything to us—just as only He can make us happy by making us enjoy all sorts of pleasures.

Let us hold this view, then, that God is the intelligible world or the place of minds, as the material world is the place of bodies; that from His power minds receive their modifications; that in His wisdom they find all their ideas; that through His love they receive their orderly impulses, and because His power and love are but Himself, let us believe with Saint Paul, that He is not far from any of us, and that in Him we live and move and have our being. "Non longe est ab unoquoque nostrum, in ipso enim vivimus, movemur, & sumus."^b

^aSee the *Elucidations* [4]. The *Réponse au livre des vraies & fausses Idées*. The *1ère Lettre contre la Défense* against this *Réponse*, the first two *Dialogues on Metaphysics*. The *Réponse à M. Régis*, and especially my *Réponse à une 3e Lettre de M. Arnauld*. There perhaps my view will be found more clearly demonstrated.

^bActs 17:28.

BOOK THREE: PART TWO

Chapter Seven



I. The four different ways of perceiving things. II. How we know God. III. How we know bodies. IV. How we know our own souls. V. How we know pure spirits and the souls of other men.

In order to clarify and simplify the view I have just laid out concerning the way in which the mind perceives all the various objects of its knowledge, I must distinguish its four ways of knowing.

I. The four ways of perceiving things.

The first is to know things by themselves.

The second is to know them through their ideas, i.e., as I mean it here, through something different from themselves.

The third is to know them through *consciousness*, or inner sensation.

The fourth is to know them through conjecture.

We know things by themselves and without ideas when they are intelligible by themselves, i.e., when they can act on the mind and thereby reveal themselves to it. For the understanding is a purely passive faculty of the soul, whereas activity is found only in the will. Even its desires are not the true causes of ideas—they are but the occasional or natural causes of their presence as a result of the natural laws concerning the union of our soul with universal Reason, as I have explained elsewhere. We know things through their ideas when they are not intelligible by themselves, whether because they are corporeal or because they cannot affect the mind or reveal themselves to it. Through consciousness we know everything that is not distinct from ourselves. Finally, through conjecture we know those things that are different both from ourselves and from what we know either in itself or through ideas, such as when we believe that certain things are like certain others we know.

II. How we know God.

Only God do we know through Himself, for though there are other spiritual beings besides Him, which seem intelligible by their nature, 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,^a ruling our mind without the mediation of any creature.

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. But as far as particular beings are concerned, there is no difficulty in conceiving how they can be represented by the infinite being that contains them in His most efficacious and, consequently, most intelligible substance. 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, i.e., in God, since only God contains the intelligible world, where the ideas of all things are located.

But while we can see all things in God, it does not follow that we in fact do so—we see in God only the things of which we have ideas, and there are things we perceive without ideas, or know only through sensation.

III. *How we know bodies.*

Everything in this world of which we have some knowledge is either a mind or a body, a property of a mind or a property of a body. Undoubtedly, we know bodies with their properties through their ideas, because given that they are not intelligible by themselves, we can perceive them only in that being which contains them in an intelligible way. Thus, it is in God and through their ideas that we perceive bodies and their properties, and for this reason, the knowledge we have of them is quite perfect—i.e., our idea of extension suffices to inform us of all the properties of which extension is capable, and we could not wish for an idea of extension, figure, or motion more distinct or more fruitful than the one God gives us.

As the ideas of things in God include all their properties, whoever sees their ideas can also see all their properties successively; for when we see things as they are in God, we always see them in perfect fashion, and the way we see them would be infinitely perfect if the mind seeing them were infinite. What is lacking to our knowledge of extension, figures, and motion is the shortcoming not of the idea representing it but of our mind considering it.

IV. *How we know our own soul.*

Such is not the case with the soul, [which] we do not know through its idea—we do not see it in God; we know it only through *consciousness*, and because of this, our knowledge of it is imperfect. Our knowledge of our soul is limited to what we sense taking place in us. If we had never sensed pain, heat, light, and such, we would be unable to know whether the soul was capable of sensing these things, because we do not know it through its idea. But if we saw in

^a*Humanis mentibus nulla interposita natura praesidet.* Aug. *De vera relig.* ch. 55.

God the idea corresponding to our soul, we would at the same time know, or at least could know all the properties of which it is capable—as we know, or at least can know, all the properties of which extension is capable, because we know extension through its idea.

It is true that we know well enough through our consciousness, or the inner sensation we have of ourselves, that our soul is something of importance. But what we know of it might be almost nothing compared to what it is in itself. If all we knew about matter were some twenty or thirty figures it had been modified by, we certainly would know almost nothing about it in comparison with what we can know about it through the idea representing it. To know the soul perfectly, then, it is not enough to know only what we know through inner sensation—since the consciousness we have of ourselves perhaps shows us only the least part of our being.

From what we have just said it might be concluded that although we know the existence of our soul more distinctly than the existence of both our own body and those surrounding us, still our knowledge of the soul's nature is not as perfect as our knowledge of the nature of bodies, and this might serve to reconcile the differing views^a of those who say that nothing is known better than the soul, and those who claim to know nothing less.

This might also serve to prove that the ideas which represent to us things outside us are not modifications of our soul. For if the soul saw all things by considering its own modifications, it would have to know its own nature or essence more clearly than that of bodies, and all the sensations or modifications of which it is capable more clearly than the figures or modifications of which bodies are capable. However, it knows itself capable of a given sensation not through the perception it has of itself in consulting its idea but only through experience, whereas it knows that extension is capable of an infinite number of figures through the idea it has of extension. There are even certain sensations like colors and sounds which are such that most people cannot tell whether or not they are modifications of the soul, but there is no figure that everyone, through the idea he has of extension, does not recognize as the modification of a body.

What I have just said also shows why the modifications of the soul cannot be made known through definition; for since we know neither the soul nor its modifications through ideas but only through sensation, and since such sensations as, for example, pleasure, pain, heat, and so on, are not attached to any words, it is clear that if someone had never seen color or felt heat, he could not be made to know these sensations through any definition of them that might be given him. Now, given that men have their sensations only on account of their body, and given that their bodies are not all disposed in the same way, it often happens that words are equivocal, that the words we use to express the modifications of our soul mean just the opposite of what we intend, and that we often make people think of bitterness, for example, when we believe we are making them think of sweetness.

^aSee the *Elucidations* [11].

Although our knowledge of our soul is not complete, what we do know of it through consciousness or inner sensation is enough to demonstrate its immortality, spirituality, freedom, and several other attributes we need to know. And this seems to be why God does not cause us to know the soul, as He causes us to know bodies, through its idea. The knowledge that we have of our soul through consciousness is imperfect, granted; but it is not false. On the other hand, that knowledge we have of bodies through sensation or consciousness, if the confused sensation we have of what takes place in our body can be called consciousness, is not only imperfect, but also false. We therefore needed an idea of the body to correct our sensations of it—but we need no idea of our soul, since our consciousness of it does not involve us in error, and since to avoid being mistaken in our knowledge of it, it is enough not to confuse it with the body—and reason enables us to do this since our idea of the body reveals to us that the modalities of which it is capable are quite different from those we sense. Finally, if we had an idea of the soul as clear as that which we have of the body, that idea would have inclined us too much to view the soul as separated from the body. It would have thus diminished the union between our soul and body by preventing us from regarding it as dispersed through all our members, though I shall not further explain the matter here.

V. How we know other men's souls.

Of all the objects of our knowledge, only the souls of other men and pure intelligences remain; and clearly we know them only through conjecture. At present we do not know them either in themselves or through their ideas, and as they are different from ourselves, we cannot know them through consciousness. We conjecture that the souls of other men are of the same sort as our own. We suppose them to feel what we feel in ourselves, and even when these sensations have no relation to the body, we are certain we are not mistaken because we see in God certain ideas and immutable laws from which we know with certainty that God acts uniformly in all minds.

I know that twice two is four, that it is better to be just than rich, and I am not mistaken in believing that others know these truths as well as I do. I love pleasure and good, I abhor pain and evil, I want to be happy, and I am not mistaken in believing that all men, the angels, and even demons have these same inclinations. I even know that God will never make a mind that does not desire to be happy, or that can desire to be unhappy. But I know this with evidence and certainty because it is God who teaches it to me—for who else but God could reveal to me His designs and volitions? But when the body plays a part in what happens in me, I am almost always mistaken in judging others by myself. I feel heat, I see something of a certain size, a certain color, I taste such and such a flavor upon the approach of certain bodies—but I am mistaken if I judge others by myself. I am subject to certain passions, I have a liking or an aversion for such and such things, and I judge that others are like me—but my conjecture is often false. Thus, the knowledge we have of other men is very liable to error if we judge them only by the sensations we have of ourselves.

If there are beings different from God and ourselves, as well as from bodies and pure spirits, they are unknown to us. I can hardly persuade myself of their existence, and after examining the arguments of certain philosophers holding that there are these things, I have found them unsound. This reinforces our view that since all men have the same nature, we all have the same ideas, because we all need to know the same things.

BOOK SIX: PART TWO

Chapter Three



The most dangerous error of the philosophy of the ancients.

Not only do philosophers say what they do not conceive when they explain natural effects through certain beings of which they have not one single particular idea, they even furnish a principle from which one can directly infer very false and very dangerous conclusions.

For if we assume, in accordance with their opinion, that bodies have certain entities distinct from matter in them, then, having no distinct idea of these entities, we can easily imagine that they are the true or major causes of the effects we see. That is even the general opinion of ordinary philosophers; for it is mainly to explain these effects that they think there are substantial forms, real qualities, and other similar entities. If we next consider attentively our idea of cause or of power to act, we cannot doubt that this idea represents something divine. For the idea of a sovereign power is the idea of sovereign divinity, and the idea of a subordinate power is the idea of a lower divinity, but a genuine one, at least according to the pagans, assuming that it is the idea of a genuine power or cause. We therefore admit something divine in all the bodies around us when we posit forms, faculties, qualities, virtues, or real beings capable of producing certain effects through the force of their nature; and thus we insensibly adopt the opinion of the pagans because of our respect for their philosophy. It is true that faith corrects us; but perhaps it can be said in this connection that if the heart is Christian, the mind is basically pagan. Perhaps it will be said that substantial forms, those *plastic* forms, for example, that produce animals and plants, do not know what they are doing and that, thus lacking intelligence, they have no relation to the divinities of the pagans. But who will be able to believe that what produces works that manifest a wisdom that surpasses all philosophers produces them without intelligence?

Furthermore, it is difficult to be persuaded that we should neither fear nor love true powers—beings that can act upon us, punish us with pain, or reward us with pleasure. And as love and fear are true adoration, it is also difficult to be persuaded that we should not adore these beings. Everything that can act upon us as a true and real cause is necessarily above us, according to Saint Augustine and according to reason; and according to the same saint and the same reason, it is an

immutable law that inferior things serve superior ones. It is for these reasons that this great saint recognizes^a that the body cannot act upon the soul,^b and that nothing can be above the soul except God.

In the Sacred Scriptures, when God proves to the Israelites that they must adore Him, i.e., that they must fear and love Him, the main reasons He gives are drawn from His power to reward and punish them. He shows them the benefits they have received from Him, the evils for which He chastised them, and that He still has the same power. He forbids them to adore the gods of the pagans because they have no power over them and can do them neither good nor evil. He wants them to honor only Him because He alone is the true cause of good and evil, and because nothing happens in their city, according to one prophet,^c that He himself does not cause: because natural causes are not the true causes of the ill they appear to cause us, and because, as it is God alone who acts in them, it is He alone who must be feared, and who must be loved in them; "Soli Deo honor et gloria" [1 Tim. 1:17].

Finally, this opinion that we should love and fear what can be the true cause of good and evil appears so natural and right that it is impossible to disbelieve it. Hence, if we assume this false opinion of the philosophers, which we are here trying to destroy, that the bodies that surround us are the true causes of the pleasures and ills we feel, reason seems to some degree to justify a religion similar to that of the pagans, and to approve the universal disorder of morals.

It is true that reason does not teach that it is necessary to adore onions and leeks, for example, as the sovereign divinity, because they cannot make us completely happy when we have them, nor entirely unhappy when we do not. Also the pagans never gave them as much honor as they gave to the great Jupiter, on whom all their divinities depended, or as they gave to the sun, which our senses represent to us as the universal cause that gives life and motion to all things, and that we cannot help regarding as a divinity if we assume with the pagan philosophers that it encompasses in its being the true causes of everything it seems to produce, not only in our bodies and minds, but also in all the beings that surround us.

But if one should not render sovereign honor to leeks and onions, one can always render them some particular adoration; I mean, one can think of them and love them to some extent, if it is true that they can to some extent make us happy. We should render them honor in proportion to the good they can do. And certainly, men who heed the reports of their senses think these vegetables are capable of doing them good. The Israelites, for example, would not have missed them so much in the desert, they would not have considered themselves unhappy for want of them, had they imagined themselves in some way happy because of their enjoyment of them. Perhaps drunkards would not love wine so much if they

^a"Ego enim ab anima hoc corpus animari non puto, nisi intentione facientis; nec ab isto quicquam illam pati arbitror, sed facere de illo et in illo, tamquam subjecto divinitus dominationis suae." 1. 6. *Mus. C.* 5.

^bSee chapter 34 of St. Augustine *De quantitate animae*.

^cAmos, chs. 3, 6.

were well aware of what it is, and that the pleasure they find in drinking it comes from the Almighty, who commands them to be temperate and whom they unjustly cause to serve their intemperance. Those are the disorders in which we involve reason itself when it is joined to the principles of pagan philosophy and when it follows the impressions of the senses.

In order that we shall no longer be able to doubt the falseness of this detestable philosophy and shall clearly recognize the soundness of the principles and the distinctness of the ideas being used, it is necessary clearly to establish the truths that are opposed to the errors of the ancient philosopher, and to prove in few words that there is only one true cause because there is only one true God; that the nature or power of each thing is nothing but the will of God; that all natural causes are not *true* causes but only *occasional* causes, and certain other truths that will follow from these.

It is clear that no body, large or small, has the power to move itself. A mountain, a house, a rock, a grain of sand, in short, the tiniest or largest body conceivable does not have the power to move itself. We have only two sorts of ideas, ideas of minds and ideas of bodies; and as we should speak only of what we conceive, we should only reason according to these two kinds of ideas. Thus, since the idea we have of all bodies makes us aware that they cannot move themselves, it must be concluded that it is minds which move them.^a But when we examine our idea of all finite minds, we do not see any necessary connection between their will and the motion of any body whatsoever. On the contrary, we see that there is none and that there can be none. We must therefore also conclude, if we wish to reason according to our lights, that there is absolutely no mind created that can move a body as a true or principal cause, just as it has been said that no body could move itself.

But when one thinks about the idea of God, i.e., of an infinitely perfect and consequently all-powerful being, one knows there is such a connection between His will and the motion of all bodies, that it is impossible to conceive that He wills a body to be moved and that this body not be moved. We must therefore say that only His will can move bodies if we wish to state things as we conceive them and not as we sense them. The motor force of bodies is therefore not in the bodies that are moved, for this motor force is nothing other than the will of God. Thus, bodies have no action; and when a ball that is moved collides with and moves another, it communicates to it nothing of its own, for it does not itself have the force it communicates to it. Nevertheless, a ball is the natural cause of the motion it communicates. A natural cause is therefore not a real and true but only an occasional cause, which determines the Author of nature to act in such and such a manner in such and such a situation.

It is certain that all things are produced through the motion of either visible or invisible bodies, for experience teaches us that bodies whose parts have more motion are always those that act more and produce more change in the world. All

^aSee the seventh *Dialogue on Metaphysics* and the fifth of the *Christian Meditations* [3-9 and 14-18].

natural forces are therefore nothing but the will of God, which is always efficacious. God created the world because He willed it: "Dixit, & facta sunt" [Ps. 32:9]; and He moves all things, and thus produces all the effects that we see happening, because He also willed certain laws according to which motion is communicated upon the collision of bodies; and because these laws are efficacious, they act, whereas bodies cannot act. There are therefore no forces, powers, or true causes in the material, sensible world; and it is not necessary to admit the existence of forms, faculties, and real qualities for producing effects that bodies do not produce and for sharing with God the force and power essential to Him.

But not only are bodies incapable of being the true causes of whatever exists: the most noble minds are in a similar state of impotence. They can know nothing unless God enlightens them. They can sense nothing unless God modifies them. They are incapable of willing anything unless God moves them toward good in general, i.e., toward Himself. They can determine the impression God gives them toward Himself toward objects other than Himself, I admit; but I do not know if that can be called power. If the ability to sin is a power, it will be a power that the Almighty does not have, Saint Augustine says somewhere. If men held, of themselves, the power to love the good, we could say they had some power; but men can only love because God wills them to and because His will is efficacious. Men can only love because God incessantly pushes them toward the good in general, i.e., toward Himself; for God having created them only for Himself, He never preserves them without turning and pushing them toward Himself. It is not they who move themselves toward the good in general, it is God who moves them. They merely follow this impression through an entirely free choice according to the law of God, or they determine it toward false goods, according to the law of the flesh; but they can determine it only through the perception of good, for, being capable only of what God makes them do, they can love only the good.

But were one to assume what is in one sense true, that minds have in themselves the power to know truth and to love good, still, if their thoughts and wills produced nothing externally, one could always say that they are capable of nothing. Now it appears to me quite certain that the will of minds is incapable of moving the smallest body in the world; for it is clear that there is no necessary connection between our will to move our arms, for example, and the movement of our arms. It is true that they are moved when we will it, and that thus we are the natural cause of the movement of our arms. But *natural* causes are not true causes; they are only *occasional* causes that act only through the force and efficacy of the will of God, as I have just explained.

For how could we move our arms? To move them, it is necessary to have animal spirits, to send them through certain nerves toward certain muscles in order to inflate and contract them, for it is thus that the arm attached to them is moved; or according to the opinion of some others, it is still not known how that happens. And we see that men who do not know that they have spirits, nerves, and muscles move their arms, and even move them with more skill and ease than

those who know anatomy best. Therefore, men will to move their arms, and only God is able and knows how to move them. If a man cannot turn a tower upside down, at least he knows what must be done to do so; but there is no man who knows what must be done to move one of his fingers by means of animal spirits. How, then, could men move their arms? These things seem obvious to me and, it seems to me, to all those willing to think, although they are perhaps incomprehensible to all those willing only to sense.

But not only are men not the true causes of the movements they produce in their bodies, there even seems to be some contradiction (in saying) that they could be. A true cause as I understand it is one such that the mind perceives a necessary connection between it and its effect. Now the mind perceives a necessary connection only between the will of an infinitely perfect being and its effects. Therefore, it is only God who is the true cause and who truly has the power to move bodies. I say further (a) that it is inconceivable that God could communicate His power to move bodies to men or angels, and (b) that those who claim that our power to move our arms is a true power should admit that God can also give to minds the power to create, annihilate, and to do all possible things; in short, that He can render them omnipotent, as I shall show.

God needs no instruments to act; it suffices that He wills^a in order that a thing be, because it is a contradiction that He should will and that what He wills should not happen. Therefore, His power is His will, and to communicate His power is to communicate the efficacy of His will. But to communicate this efficacy to a man or an angel signifies nothing other than to will that when a man or an angel shall will this or that body to be moved it will actually be moved. Now in this case, I see two wills concurring when an angel moves a body; that of God and that of the angel; and in order to know which of the two is the true cause of the movement of this body, it is necessary to know which one is efficacious. There is a necessary connection between the will of God and the thing He wills. God wills in this case that, when an angel wills this or that body be moved, it will be moved. Therefore, there is a necessary connection between the will of God and the movement of the body; and consequently it is God who is the true cause of its movement, whereas the will of the angel is only the occasional cause.

But to show this still more clearly, let us suppose that God wills to produce the opposite of what some minds will, as might be thought in the case of demons or some other minds that deserve this punishment. One could not say in this case that God would communicate His power to them, since they could do nothing they willed to do. Nevertheless, the wills of these minds would be the natural causes of the effects produced. Such bodies would be moved to the right only because these minds willed them moved to the left; and the volitions of these minds would determine the will of God to act, as our willing to move the parts of our bodies determines the first cause to move them. Thus, all the volitions of minds are only occasional causes.

^aIt is clear that I am speaking here about practical volitions, or those God has when He wills to act.

But if after all these arguments someone still wishes to maintain that the will of an angel who moved a body would be a true and not an occasional cause, it is clear that this same angel could be the true cause of the creation and annihilation of all things. For God could communicate to him His power to create and annihilate bodies, as <He does> the power to move them, if He willed all things to be created and annihilated, in a word if He willed all things to happen as the angel would will, just as He willed bodies to be moved as the angel would will. Therefore, if someone claims that an angel and a man are true movers because God moves bodies when they will it, they must also say that a man and an angel can truly be creators, since God could create beings when they would will it. Perhaps one could even say that the most vile animals, or matter all by itself, would effectively cause the creation of some substance, if one assumed as do the philosophers^a that God produced substantial forms when required by matter. Finally, because God resolved from all eternity to create certain things in a certain time, one could also say that these times would be the causes of the creation of these beings; just as one claims that a ball that collides with another is the true cause of the movement it communicates to it, because God willed through His general will, which causes the order of nature, that when two bodies collide, such a communication of motion occurs.

There is therefore only one single true God and one single cause that is truly a cause, and one should not imagine that what precedes an effect is its true cause. God cannot even communicate His power to creatures, if we follow the lights of reason; He cannot make true causes of them, He cannot make them gods. But even if He could, we cannot conceive why He would. Bodies, minds, pure intelligences, all these can do nothing. It is He who made minds, who enlightens and activates them. It is He who created the sky and the earth, and who regulates their motions. In short, it is the Author of our being who executes our wills: *semel jussit, semper paret*. He moves our arms even when we use them against His orders; for He complains through His prophet^b that we make Him serve our unjust and criminal desires.

All these insignificant pagan divinities and all these particular causes of the philosophers are merely chimeras that the wicked mind tries to establish to undermine worship of the true God in order to occupy the minds and hearts that the Creator has made only for Himself. It is not the philosophy received from Adam that teaches these things; it is that received from the serpent; for since Original Sin, the mind of man is quite pagan. It is this philosophy that, together with the errors of the senses, made men adore the sun, and that today is still the universal cause of the disorder of men's minds and the corruption of men's hearts. Their actions and sometimes even their words ask why we should not love the body, since bodies are capable of gorging us with pleasure. And why do people mock the Israelites who longed for the cabbages and onions of Egypt, since they were actually unhappy being deprived of something that could make

^aSee the Elucidation on the efficacy of secondary causes [15], *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, seventh Dialogue.

^bIsa. 43:24.

them to some extent happy. But the philosophy that is called new, which is represented as a specter to frighten feeble minds, which is scorned and condemned without being understood, the new philosophy, I say (since it is the fashion to call it thus), ruins all the arguments of the skeptics through the establishment of the greatest of its principles, which is in perfect harmony with the first^a principle of the Christian religion: that we must love and fear only one God, since there is only one God who can make us happy.

For if religion teaches us that there is only one true God, this philosophy shows us that there is only one true cause. If religion teaches us that all the divinities of paganism are merely stones and metals without life or motion, this philosophy also reveals to us that all secondary causes, or all the divinities of philosophy, are merely matter and inefficacious wills. Finally, if religion teaches us that we must not genuflect before false gods, this philosophy also teaches us that our imaginations and minds must not bow before the imaginary greatness and power of causes that are not causes at all; that we must neither love nor fear them; that we must not be concerned with them; that we must think only of God alone, see God in all things, fear and love God in all things.

But that is not the inclination of some philosophers. They do not want to see God, they do not want to think about God; for since sin there is a secret opposition between man and God. They take pleasure in fabricating gods at their whim, and they willingly love and fear the figments of their imaginations, as the pagans do the works of their hands. They are like children who tremble before their companions after they have painted their faces. Or if one wishes a more noble comparison, although perhaps not as accurate, they resemble those famous Romans who had fear and respect for the figments of the imagination, and who foolishly worshiped their emperors after they had released the eagle at their apotheoses.

^aHaec est religio Christiana, fratres mei, quae praedicatur per universum mundum horrentibus inimicis, et ubi vincuntur murmurantibus, ubi praevalent savientibus, haec est religio Christiana ut COLTUR UNUS DEUS NON MULTI DII. QUIA NON FACIT ANIMAM BEATAM NISI UNUS DEUS." Aug. *Tract.* 23 on St. John [C. 5].

ELUCIDATION TEN



On the nature of ideas, in which I explain how all things, eternal laws, and truths, are seen in God.

I hoped that what I said about the nature of ideas would have been enough to show that it is God who enlightens us, but experience has taught me that there are many people who are incapable of sufficiently close attention to understand the arguments that I have given for this principle. What is abstract is incomprehensible to most men. Only what is sensible awakens them, and fixes and sustains their mind's perception. They cannot consider and hence cannot understand what does not come under the senses or the imagination. This is something that I have said often, but that bears repetition.

It is evident that bodies are not visible by themselves and that they cannot act on our mind or represent themselves to it. This needs no proof—it can be seen through simple perception with no need of reasoning, for the slightest attention of the mind to the clear idea of matter suffices to show it. This is infinitely more certain than that bodies communicate their motion when they collide; but it is certain only to those who silence their senses in order to listen to their reason. Thus, everyone believes, though utterly without foundation, that bodies can move one another, because the senses say so; but no one believes that bodies are by themselves entirely invisible and incapable of acting on the mind, because the senses do not say so and seem to say the contrary.

Nonetheless, there are some people whose firm and steadfast reason rises to the most abstract of truths; they meditate attentively and they courageously resist the impression of their senses and imagination. But the body gradually weighs down the mind, and they fall back. These ideas vanish, and as the imagination stirs up livelier and more sensible ideas, the ideas of abstract truths then seem to be only wraiths exciting fear and mistrust.

We are easily led to mistrust people or things with which we are unfamiliar, or which do not afford us some sensible pleasure, for it is pleasure that wins the heart and familiarity that calms the uncertain mind. Thus, those who are unaccustomed to abstract or metaphysical truths are easily persuaded that we are trying only to lead them astray when we would enlighten them. With mistrust and with

a kind of loathing do they look at non-pleasant, non-sensible ideas, and the love they have for repose and felicity soon delivers them from this troubling perception that seems incapable of satisfying them.

If the question before us were not of the greatest importance, the reasons I have just given (as well as certain others I need not relate) would preclude further discussion—for I can see that whatever I might say on this topic will never penetrate the minds of certain people. But it seems to me that the principle that only God enlightens us, and that He enlightens us only through the manifestation of an immutable and necessary wisdom or reason so conforms to religion, and furthermore, that this principle is so absolutely necessary if a sound and unshakable foundation is to be given to any truth whatsoever, that I feel myself under an indispensable obligation to explain and defend it as much as I possibly can. I prefer to be called a visionary, or one of the *Illuminati*, or any of the lovely things with which the imagination (always sarcastic in insignificant minds) usually answers arguments it does not understand and against which it is defenseless, than to agree that bodies can enlighten me, that I am my own master, reason, and light, and that in order to be well-versed in anything I need only consult myself or other men who can perhaps fill my ears with noise, but who certainly cannot fill my mind with light. Here, then, are several more arguments for the view I proposed in the chapters on which I am now writing.

No one disagrees that all men can know the truth, and even the least enlightened of philosophers agree that man participates in a certain *Reason* that they do not determine. This is why they define man as *animal RATIONIS particeps*; for everyone knows, at least in confused fashion, that man's essential difference consists in the necessary union he has with universal Reason (although it is not generally known who it is who contains this Reason, and little effort is made to find out).^a I see, for example, that twice two is four, and that my friend is to be valued more than my dog; and I am certain that no one in the world does not see this as well as I. Now, I do not see these truths in the mind of other people, just as other people do not see them in mine. There must, therefore, be a universal Reason that enlightens me and all other intelligences. For if the reason I consult were not the same that answers the Chinese, it is clear that I could not be as certain as I am that the Chinese see the same truths as I do. Thus, the Reason we consult when we withdraw into ourselves is a universal Reason. I say, when we withdraw into ourselves, because I am not here talking about the reason followed by a man in passion. When a man values the life of his horse more than the life of his coachman, he has his reasons for doing so; but they are particular reasons that every reasonable man abhors. They are reasons that at bottom are unreasonable, because they do not conform with Sovereign Reason, or the Universal Reason that all men consult.

I am certain that the ideas of things are immutable,^b and that eternal laws and

^a"Si ambo videmus verum esse quod dicis, & ambo videmus verum esse quod dico, ubi quaeso id videmus? Nec ego utique in te, nec tu in me, sed ambo in ipsa quae supra mentes nostras est incommutabili veritate." *Conf. of St. Aug.* bk. 12. ch. 25.

^bSee *Aug. De libero arbitrio*. bk. 2. ch. 8 ff.

truths are necessary—it is impossible that they should not be as they are. Now, I see nothing in me of a necessary or immutable nature—I am able not to be, or not to be such as I am; there might be minds unlike me, yet I am certain that there can be no mind that sees truths and laws different from those I see—for every mind necessarily sees that twice two is four, and that one's friend is to be valued more than one's dog. It must be concluded, then, that the reason consulted by all minds is an immutable and necessary Reason.

Furthermore, it is evident that this Reason is infinite. The mind of man clearly conceives that there are, or can be, infinite numbers of intelligible triangles, tetragons, pentagons, and other such figures. Not only does it conceive that it will never lack for ideas of figures, and that it will always discover new ones, even if it were to attend only to these kinds of ideas for all eternity; it even perceives infinity in extension, for the mind cannot doubt that its idea of space is inexhaustible. The mind clearly sees that the number which when multiplied by itself produces 5, or any of the numbers between 4 and 9, 9 and 16, 16 and 25, and so on, is a magnitude, a proportion, a fraction whose terms have more numbers than could stretch from one of the earth's poles to the other. The mind sees clearly that this proportion is such that only God could comprehend it, and that it cannot be expressed exactly, because to do so, a fraction both of whose terms were infinite would be required. I could relate many such examples demonstrating not only that the mind of man is limited but also that the Reason he consults is infinite. For, in short, the mind clearly sees the infinite in this Sovereign Reason, although he does not comprehend it. In a word, the Reason man consults must be infinite because it cannot be exhausted, and because it always has an answer for whatever is asked of it.

But if it is true that the Reason in which all men participate is universal, that it is infinite, that it is necessary and immutable, then it is certainly not different from God's own reason, for only the infinite and universal being contains in itself an infinite and universal reason. All creatures are particular beings; universal reason, therefore, is not created. No creature is infinite; infinite reason, therefore, is not a creature. But the reason we consult is not only infinite and universal, it is also independent and necessary, and in one sense, we conceive it as more independent than God Himself. For God can act only according to this reason; He depends on it in a sense—He has to consult and follow it. Now, God consults only Himself and depends on nothing. This reason, therefore, is not different from Himself; it is, therefore, coeternal and consubstantial with Him. We see clearly that God cannot punish innocence, that He cannot subject minds to bodies, that He is constrained to observe order. We see, then, the rule, the order, the reason of God—for what wisdom other than God's could we see when we dare to say that God is constrained to follow it?

But, after all, is any wisdom other than God's conceivable? Does Solomon, who describes it so well, distinguish two kinds of wisdom? Does he not teach us that the wisdom that is coeternal with God Himself and by which He established the order we see in His works is the same wisdom that presides over all minds and is consulted in the legislation of just and reasonable laws. One need only read

the eighth chapter of Proverbs to be convinced of this truth. I know that Sacred Scripture speaks of a certain wisdom it calls the wisdom of the age, the wisdom of men. But this is because it speaks of things according to appearance, or in a popular vein, for elsewhere it teaches us that this wisdom is but folly and abomination, not only before God, but before all men who consult Reason.

Surely, if eternal laws and truths depended on God, if they had been established by a free volition of the Creator, in short, if the Reason we consult were not necessary and independent, it seems evident to me that there would no longer be any true science and that we might be mistaken in claiming that the arithmetic or geometry of the Chinese is like our own. For in the final analysis, if it were not absolutely necessary that twice four be eight, or that the three angles of a triangle be equal to two right angles, what assurance would we have that these kinds of truths are not like those that are found only in certain universities, or that last only for a certain time? Do we clearly conceive that God cannot stop willing what He has willed with an entirely free and indifferent will? Or rather, do we clearly see that God could not have willed certain things, for a certain time, for a certain place, for certain people, or for certain kinds of beings—given, as some would have it, that He was entirely free and indifferent in His willing? As for me, I can conceive no necessity in indifference, nor can I reconcile two things that are so opposite.

Yet I will suppose that we clearly see that God through an entirely indifferent will has established eternal laws and truths for all times and for all places, and that they are now immutable because of His decree. But where do men see this decree? Has God created some being representative of this decree? Will they say that this decree is a modification of their soul? They clearly see this decree, for they have learned from it that immutability attaches to eternal laws and truths; but where do they see it? Certainly, unless they see it in God, they do not see it; for this decree can be only in God, and it can be seen only where it is. Philosophers can be certain of nothing, then, unless they consult God and He answers them. Their protests here are in vain—they must either submit or remain silent.

But at bottom, this decree is an unfounded product of the imagination. When we think about order and eternal truths and laws, we do not naturally seek their cause, for they have none. We do not clearly see the necessity of this decree, nor do we immediately think about it—rather, we see with evidence through simple perception that the nature of numbers and of intelligible ideas is immutable, necessary, and independent. We clearly see that it is absolutely necessary that twice four be eight and that the square of the diagonal of a square be double that square. If anyone doubts the absolute necessity of these truths, it is because he looks away from their light, reasons on some false premiss, and seeks their nature, immutability, and independence elsewhere than in the truths themselves. Thus, the decree of immutability for these truths is a fiction of the mind, which, supposing that it does not see what it perceives in God's wisdom, and knowing that God is the cause of all things, feels itself constrained to imagine a decree in order to ascribe immutability to certain truths it cannot fail to recognize as immutable. But the supposition is false and must be guarded against. Only in the

wisdom of God do we see eternal, immutable, and necessary truths. Nowhere else but in this wisdom do we see the order that God Himself is constrained to follow, as I have just indicated. The mind is created only for this wisdom, and in a certain sense the mind can see only it; for if the mind can see creatures, it does so only because He whom it sees (though in a very imperfect way during this life) comprehends all creatures in the immensity of His being in an intelligible fashion suited to the mind, as I have indicated elsewhere.

It seems clear to me that if we did not have within us the idea of the infinite, and if we did not see everything through the natural union of our soul with infinite and universal Reason, we would not be free to think about all things. For the mind can will to apply itself only to the things of which it has some idea, and it now has the power to think about only those things to which it can will to apply itself. Thus, man is stripped of his freedom to think about all things if his mind is severed from Him who contains all things. Furthermore, given that we can love only what we see, it is clear that if God gave us only particular ideas He would determine all the impulses of our will in such a way that we could love only particular beings. For in the final analysis, if we did not have an idea of the infinite, we could not love it; and if those who assert that they have no idea of God spoke the truth, I would not hesitate in saying that they never have loved God, for it appears to me quite certain that one can love only what one sees.

Finally, if order and eternal laws were not immutable by the necessity of their nature, the foundation of the clearest and strongest arguments of religion would seemingly be destroyed, as well as freedom and the most certain of the sciences. For it is certain that the Christian religion, which offers us the mediation and reparation of Jesus Christ, assumes the corruption of nature by Original Sin. Now, what proof can we have of this corruption? The flesh struggles against the mind, you will say, the flesh subjugates and dominates the mind. I agree. But this, a libertine will answer, is no disorder. It pleases God, He has ordained it thus, He is the master of His decrees, He establishes whatever order pleases Him amongst His creatures. How will you prove to him that it is a disorder for minds to be subordinated to bodies unless you have a clear idea of order and its necessity, unless you know that God Himself is constrained to follow this order by the necessary love He bears for Himself? Besides, if this order depends on God's free decree, it will always be necessary to call upon God to learn of His decree; God will always have to be consulted (in spite of the disliking certain learned people have for appealing to Him); we shall have to yield to this truth, that our instruction depends upon God. But this free decree that caused order is, for the reasons I have already given, a fiction of the mind.

If it is not a necessary order according to which man be made for his Author and that our will conform to the order that is the essential and necessary rule of God's will, if it is not true that actions are good or evil as they conform or not with an immutable and necessary order and that this same order requires that the former be rewarded and the latter punished, finally, if all men do not naturally have a clear idea of order, but an order that is such that God Himself cannot will otherwise than as this order prescribes (because God cannot will disorder), then

surely I can see nothing but universal confusion. For how could we criticize the most infamous and most immoral actions of pagans to whom God has not given any laws? What reason will dare to judge them if there is no sovereign reason that condemns them, if there is no immutable order or indispensable law according to which they should be judged?

There was a poet^a who said that it is impossible to distinguish what is moral from what is immoral. There was a philosopher^b who said that it is a weakness to be ashamed of infamous actions. Similar paradoxes are often proposed as a result of a heated imagination or in a fit of passion. But why will you condemn these opinions unless there is an order, a rule, a universal and necessary reason, that is always present to those who know how to retreat within themselves. In many instances we have no hesitation in judging ourselves and others, but by what authority do we act unless the Reason that judges in us when it seems to us that we pronounce judgments against ourselves and others is sovereign over us and all other men?

But if this Reason were not present to those who retreat within themselves, and if pagans too were not naturally united to some extent with the immutable order I am speaking of, what sin or what disobedience would they have been guilty of, and according to what justice would God punish them? I say this because there is a prophet^c who tells me that God Himself wills men to be His arbiter between Him and His people provided that they judge them according to the immutable and necessary order of justice. Nero killed his mother, granted. But in what did his evil consist? He followed the natural impulse of his hatred. In no way did God forbid him in this. The law of the Jews was not given to him. Perhaps you will say that the natural law prohibits such actions and that this law was known to him. But what proof have you of this? For my part, I agree, because this indeed is an irresistible proof that there is a necessary and immutable order and that every mind knows this order more clearly as it is more closely joined to the universal reason and as it is less sensible to the impressions of its senses and passions—in short, as it is more reasonable. But I must now explain as clearly as I can the view I have of order and the divine or natural law, for the difficulty in agreeing with what I say perhaps springs from failing to perceive distinctly my thought.

It is certain that God contains within Himself in an intelligible fashion the perfection of all the beings He has created or can create, and that through these intelligible perfections He knows the essence of all things, as through His volitions He knows their existence. Now, these perfections are also the human mind's immediate object (for the reasons I have already given). Therefore, the intelligible ideas or perfections that are in God and that represent to us what is external to God are absolutely immutable and necessary. Now, truths are but relations of equality or inequality between these intelligible beings (since it is true that twice two is four or that twice two is not five only because there is a

^a“Nec natura potest justo secernere iniquum.” Lucretius. [Horace; *Satires* I, 3, v.113.]

^bDiogenes.

^c“Nunc ergo habitatores Jerusalem & viri Juda judicate inter me & vineam meam.” Isa. 53 [5:3].

relation of equality between twice two and four, and one of inequality between twice two and five). Truths, therefore, as well as ideas, are necessary and immutable. It has always been true that twice two is four and this cannot become false. This is clear, without it being necessary *that God as sovereign legislator has established these truths*,^a as Descartes has asserted in his reply to the sixth objections against his metaphysical meditations.

We understand easily enough what truth is, but we have some difficulty in conceiving what the necessary and immutable order is, or what the natural and divine law is that God necessarily wills and that the righteous likewise will. For what makes a man moral is that he loves order and conforms his will to it in all things—just as the sinner is such only because he does not find order pleasing in all things and because he would have order conform to his own wishes. Yet it seems to me that these things are not as mysterious as might be imagined, and I think the reason why they are found so troublesome comes from the mind's difficulty in raising itself up to abstract and metaphysical thoughts. Here, then, are some of my thoughts on order.

It is evident that the perfections in God that represent created or possible beings are not all equal insofar as they represent these beings, and that those, for example, that represent bodies are not as noble as those that represent minds, and furthermore, that even among those that represent only bodies or only minds, there are infinite degrees of perfection. All this is easily and clearly conceived, although there is a great deal of difficulty in reconciling the Divine Being's simplicity with this variety of intelligible ideas that He contains in His wisdom. For it is clear that if all God's ideas were in every sense equal, He could not distinguish among His works, since He sees His creatures only in what in Him represents them, and if the idea of a watch that shows, besides the hour, all the different motions of the planets were not more perfect than the idea of a watch that shows only the hour, or than the idea of a circle or of a square, then a watch would not be more perfect than a circle. For one can judge the perfection of works only through the perfection of the ideas one has of them; and if there were no more intelligence or mark of wisdom in a watch than in a circle, there would be no greater difficulty in conceiving the most complex machines than in conceiving a square or a circle.

If it is true, then, that God, who is the universal Being, contains all beings within Himself in an intelligible fashion, and that all these intelligible beings that have a necessary existence in God are not in every sense equally perfect, it is clear that there will be a necessary and immutable order among them, and that just as there are necessary and eternal truths because there are relations of magnitude among intelligible beings, there must also be a necessary and immutable order because of the relations of perfection among these same beings. An immutable order has it, then, that minds are more noble than bodies, as it is a necessary truth that twice two is four, or that twice two is not five.

So far, order seems to be more of a speculative truth than a necessary law. For

^aArt. 6 and 8.

if we consider order as we have just done, we clearly see, for example, that it is a truth that minds are more noble than bodies, but we do not see that this truth is at the same time an order that has the force of law and that we are obliged to prefer minds to bodies. It must be considered, then, that God loves Himself with a necessary love, and that thus He loves what in Him represents or contains greater perfection more than what contains less—so much so that if we wish to suppose an intelligible mind to be a thousand times more perfect than an intelligible body, the love by which God loves Himself would necessarily be a thousand times greater for the intelligible mind than for the intelligible body; for God's love is necessarily proportionate to the order among the intelligible beings He contains, since He necessarily loves His own perfections. As a result of this, the order that is purely speculative has the force of law with regard to God Himself, given, as is certainly the case, that God necessarily loves Himself and that He cannot contradict Himself. Furthermore, God cannot love intelligible bodies more than intelligible minds, although He can love created bodies more than minds, as I shall soon show.

Now, this immutable order that has the force of law with regard to God Himself clearly has the same force with regard to us. For, since God has created us in His image and likeness, He cannot will that we love more what deserves to be loved less—He wills that our will conform with His and that here below we freely and hence meritoriously render things the justice that He necessarily renders them. His law, the immutable order of His perfections, is therefore also ours; and this order is not unknown to us, and even our natural love excites us to follow it when we retreat within ourselves and our senses and passions leave us free—in short, when our self-love does not corrupt our natural love. Given that we are made for God and cannot be entirely separated from Him, we see this order in Him and we are naturally led to love it, for it is His light that illumines us and His love that animates us (although our senses and passions obscure this light and turn the impression we have for loving Him according to this order against order itself). However, in spite of concupiscence, which conceals order from us and prevents us from following it, order is always a law that is essential and without exception with regard to us, and not only with regard to us but to all created intelligences and even the damned—for I do not think that they are so removed from God that they do not yet have some faint idea of order in which they find some beauty and that they are not perhaps even ready to conform themselves to it in certain particular cases where their self-love is not at stake.

Corruption of the heart consists in opposition to order. Therefore, given that the evil or the corruption of will is not equal even among the damned, it is clear that they are not equally opposed to order, and that they do not detest it in everything, unless they do so as a result of their hatred of God. For just as one cannot detest the good considered simply as such, one can detest order only when it seems to be contrary to our inclinations. But even if it should appear contrary to our inclinations, it still remains for us a law that condemns and even punishes us by a worm that never dies [Mark 9:44].

Perhaps, then, we can now see the nature of the immutable order of justice and

how this order has the force of law through the necessary love that God has for Himself. We can conceive how this law is universal for all minds as well as for God Himself, why it is necessary and absolutely without exception. We can see clearly (provided that what I have just said is seriously considered) that to maintain that ideas that are eternal, immutable, and common to all intelligences, are only perceptions or momentary particular modifications of the mind, is to establish Pyrrhonism and to make room for the belief that what is moral or immoral is not necessarily so, which is the most dangerous error of all. Finally, we can easily conceive in general that this law, the immutable order, is the principle of all human and divine laws, and that it is according to this law that all intelligences are judged and all creatures given the rank they deserve.

I admit that it is not easy to explain all this in detail, and I shall not risk the undertaking. For if my intention were to show the connection between certain particular laws and the general law, or between certain ways of behaving and order, I would necessarily become involved in difficulties that I could not perhaps resolve, and that would lead me far from my topic.

Nonetheless, if you consider that God has not and cannot have any law other than His wisdom and the necessary love He has for it, you will easily judge that all the divine laws must depend on it. And if you take note that He created the world only in relation to this wisdom and love (since He acts only for Himself), you will have no doubt that all natural laws must tend to the preservation and perfection of this world according to indispensable order and depending upon necessary love—for the wisdom and will of God rule all things.

I need not explain this principle at greater length. What I have said is enough for the following conclusion, that as nature was first instituted, minds could not have been subordinated to bodies. For since God cannot act in ignorance and in spite of Himself, He created the world according to wisdom and through the impulse of His love—He made all things through His Son and in the Holy Spirit as Scripture teaches us. Now, in the wisdom of God, minds are more perfect than bodies; and as a result of the necessary love that God has for Himself, He prefers the more perfect to the less perfect. Thus, minds could not have been subordinated to bodies as nature was first instituted. Otherwise we would have to say that in creating the world God did not follow the direction of His eternal wisdom, nor the impulses of His natural and necessary love, which is inconceivable and which even contains a manifest contradiction.

It is true that the created mind is now subordinated to the body, but this is because order considered as a necessary law would have it so. This is because God, whose self-love is a necessary love and is always His inviolable law, cannot love minds that are opposed to Him; consequently, He cannot prefer them to bodies in which there is nothing that is evil or that He hates. For God does not love sinners in themselves; they subsist in the universe only through Jesus Christ. God preserves and loves them only so that they might cease being sinners through the grace of Jesus Christ, or, if they remain sinners eternally, so that they might be eternally condemned by the immutable and necessary order and by the

judgment of Jesus Christ (through whose power they subsist for the glory of divine justice, for without Jesus Christ they would be annihilated). I mention this in passing to remove certain difficulties that might remain from what I said elsewhere about Original Sin or the general corruption of nature.

It seems to me worthwhile to point out that the mind knows objects in only two ways: through illumination [*par lumiere*] and through sensation. It sees things through *illumination* when it has a *clear idea* of them, and when by consulting this idea it can discover all the properties of which these things are capable. It sees things through *sensation* when it finds no clear idea of these things in itself to be consulted, when it is thus unable to discover their properties clearly, and when it knows them only through a confused sensation, without illumination and without evidence. Through illumination and through a clear idea, the mind sees numbers, extension, and the essences of things. Through a confused idea or through sensation, it judges about the existence of creatures and knows its own existence.

The things the mind perceives through illumination or through a clear idea it perceives in very perfect fashion, and it even sees clearly that whatever obscurity or imperfection there is in its knowledge is due to its own weakness and limitation or some lack of attentiveness on its part, and not to the imperfection of the idea it perceives. But what the mind perceives through sensation is never clearly known to it, not because of some lack of attentiveness on its part (for we always attend closely to what we sense), but because of the inadequacy of the idea, which is extremely obscure and confused.

From this we can judge that it is in God or in an immutable nature that we see all that we know by means of illumination or clear idea—not only because through illumination we see only numbers, extension, and the essences of things, which do not depend on a free act of God, as I have already pointed out, but also because we know these things in very perfect fashion, and because we would even know them in an infinitely perfect fashion if our capacity for thought were infinite, since nothing is lacking to the idea representing them. We must also conclude that everything we know through sensation is seen in itself. However, this is not to say that we can produce in ourselves any new modification, or that our soul's sensations or modifications can represent objects upon whose occasion God excites them in us, but only that our sensations (which are in no way different from us, and which as a result can never represent anything different from ourselves) can, nonetheless, represent the existence of beings or, rather, make us judge that they exist. For as God, upon the presence of objects, excites our sensations in us through an insensible action that we do not perceive, we imagine that we receive from the object not only the idea that represents its essence but also the sensation that makes us judge that it exists—for there is always a *pure idea* and a *confused sensation* in the knowledge we have of the existence of beings, the knowledge of God and of our soul excepted. I exclude the existence of God, which we know through a pure idea and without sensation, because His existence depends on no cause and is contained in the idea of an

infinite and necessary being, for as I have proved elsewhere,^a if He is thought of, He must exist. I also exclude the existence of our soul, because we know through inner sensation that we think, will, and perceive, and because we have no clear idea of our soul, as I have sufficiently explained in the seventh chapter of the second part of the third book and elsewhere.

Here are some of the arguments that can be added to those I have already given to prove that only God enlightens us and that the immediate and direct object of our clear and evident knowledge is an immutable and necessary nature. Several objections are commonly raised against this view; I shall now try to answer them.

Objections

Against what has been said: that only God enlightens us and that we see all things in Him.

First Objection

Our soul thinks because of its *nature*. In creating it, God gave it the *faculty* of thinking and it needs nothing more; but if it does need something, let us stick to what experience teaches us about our senses, i.e., that they are the cause of our ideas. To argue against experience is a bad way of philosophizing.

Reply

I am amazed that the Cartesian gentlemen who so rightly reject the general terms *nature* and *faculty* should so willingly employ them on this occasion. They criticize those who say that fire burns by its *nature* or that it changes certain bodies into glass by a natural *faculty*, and yet some of them do not hesitate to say that the human mind produces in itself the ideas of all things by its *nature*, because it has the *faculty* of thinking. But, with all due respect, these terms are no more meaningful in their mouth than in the mouth of the Peripatetics. True, our soul is what it is by its nature and necessarily perceives what affects it, but God alone can act on it; He alone can illuminate it, affect it, or modify it through the efficacy of His ideas.

I realize that the soul can think, but I also know that extension can have figures; the soul is capable of volition as matter is of motion. But just as it is false that matter, although capable of figure and motion, has in itself a *power*, a *faculty*, a *nature* by which it can move itself or give itself a figure that is now round, now square, so it is false that the soul, although naturally and essentially capable of knowledge and volition, has any *faculties* by which it can produce in itself its own ideas or its own impulse toward the good,^b for it necessarily wishes to be happy. There is a big difference between being mobile and moving oneself. Matter is by its nature mobile and capable of figure; it cannot even subsist without figure. But it cannot move itself, it cannot shape itself, and lacks a faculty to do so. The mind is by its nature capable of impulses and ideas, I agree.

^aBk. 4, ch. 11.

^bAs opposed to particular goods; see the first Elucidation.

But it cannot move itself, it cannot enlighten itself—it is God who works everything of a material nature in minds as well as in bodies. Can it be said that God works the changes that take place in matter but not those that take place in the mind? Is it to render to God His due to leave these latter beings to their own devices? Is He not equally the master of all things? Is He not the creator, preserver, and true mover of minds as well as of bodies?

But if you would have it that creatures have the faculties they are ordinarily conceived to have,^a or that natural bodies be said to have a *nature* that is the principle of their motion and rest (as Aristotle and his followers would have it), all my ideas would be overthrown. But I would rather agree to this than to say that the mind enlightens itself, or that the soul has the power to move the members of its body in various ways and to communicate to them feeling and life, or that it is the soul that gives heat to the blood, motion to the spirits, and its size, disposition, and figure to the rest of the body—I would rather all this than to say that the mind gives itself its own impulse and light. If God does not do all things, let Him do at least what is greatest and most perfect in the universe. And if creatures do something, let them move bodies and order them as they will, but let them not act on minds.

Let us say that bodies move each other after being moved themselves, or, rather, let us ignore the cause of these different dispositions of matter, which does not concern us. But let our minds not be ignorant of Him from whom their enlightenment comes, the *Reason* to which they are essentially related, the Reason that is spoken about so much and understood so little. Let our minds know Him from whom they receive everything capable of making them happier and more perfect, and let them realize the full extent of their dependence on God, who continually gives them all that they now have, for as a great saint says in another context,^b *it is culpable pride to use the things that God gives us as if they were natural to us*. Above all, let us not imagine that the senses instruct reason, or that the body enlightens the mind, or that the soul receives from the body what it itself lacks. It is better to believe that one is self-dependent than truly dependent on bodies; it is better to believe oneself one's own master than to seek one's master among creatures that have no value to us. But it is best to accede to the eternal truth, which assures us in the gospel that only it is our teacher,^c than to rely on the reports of our senses or of men who dare to speak to us as our teachers. Experience, whatever is to be said of it, does not encourage prejudice, for our senses are but the occasional causes of God's action on us. Our teachers are only prompters—they too are but the occasional causes of the instruction that eternal wisdom gives us in the most secret recesses of our reason. But because this wisdom enlightens us in a completely non-sensible way, we fancy that our eyes, or the words of those who reverberate the air against our ears, produce this

^aSee the last Elucidation concerning the efficacy of secondary causes [15].

^b"Est quippe superbia & peccatum maximum uti datis tanquam innatis." St. Bern. *De diligendo Deo*.

^cMatt. 23 [vv. 8–10]. See St. Augustine's *De magistro*.

illumination, or express the intelligible voice that instructs us inwardly. It is for this reason, as I have pointed out elsewhere, that Jesus Christ was not satisfied with instructing us through His divinity in an intelligible way; He wished further to instruct us in sensible fashion by His humanity; He wished to teach us that He is our master in every way. And because we are unable without difficulty to retreat within ourselves in order to consult Him as the eternal truth, the immutable order, the intelligible light, He made the truth sensible through His words, order worthy of love through His example, and light visible through a body that adapts it to our weakness. And yet we remain ungrateful, immoral, stupid, and insensible enough to consider (against His express prohibition) as our teachers or the cause of our knowledge, not merely other men, but perhaps even the vilest and most despicable of bodies.

Second Objection

Given that the soul is more perfect than bodies, why can it not contain what represents them? Why could the idea of extension not be one of its modifications? Only God acts on it and modifies it—granted, but why should it see bodies in God if it can see them in its own substance? The soul is not material, admitted. But God, though He is a pure spirit, sees bodies in Himself; why could not the soul, then, see them by considering itself, even though it itself is spiritual?

Replies

Do you not see that there is this difference between God and the human soul, that God is a being without restriction, a universal and infinite being, whereas the soul is a kind of particular being? 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; for since each divine perfection is infinite, it constitutes the entire divine being. But as the soul is a particular being, a limited being, it cannot have extension in it without becoming material, without being composed of two substances. God, then, contains bodies within Him in an intelligible way. He sees their essences or ideas in His wisdom, and their existence in His love or volitions. We must speak this way because God made bodies, and because He knew what He made even before anything was made. But the soul cannot see in itself what it does not contain; it cannot even see clearly what it does contain, which it can only sense in a confused way. Let me explain this point.

The soul does not contain intelligible extension as one of its modes because this extension is not perceived as a mode of the soul's being, but simply as a being. This extension is conceived by itself and without thinking of anything else; but modes cannot be conceived without perceiving the subject or being of which they are modes. We perceive this extension without thinking about our mind; we cannot even conceive that this extension could be a modification of our mind. A figure is disclosed in it when this extension is conceived as limited; but the mind's limits do not serve to give it figure. Since this extension has parts, it

can be divided in the same sense that it is extended, i.e., into intelligible parts; but we see nothing in the soul that is divisible. The extension we see, then, is not a mode of the soul, and therefore it cannot be seen in it.

But, you will say, for these same reasons God would not be able to see His creatures in Himself. This would be true if ideas of creatures were modifications of His substance, but the Infinite Being is incapable of modifications.^a God's ideas of creatures are, as Saint Thomas says, only His essence, insofar as it is participable or imperfectly imitable, for God contains every creaturely perfection, though in a divine and infinite way; He is one and He is all. Thus, He can see them in Himself and only in Himself, for His knowledge is drawn only from Himself. But the soul, however it might sense itself, does not know either itself or its modifications, the soul which is a particular being, a very limited and imperfect being. Certainly it cannot see in itself what is not there in any way at all. How could we see in one species of being all species of being, or in a finite and particular being a triangle in general and infinite triangles? For the soul indeed perceives a triangle or circle in general, while it is a contradiction that the soul should be able to have a modification in general. The sensations of color that the soul ascribes to figures makes them particular, because no modification of a particular being can be general.

To be sure, we can assert what we clearly conceive. Now, we clearly conceive that the extension we see is something distinct from ourselves. We can say, then, that this extension is not a modification of our being, and that it is indeed something distinct from ourselves. For it should be noted that the sun that we see, for example, is not the one we look at. The sun, and everything else in the material world, is not visible by itself. This I have proved elsewhere. The soul can see only the sun to which it is immediately joined, only that sun that like it occupies no place. Now, we see clearly and perceive distinctly that this sun is something distinct from us. Thus, we speak contrary to our light and consciousness when we say that the soul sees in its own modifications all the objects it perceives.

Pleasure, pain, taste, heat, color, all our sensations and all our passions, are modifications of our soul. But be that as it may, do we clearly know them? Can we compare heat with taste or smell with color? Do we know the relation between red and green, or even between two shades of green? Such is not the case with different figures, which we can compare with each other; we know their relations exactly, we know precisely that the square of the diagonal of a square is double that square. What relation is there between these intelligible figures, which are very clear ideas, and our soul's modifications, which are but confused sensations? Why suppose, then, that these intelligible figures cannot be perceived by the soul unless they are its modifications, since the soul knows nothing of what happens to it through a clear idea, but only through consciousness or inner sensation, as I have proved elsewhere and as I shall again prove in the following Elucidation. If we could see the figures of bodies only in ourselves,

^aSee my *Réponse* to the third posthumous letter of Arnauld.

they would be, on the contrary, *unintelligible*, for we do not know ourselves. We are but shadows to ourselves; to see ourselves, we must look beyond ourselves, and we shall never know what we are until we view ourselves in Him who is our light and in whom all things become light. For only in God are the most material beings perfectly intelligible; but outside of Him the most spiritual of substances become utterly invisible. For only what is intelligible can affect intelligences. Surely, only God, only His always efficacious substance, can affect, enlighten and nourish our minds, as Saint Augustine says. It is not possible that we should, I do not say, sense, for we can sense ourselves only in ourselves, but clearly know ourselves, i.e., discover the nature and properties of our soul, elsewhere than in our divine and eternal model, that is, elsewhere than in the always luminous substance of the divinity, insofar as it can be participated in by a spiritual creature, or insofar as it is representative of such a creature. We know clearly the nature and properties of matter, for the idea of extension that we have in God is very clear. But as we do not see in God the idea of our soul, we sense both what we are and whatever actually takes place in us. But it is impossible for us to discover clearly what we are, or any of the modifications of which we are capable.

Third Objection

Nothing in God can be moved, nothing in Him can have figure. If there is a sun in the intelligible world, this sun is always equal to itself. The visible sun appears greater when it is near the horizon than when it is at a great distance from the horizon. Therefore, it is not this intelligible sun that we see. The same holds true for other creatures. Therefore, we do not see God's works in Him.

Reply

A sufficient reply to this would be that nothing in God is really figured and thereby capable of motion, but that there are in God figures that are intelligible and, consequently, intelligibly mobile. For it cannot be doubted that God has the idea of the bodies He has created and constantly moves, that He can find this idea only in His substance, and that He is at least able to inform us of it. But to clarify this matter, it must be realized that God contains in Himself an ideal or intelligible infinite extension; for since He has created it, God knows extension, and He can know it only in Himself. Thus, since the mind can perceive a part of this intelligible extension that God contains, it surely can perceive in God all figures; for all finite intelligible extension is necessarily an intelligible figure, since figure is nothing but the boundary of extension. Furthermore, we see or sense a given body when its idea, i.e., when some figure composed of intelligible and general extension, becomes sensible and particular through color or some other sensible perception by which its idea affects the soul and that the soul ascribes to it, for the soul almost always projects its sensation on an idea that strikes it in lively fashion. Therefore, there need be in God no sensible bodies or real figures in intelligible extension in order for us to see them in God or in order for God to see them in Himself. It is enough that His substance, insofar as it can be participated in by the corporeal creature, should be able to be perceived in different ways.

Likewise, if, as it were, a figure of intelligible extension made sensible by color should be taken successively from different parts of this infinite extension, or if a figure of intelligible extension could be perceived as turning on its center or as gradually approaching another, we would perceive motion in an intelligible or sensible figure without there being any actual motion in intelligible extension. For God does not see the actual motion of body in His substance, or in the idea He has of them in Himself, but only in the knowledge He has of His volitions with regard to them. Even their existence He sees only in this way, because only His will gives being to all things. God's volitions change nothing in His substance, they do not move it. In this sense, intelligible extension cannot be moved even intelligibly. But although we might suppose that the intelligible parts of the idea of extension always maintain the same relation of intelligible distance between them and that this idea therefore cannot be moved even intelligibly, nonetheless, if we conceive of a given created extension to which there corresponds a given part of intelligible extension as its idea, we shall be able through this same idea of space (though intelligibly immobile) to see that the parts of the created extension are mobile, because the idea of space, although assumed intelligibly immobile, necessarily represents all sorts of relations of distance and shows that the parts of a body can fail to maintain the same situation relative to each other. Furthermore, although we do not see bodies in themselves, but only through intelligible extension (let this extension be assumed intelligibly immobile or not), we can through it actually see or imagine bodies in motion because it appears mobile to us due to the sensation of color, or the confused image remaining after the sensation that we successively attach to different parts of the intelligible extension that furnishes us with an idea when we see or imagine the motion of some body. It is easier to understand all this than to give an unambiguous explanation of it.

From what I have just said, you can understand why you see the intelligible sun now greater, now smaller, although it is always the same with regard to God. All that is needed for this is that we sometimes see a greater part of intelligible extension and sometimes a smaller. Since the parts of intelligible extension are all of the same nature, they may all represent any body whatsoever.

It should not be imagined that the intelligible world is related to the sensible, material world in such a way that there is an intelligible sun, for example, or an intelligible horse or tree intended to represent to us the sun or a horse or a tree, or that everyone who sees the sun necessarily sees this hypothetical intelligible sun. Given that all intelligible extension can be conceived of as circular, or as having the intelligible figure of a horse or a tree, all of intelligible extension can serve to represent the sun, or a horse or a tree, and consequently can be the sun or a horse or a tree of the intelligible world and can even become a visible and sensible sun, horse, or tree if the soul has some sensation upon the occasion of bodies to attach to these ideas, i.e., if these ideas affect the soul with sensible perceptions.

Thus, when I said that we see different bodies through the knowledge we have of God's perfections that represent them, I did not exactly mean that there are in God certain particular ideas that represent each body individually, and that we see such an idea when we see the body; for we certainly could not see this body

as sometimes great, sometimes small, sometimes round, sometimes square, if we saw it through a particular idea that would always be the same. But I do say that we see all things in God through the efficacy of His substance, and particularly sensible things, through God's applying intelligible extension to our mind in a thousand different ways, and that thus intelligible extension contains all the perfections, or rather, all the differences of bodies due to the different sensations that the soul projects on the ideas affecting it upon the occasion of these same bodies. I have spoken in a different way, but you should realize that I did so only to make certain of my arguments stronger and more intuitive, and you must not think on the basis of what I have just said that these arguments no longer obtain. If it were necessary, I could give the reasons for the different ways in which I have explained myself.

I shall not venture to treat this subject in depth^a for fear of saying things either too abstract or out of the ordinary, or, if you will, in order not to risk saying things I do not know and cannot discover. Here instead are several passages from Scripture that seem contrary to what I have just asserted. I shall try to explain them.

Fourth Objection

In his gospel and the first of his epistles, Saint John says *That no one has ever seen God*, "DEUM nemo vidit unquam,^b unigenitus qui est in sinu patris ipse enarravit.^c

Reply

I answer that seeing His creatures in Him is not really seeing God. Seeing the essences of creatures in His substance is not seeing His essence, just as merely seeing the objects it represents is not seeing a mirror. Seeing the essence of God, not in its absolute being, but in relation to creatures or insofar as it is representative of them, is not seeing the essence of God.

Nothing precludes us from agreeing with Saint Paul,^d Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory, and several other Church Fathers, that we see God even in this life, though in very imperfect fashion. Here are the words of Saint Gregory in his *Homilies on Job*:^e "A luce incorruptibili caligo nos nostrae corruptionis obscurat; cumque & videri aliquatenus potest, & tamen videri lux ipsa sicuti est non potest, quam longe sit indicat. Quam si mens non cerneret, nec quia longe esset videret. Si autem perfecte jam cerneret, profecto hanc quasi per caliginem non videret. Igitur quia nec omnino cernitur, nec rursum omnino non cernitur, recte dictum est quia a longe Deus videtur." Although Saint Gregory, to explain the passage of Job "Oculi ejus a longe prospiciunt," says that in this life we see

^aSee my *Réponse aux vraies & fausses idées*, my first *Lettre touchant la defense* & especially my *Réponse à une 3^e lettre posthume de M. Arnauld*, as well as certain other passages that can perhaps eliminate all the difficulties the most attentive and most careful reader might form.

^bCh. 1. 18 [Ep. (1), 4, 12].

^cCh. 4. 12 [Ev. 1. 18].

^dTo the Corinthians, ch. 13 [1 Cor. 13:12].

^eBk. 31, ch. 20 [in c.39 Job. cap. 51].

God only from a distance, this is not because God is not very present to us, but because the clouds of our concupiscence conceal Him from us, "caligo nos nostrae corruptionis obscurat." For in other passages he compares, following Saint Augustine, the light of God, which is God Himself, to the light of the sun that surrounds us, but that we do not see if we are blind or if we close our eyes because overwhelmed with its brilliance, "In sole oculos clausos tenemus."

Saint Augustine^a goes even farther than his faithful follower Saint Gregory. For although he agrees that we now know God only in very imperfect fashion, he nonetheless claims in several passages that God is better known to us than the things we imagine we know best. "He who made all things," he says, "is closer to us than the very things He made, for it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. The greater part of the things He made are not suited to our mind because they are corporeal and of a kind different from it." And further on: "Those who have known the secrets of nature are justly condemned in the Book of Wisdom, for if they can have penetrated what is most hidden from men, how much more easily should they be able to discover the Author and Sovereign of the universe? The foundations of the earth are hidden from our eyes, but He who has cast down these foundations is close to our minds." This is why the holy doctor believes that he who has charity can know God better than he knows his brother. Says he, "Ecce jam potest notiozem Deum habere quam fratrem. Plane notiozem, quia praesentiozem: notiozem, quia interiozem: notiozem, quia certiozem."^b I shall relate no further proofs of Saint Augustine's view. If you wish them, you will find all sorts of them in the learned anthology Ambrosius Victor made of them, in volume two of his *Philosophia Christiana*.

But to return to the passage from Saint John, "Deum nemo vidit unquam." I believe that the evangelist's aim, when he says that we have never seen God, is to point out the difference between the Old and New Testaments, between Jesus Christ and the prophets and patriarchs, of whom it is written that they saw God. For Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, and the others saw God only with the eyes of the body and under a different form. They did not see God Himself, "Deum nemo vidit unquam." But the only Son of the Father who is in His bosom has told us of what He saw: "Unigenitus qui est in sinu Patris: ipse enarravit."

Fifth Objection

Writing to Timothy [1, 6:16], Saint Paul says that God dwells in an inaccessible light that no one has ever seen, nor ever can see. If the light of God is inaccessible, we cannot see all things in it.

^a"Propinquior nobis qui fecit, quam multa quae facta sunt. In illo enim vivimus, movemur & sumus" [Paul, Act. 17, 28]. "Istorum autem pleraque remota sunt a mente nostra propter dissimilitudinem sui generis. Recte culpanitur in libro sapientiae inquisitores hujus saeculi. Si enim tantum, inquit potuerunt valere ut possent aestimare saeculum, quomodo ejus Dominum non facilius invenerunt?" [Sap. 13, 9]. "Ignota enim sunt fundamenta oculis nostris & qui fundavit terram, propinquat mentibus nostris." *Lib. imp. de Gen. ad litt.* bk. 5. ch. 16.

^b*De Trinitate*. bk. 8, ch. 8. See the preface of the *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, or the *Réponse aux vraies & fausses idées*, chapters 7 & 21, where I prove my view through the teaching of St. Augustine.

Reply

Saint Paul cannot be in disagreement with Saint John,^a who tells us that Jesus Christ is the true light that enlightens all men coming into this world. For the mind of man that several^b Fathers call an illuminated or enlightened light, "lumen illuminatum," is enlightened only by the light of eternal wisdom, which these same Fathers therefore call illuminating light, "lumen illuminans." David exhorts us to draw near God in order to be enlightened by Him: "Accedite ad eum, & illuminamini" [Ps. 33, v.6]. But how can we be enlightened by Him if we cannot see the light by which we are to be enlightened? Thus, when Saint Paul says that this light is inaccessible, he means to the carnal man^c who does not retreat within himself to contemplate it. Or, if he is speaking of all men, the explanation is that there is no one who fails to be distracted from perfect contemplation of the truth because our body constantly upsets the mind's attention.

Sixth Objection

In answering Moses, who had wished to see Him, God said, "You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me and live. NON videbit me homo & vivet" [Exod. 33:20].

Reply

It is clear that the literal sense of the passage is in no way contrary to what I have said up till now. For I do not maintain that we can see God in this life in the way in which Moses wished to do so. Yet I make this reply, that in order to see God it is necessary to die, for the soul is joined to the truth to the extent that it is released from the body. This is a truth that we do not think about enough. Those who follow the impulses of their passions, those whose imagination is tainted by the enjoyment of pleasures,^d those who have increased the union and correspondence of their mind and body, in a word, those who *live*, cannot see God, for they cannot retreat into themselves in order to consult the truth. Happy, therefore, are those of a pure heart, of a disinterested mind and clear imagination, and who are in no way dependent on the world and hardly at all on their body; in a word, happy are those who are *dead*, for they will see God. Wisdom has said^e this publicly on the mountain and it says it secretly to those who consult it by retreating within themselves.

Those who constantly awaken their concupiscence of pride, whose ambitious intentions know no bounds, who join and even subjugate their soul not only to

^aCh. 1 [v.9].

^bSt. Cyril of Alexandria on the words of St. John, "Erat lux vera" [John 1:9]. St. Augustine *Tract.* 14 on St. John [c. 3]. St. Gregory, c. 27, on ch. 28 of Job.

^c"Inaccessibilem dixit sed omni homini humana sapienti. Scriptura quippe sacra omnes carnalium sectatores humanitatis nomine notare solet." St. Gregory, ch. 28, on ch. 28 of Job.

^d"Sapientia non invenitur in terra suaviter viventium." Job 18 [28:12-13].

^eMatt. 5:8.

their own body but also to those surrounding them, in short, those who *live* not only the life of the body but also the life of the world, cannot see God, for wisdom dwells in the most secret recesses of reason, while they are forever spreading themselves externally.

But those who constantly mortify the activity of their senses, who carefully preserve the purity of their imagination, and who courageously resist the impulses of their passions, in short, those who sever the bonds that make others slaves of the body and of perceptible grandeur, can discover countless truths as well as see that wisdom which is^a "hidden from the eyes of all the living." To a certain extent they give up *living* when they retreat into themselves; they leave the body when they draw near the truth. For the human mind is so situated between God and bodies that to recede from the one is to draw near the other; it cannot leave bodies without approaching God, just as it cannot pursue bodies without withdrawing from Him. But because we cannot entirely leave the body before death, I admit that before death we cannot perfectly unite ourselves with God. According to Saint Paul^b we can now see God in confused fashion as through a reflecting glass, but we cannot see Him face to face: "Non videbit me homo, & vivet." But we can see Him *ex parte*, that is, in a confused and imperfect way.

It should not be imagined that *life* is the same in all *living* men, nor that it consists in an indivisible point. The body's domination over the mind, which prevents us from uniting ourselves with God through knowledge of the truth, can vary. The soul is not equally joined in all men to the body it animates through its sensations, nor to those toward which it is led by its passions, and there are people who so mortify their concupiscence of pleasure and pride that they are hardly bound any longer either to their body or to the world. They are, as it were *dead*. Saint Paul gives us a good example of this. He chastized his body and reduced it to servitude [1 Cor., 9:27], and he so humiliated and annihilated himself that he no longer thought about the world, nor did the world think about him; for the world was crucified and dead for him as he was crucified and dead for the world.^c It was because of this, says Saint Gregory, that he was so aware of the truth and so disposed to receive the divine lights contained in his Epistles,^d which, however dazzling they may be, strike only those who, like him, mortify their senses and passions. For as he himself says, the carnal and sensual man cannot understand spiritual things because worldly knowledge, contemporary tastes, polite conversation, refinement, liveliness and beauty of imagination, and the things by which we live for the world and the world lives for us, induce in our

^a"Abscondiat est ab oculis omnium viventium." Job 28:2 [28:21].

^b"Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte." 1 Cor. ch. 13 [v. 12].

^cGal. 16:14 [6:14].

^d"Animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt spiritus Dei, stultitia enim est illi." 1 Cor. 2:14. "Ad moysen dicitur, non videbit me homo & vivet; ac si aperte diceretur: Nullus unquam Deum spiritualiter videt qui mundo carnaliter vivit." St. Gregory, c. 28, on ch. 28 of Job.

mind a dull and frightening stupor with regard to every truth that we understand perfectly only in the silence of our senses and passions.

We must, therefore, wish for the death that unites us with God, or at least for the image of this death, the mysterious sleep during which all our external senses are deadened and we can listen to the voice of inner truth, which is heard only in the silence of night, when darkness hides sensible objects from us, and, as far as we are concerned, the world is, as it were, dead. "It is thus," says Saint Gregory, "that the bride had heard the voice of her bridegroom as if in her sleep, when she said, 'I sleep but my heart keeps watch' [Song of Sol. 5:2]. Externally I sleep, but inwardly my heart keeps watch, because with neither life nor feeling with regard to visible objects, I become extremely sensitive to the voice of inner truth which speaks to me in the most secret recesses of my reason. *HINC est quod sponsa in canticis canticorum sponsi vocem quasi per somnium audierat, quae dicebat: 'Ego dormio, & cor meum vigilat.'* Ac si diceret, dum exteriores sensus ab hujus vitae sollicitudinis sopio, vacante mente, vivacius intema cognosco. Foris dormio, sed intus cor vigilat, quia dum exteriora quasi non sentio, interiora solerter apprehendo. Bene ergo Eliu ait quod per somnium loquitur Deus." *Morals of Saint Gregory on chapter 33 of Job.*

ELUCIDATION FIFTEEN



On the third chapter of the second part of the sixth book. Concerning the efficacy attributed to secondary causes.

Since the sin of the first man, the mind constantly spreads itself externally; it forgets itself and Him who enlightens and penetrates it, and it lets itself be so seduced by its body and by those surrounding it that it imagines finding in them its perfection and happiness. God, who alone is capable of acting on us, is now hidden to our eyes; His operations contain nothing sensible, and although He produces and conserves all beings, the mind, which so arduously seeks the cause of all things, has difficulty in recognizing Him, although it encounters Him at every moment. Some philosophers prefer to imagine a *nature* and certain *faculties* as the cause of the effects we call natural, than to render to God all the honor that is due His power; and although they have neither a proof nor even a clear idea of this nature or these faculties, as I hope to show, they prefer to speak without knowing what they say and to respect a purely imaginary power, than to make any effort of mind to recognize the hand of Him who does everything in all things.

I cannot help believing that one of the most deplorable consequences of Original Sin is that we no longer have any taste or feeling for God, or that we experience and encounter Him only with a kind of horror or fear. We should see God in all things, sense His power and might in all natural effects, admire His wisdom in the marvelous order of creatures—in a word, we should adore only Him, fear and love only Him in all His works. But there is now a secret opposition between man and God. Feeling himself a sinner, man hides, flees the light, fears encountering God and prefers to imagine in the bodies surrounding him a blind nature or power that he can master and without remorse use toward his bizarre and disordered intentions, than to find in them the terrible power of a just and holy God who knows all and who does all.

I grant that there are many people who through a principle different from that of the pagan philosophers follow their opinion on *nature* and secondary causes. But I hope it will be seen from the following discourse that they yield to this opinion only through a prejudice from which it is almost impossible to deliver oneself without the aid that can be drawn from the principles of a philosophy that

has not always been sufficiently known. For it is apparently this which has prevented them from declaring themselves in favor of the opinion I think ought to be held.

There are many reasons preventing me from attributing to *secondary* or *natural* causes a force, a power, an efficacy to produce anything. But the principal one is that this opinion does not even seem conceivable to me. Whatever effort I make in order to understand it, I cannot find in me any idea representing to me what might be the force or the power they attribute to creatures. And I do not even think it a temerarious judgment to assert that those who maintain that creatures have force and power in themselves advance what they do not clearly conceive. For in short, if philosophers clearly conceived that secondary causes have a true force to act and produce things like them, then being a man as much as they and participating like them in sovereign Reason, I should clearly be able to discover the idea that represents this force to them. But whatever effort of mind I make, I can find force, efficacy, or power only in the will of the infinitely perfect Being.

In addition, when I think about the different opinions of philosophers on this subject, I cannot doubt what I am proposing. For if they clearly saw what the power of creatures is, or what in them truly has this power, they would all agree in their opinion about it. When people who have no special interest preventing them from agreeing cannot agree, it is a sure sign that they have no clear idea of what they are saying and do not understand each other, especially if they are disputing about subjects that are not complex or difficult to discuss, such as the present question, for it would not be very difficult to resolve it if man had some clear idea of a created power or force. Here then are some of their views so that you might see how little they agree with each other.

There are some philosophers^a who assert that secondary causes act through their matter, figure, and motion, and these philosophers are right in a sense; others assert that they do so through a *substantial form*; others through accidents or *qualities*, and some through *matter* and *form*; of these some through *form* and *accidents*, others through certain *virtues* or *faculties* different from the above. There are some who maintain that the substantial form produces forms and the accidental form accidents, others that forms produce other forms and accidents, and others, finally, that accidents alone are capable of producing accidents and even forms. But it should not be imagined that those who say, for example, that accidents can produce forms through the virtue they have received from the form to which they are joined understand this in the same way. Some would have it that these accidents are but the very power or virtue of the substantial form; others that these accidents incorporate the influence of the form and thus act only through its virtue; and others, finally, that they are only instrumental causes. But these last are not yet in total agreement among themselves about what should be understood by instrumental cause, nor what the virtue is that it receives from the

^aFor the most extraordinary of these views, see Suarez's *Metaph. Disp.* 18, sec. 2 & 3; Scotus, in *4 Sent. Dis.* 12.1. D. 37.2. D. 17; LaPalud, in *4 Sent. D.* 12. Q. 1. art. 1; Pereira, 8 *Phy.* ch. 3; *Cominbricenses* on Aristotle's physics, and several others cited by Suarez.

primary cause. Philosophers do not even agree about the action by which secondary causes produce their effects.^a Some of them claim that *causality* must not be produced, for it is what produces. Others would have them truly act through their *action*; but they find such great difficulty in explaining precisely what this action is, and there are so many different views on the matter that I cannot bring myself to relate them.

There you have a great variety of views, although I have not related those of the ancient philosophers, or those who were born in very distant countries. But you can judge well enough that they no more entirely agree among themselves on the subject of secondary causes than those of whom I have just spoken. Avicenna, for example, does not believe that corporeal substances can produce anything but accidents. And here^b is his system as related by Ruvio. He claims that God immediately produces a very perfect spiritual substance, that this substance produces another, less perfect substance, and this substance a third, and so on, till the last, which produces all corporeal substances, and the corporeal substances produce the accidents. But since he was unable to understand how corporeal substances,^c which cannot penetrate each other, should be capable of altering each other, Avicenna claims that only minds are capable of acting on bodies because only they can penetrate them. For as these gentlemen did not accept the void or the atoms of Democritus, and as Descartes's subtle matter was not sufficiently known to them, they did not join the Gassendists and the Cartesians in the view that there are bodies small enough to enter the pores of those that appear hardest and most solid.

It seems to me that this diversity of views gives us the right to view men as often talking about things they do not know, and that since the power of creatures is a fiction of the mind of which we naturally have no idea, it is fancy that leads everyone to imagine it.

It is true that in all times this power has been recognized as real and true by most men, but this certainly has been without proof—I do not say without demonstrative proof, I say without proof capable of making any impression on an attentive mind. For the confused proofs that are based only on the deceiving testimony of the senses and imagination should not be accepted by those who make use of their reason.

Speaking of what is called *nature*, Aristotle^d said that it is ridiculous to wish to prove that natural bodies have an inner principle of their motion and rest, because, he says, this is a thing known by itself. Nor does he doubt that a ball that collides with another has the force to set it in motion. This is the way it appears to the eyes, and that is enough for this philosopher; for he almost always follows the testimony of the senses and rarely that of reason, and he is indifferent as to whether that testimony be intelligible or not.

^aSee Fonseca's *Metaph.* q. 13. sec. 3; Soncinas's and Javelle's on the same question.

^bRuvio, book 2. ph. tract. 4. q. 2.

^cSee Suarez Disp. 18. sec. 1.

^dCh. 1. of bk. 2. of his *Physics*.

Those who contest the view of certain theologians who have written against secondary causes say, as did Aristotle, that the senses convince us of their efficacy; this is their first and chief proof. It is clear, they say,^a that fire burns, that the sun illuminates, and that water cools; one must be a fool to doubt these things. The authors of the opposite view, says the great Averreos, are out of their minds. Almost all the Peripatetics say that those who deny this efficacy must be convinced through sensible proofs and must thus be obliged to admit that they are capable of being acted upon and hurt. This is a judgment that Aristotle^b has already pronounced against them, and we should execute it.

But this alleged demonstration is pitiful. For it shows the weakness of the human mind, and it shows that even philosophers are infinitely more sensuous than they are rational. It shows that those who glory in seeking the truth do not even know what they must consult to learn of it, whether it is the sovereign Reason, who never deceives and who always discloses things as they are in themselves, or whether it is the body, which speaks only in self-interest and which discloses things only in relation to the preservation and convenience of life. For in the end, what prejudices shall we not justify if we take the senses as judges, to which practically all prejudices owe their origin, as I have shown in the *Search after Truth*.

When I see one ball strike another, my eyes tell me, or seem to tell me, that the one is truly the cause of the motion it impresses on the other, for the true cause that moves bodies does not appear to my eyes. But when I consult my reason I clearly see that since bodies cannot move themselves, and since their motor force is^c but the will of God that conserves them successively in different places, they cannot communicate a power they do not have and could not communicate even if it were in their possession. For the mind will never conceive that one body, a purely passive substance, can in any way whatsoever transmit to another body the power transporting it.

When I open my eyes, it seems clear to me that the sun is brilliant with light, that not only is it visible by itself but that it makes all the bodies surrounding it visible, that it covers the earth with flowers and fruits, gives life to animals, and, penetrating by its heat even to the bowels of the earth, produces stones, marble, and metals. But when I consult Reason, I see nothing of all this; and when I consult it faithfully, I clearly recognize that my senses seduce me, and that it is God who does everything in all things. For since I know that all the changes that occur in bodies have no other principle than the different communications of motion that take place in both visible and invisible bodies, I see that it is God who does everything, since it is His will that causes, and His wisdom that regulates, all these communications.

I assume that locomotion is the principle of generation, corruption, alteration, and generally of all the changes that occur in bodies; this is now an opinion that is

^aSee Fonseca, Ruvio, Suarez, and the others already cited.

^bBk. 1. of the *Topics*, ch. 1.

^cI have proved this truth at greater length in the seventh *Dialogue on Metaphysics* and elsewhere. See also the fifth and sixth *Meditations chrétiennes*.

well enough received among the learned. But whatever view is held on this, it makes no difference. For it seems easier to conceive that one body pushes another when it collides with it than it is to understand that fire produces heat and light and that it draws from the potentiality of matter a substance that was not there beforehand. And if God must be recognized as the true cause of the different communications of motion, *a fortiori* we must judge that only He can create and annihilate real qualities and substantial forms. I say *create* and *annihilate*, because it seems to be at least as difficult to draw from matter a substance that was not there, or to introduce it without it being there, as it is to create or annihilate it. But I do not pause over terms; I make use of these only because there are no others I know of that clearly and unequivocally express the changes that philosophers assume are constantly occurring through the power of secondary causes.

I find some difficulty in relating here the other proofs that are ordinarily given of the power and efficacy of natural causes, for they seem so weak to those who resist prejudices and who prefer their reason to their senses, that it does not seem likely they could have persuaded reasonable people. Nevertheless, I relate and answer them because there are many philosophers who use them.

First Proof

If secondary causes did nothing, say Suarez, Fonseca, and some others,^a we could not distinguish living things from those not living, for neither of them would have an inner principle of their actions.

Reply

I reply that men would still have the same sensible proofs that have convinced them of the distinction they make between living things and those not living. They would still see animals perform certain actions such as eating, growing, crying, running, jumping, and so forth, and they would see nothing similar in stones. And it is this alone that has caused ordinary philosophers to believe that beasts are alive and stones not. For it should not be imagined that they know through a clear and distinct perception of the mind what the life of a dog is; their senses determine their decisions on this question.

If it were necessary, I would prove here that the principle of a dog's life is not very different from that of the motion of a watch. For the life of bodies, whatever they might be, can only consist in the motion of their parts; and it is not difficult to judge that the same subtle matter that produces the fermentation of blood and animal spirits in a dog, and which is the principle of its life, is no more perfect than that which gives motion to the mechanism of watches or which causes heaviness in the weights of clocks, which is the principle of their life, or to speak as do others, of their motion.

It is up to the Peripatetics to give to those whom they term Cartesians a clear idea of what they call *bestial life*, *corporeal soul*, *body that perceives, desires*,

^aIn *Metaph. Disp.* 18. sec. 1. assert. 12. In *Metaph. Arist. quest.* 7. sec. 2.

sees, senses and wills, and then we shall clearly resolve their difficulties if after this they continue to produce them.

Second Proof

We could recognize neither the differences nor the virtues of the elements. It could happen that fire would cool as water does; nothing would be of a fixed and determinate nature.

Reply

I reply that while nature remains as it is, i.e., while the laws of the communication of motion remain the same, it is a contradiction that fire should not burn or separate the parts of certain bodies. Fire cannot cool like water unless it becomes water, for since fire is only wood whose parts have been agitated with a violent motion by an invisible matter surrounding them, as is easy to demonstrate,^a it is impossible for these parts not to communicate some of their motion to the bodies with which they collide. Now, since these laws are constant, the nature of fire and its virtues and qualities do not change. But this nature and these virtues are but consequences of the general and efficacious will of God, who does everything in all things. As a result, the study of nature is false and vain in every way when true causes are sought in it other than the volitions of the Almighty, or the general laws according to which He constantly acts.

I grant that recourse to God or the universal cause should not be had when the explanation of particular effects is sought. For we would be ridiculous were we to say, for example, that it is God who dries the roads or who freezes the water of rivers. We should say that the air dries the earth because it stirs and raises with it the water that soaks the earth, and that the air or subtle matter freezes the river because in this season it ceases to communicate enough motion to the parts of which the water is composed to make it fluid. In a word, we must give, if we can, the natural and particular cause of the effects in question. But since the action of these causes consists only in the motor force activating them, and since this motor force is but the will of God, they must not be said to have in themselves any force or power to produce any effects. And when in our reasoning we have come at last to a general effect whose cause is sought, we also philosophize badly if we imagine any other cause of it than the general cause. We must not feign a certain *nature*, a *primum mobile*, a *universal soul*, or any such chimera of which we have no clear and distinct idea; this would be to reason like a pagan philosopher. For example, when we ask how it is that there are bodies in motion, or that agitated air communicates its motion to water, or rather how it is that bodies push one another, then, since motion and its communication is a general effect on which all others depend, it is necessary, I do not say in order to be a Christian but to be a philosopher, to have recourse to God, who is the universal cause, because His will is the motor force of bodies and also produces the communication of their motion. Had He wished not to produce anything new in the world, He

^aSee the following Elucidation.

would not have set its parts in motion. And if He wishes some day to make some of the beings He has formed incorruptible, our bodies after the resurrection, for example, He will cease to will certain communications of motion with respect to these beings.

Third Proof

It would be useless to plow,^a water, and dispose bodies in a certain way in order to prepare them for what we hope will happen to them. For God has no need to prepare the subjects on which He acts.

Reply

I reply that God can absolutely do all He pleases without finding dispositions in the subjects on which He acts. But He cannot do so without a miracle, or by natural ways, i.e., according to the general laws of the communication of motion He has established, and according to which He almost always acts. God does not multiply his volitions without reason; He always acts through the simplest ways, and this is why he uses the collision of bodies to move them, not because their impact is absolutely necessary for their motion, as our senses tell us, but because with impact as the occasion for the communication of motion, very few natural laws are needed to produce all the admirable effects we see.

A plant must be watered in order for it to grow because, according to the laws of the communication of motion, there is almost nothing but the parts of water that, by their motion and due to their shape, can work their way up between the fibres of plants to carry with them certain salts and other small bodies, and by congealing or attaching themselves to each other in different ways take the shape necessary to nourish them. The subtle matter the sun constantly diffuses can raise water in plants by agitating it, but it does not have enough motion to raise coarse parts of earth. Nevertheless, earth and even air are necessary for the growth of plants: earth to keep water at their roots, and air to excite in the same water a moderate fermentation. But since the action of the sun, air, and water consists only in the motion of their parts, properly speaking only God acts. For, as I have just said, only He through the efficacy of His volitions and through the infinite extent of His knowledge can produce and regulate the infinitely infinite communications of motion occurring at each instant and conserving in the universe all the beautiful things we note in it.

Fourth Proof

No one struggles against himself; no one resists himself. Bodies collide, strike, and resist each other. Therefore, God does not act in them, except through His *concourse*. If God alone produced and conserved motion in bodies, He would divert them before their impact, for He knows that they are impenetrable. Why thrust bodies in order to make them rebound, why make them advance in order to make them withdraw, why produce and conserve useless motion? Is it

^aSuarez, *ibid.*

not an extravagant thing to say that God struggles against Himself and that He destroys His works when a bull fights with a lion, when a wolf devours a sheep, and when the sheep eats the grass that God makes grow. Therefore, there are secondary causes.

Reply

Therefore, secondary causes do everything and God does nothing. For God does not act against Himself, and to *cooperate* [*concourir*] is to act. To *cooperate* with contrary actions is to give contrary *cooperation*, and consequently to perform contrary actions. To cooperate with the actions of creatures that resist each other is to act against oneself. To cooperate with useless motion is to act uselessly. Now, God does nothing uselessly; He performs no contrary action; He does not struggle against Himself. Therefore, He does not cooperate with the action of creatures, which often destroy each other and perform useless motions or actions. That is where this proof of secondary causes leads. But this is what reason teaches us.

God does everything in all things, and nothing resists Him. He does everything in all things, for His volitions produce and regulate all motion, and nothing resists Him because He does everything He wills. But here is how this must be conceived. Having resolved, as agreeing more with the immutable order of His attributes, to produce through the simplest ways, this infinite variety of creatures we admire, He willed that bodies move in a straight line because that line is the simplest. But since bodies are impenetrable, and since their motion occurs along lines that are contrary or that intersect, they must strike each other and, as a result, cease to move in the same way. God foresaw this, and yet He positively willed the collision or impact of bodies, not because He is pleased to struggle against Himself, but because He intended to make use of this impact of bodies as an occasion to establish the general law of the communication of motion by which He foresaw He must produce an infinity of admirable effects. For I am convinced that these two natural laws, which are the simplest of all—namely, that motion occurs or tends to occur in a straight line, and that the impact of bodies is communicated in proportion to, and along the line of, their pressure—are sufficient, if the first instances of motion are wisely distributed, to produce the world such as we see it, i.e., the sky, the stars, the planets, the comets, earth and water, air and fire, in a word, the elements of all bodies that are not organized or living; for organized bodies depend on the initial construction of those of which they are born, and it is likely that they were formed at the creation of the world, though not as they appear to our eyes, and that with time they receive nothing more than the growth necessary to become visible. Nevertheless, it is certain that they receive this growth only through the general laws of nature according to which all other bodies are formed, with the result that their growth is not always regular and that monsters are bred.

I say, therefore, that God through the first of the natural laws positively wills, and consequently produces, the impact of bodies, and that He then makes use of this impact, which obliges Him to diversify His action due to the impenetrability

of bodies, as an occasion to establish the second natural law, which regulates the communication of motion, and that thus actual impact is the natural or *occasional* cause of the actual communication of motion by which God without altering His ways produces an infinity of admirable works.

If you consider this well, you will clearly see that nothing could be better. But on the assumption that God had not ordained it thus, and that He diverted bodies about to strike each other as if there were a void to receive them, then first, bodies would not be subject to that continuous vicissitude which produces the beauty of the universe, for the generation of bodies occurs only through the corruption of certain others; it is the contrariety of their motion that produces their variety. Secondly, God would not act through the simplest ways, because in order for bodies about to strike each other to continue their motion without striking each other, they would have to describe lines curved in an infinity of different ways; and consequently, different volitions would have to be admitted in God in order to determine their motion. Finally, if there were no uniformity in the action of natural bodies, and if their motion did not occur in a straight line, there would be no sure principles for reasoning in physics and, in a number of instances, for conducting ourselves in life.

It is no disorder for lions to eat wolves, wolves sheep, and sheep the grass that God tends so carefully that He has given it all the things necessary for its own preservation and even a seed for the preservation of its species. This no more proves the efficacy of secondary causes than it does the plurality of causes or the contrariety of the principles of good and evil the Manicheans imagined in order to explain these effects. Rather, it is a sure sign^a of the grandeur, wisdom, and magnificence of God. For God produces only works worthy of an infinite wisdom, and He produces them with a profusion that sufficiently indicates His power and grandeur. Everything that is destroyed is restored by the same law that destroyed it—so great is the wisdom, power, and fecundity of this law. God does not prevent the destruction of beings through a new volition, not only because His first volition suffices to restore them, but especially because His volitions are much more worthy than the restoration of these beings. They are even much more worthy than everything they produce. And if God has produced this visible world, though unworthy in itself of the action by which it is produced, He did so because He had considerations that are not known to philosophers, and because He could honor Himself in Jesus Christ with an honor that creatures cannot give Him.

When a house crushes an honest man to death, there occurs a greater evil than when one beast devours another, or when a body is required to rebound by the impact of the body it strikes; but God does not multiply His volitions in order to remedy the true or apparent disorders that are the necessary consequences of natural laws. God must not correct or change these laws, although they sometimes produce monsters. He must not upset the uniformity of His conduct and the simplicity of His ways. He must ignore insignificant things, i.e., He must not

^aSee the *Dialogues on Metaphysics* [9-13] where I explain divine Providence.

have particular volitions to produce effects that do not merit them, or that are unworthy of the action of Him who produces them. God produces miracles only when the order He always follows requires it; I mean the immutable order of justice that He wills to render to His attributes. And this order would have it that He act through the simplest ways, and^a that there be exceptions to His volitions only when absolutely necessary to his intentions, only when the simplicity and uniformity of His conduct honor His immutability and foreknowledge less than miraculous conduct would honor His wisdom, justice, goodness, or some other of His attributes; in a word, only on certain occasions that are entirely unknown to us. Although we are all joined to the order or wisdom of God, we do not know all its rules. We see in it what we must do, but we do not understand in it, and must not make too much effort to understand, everything that God must will.

We have a great example of what I have just said in the damnation of an infinite number of people whom God has allowed to perish during the centuries of error. God is infinitely good, He loves all His works, He wills that all men be saved and that they arrive at knowledge of the truth, for He made them to possess Him; and yet the greatest number damn themselves, the greatest number live and die in blindness and will remain there for all eternity. Is this not because God acts through the simplest ways^b and follows order? We have shown that according to order God should not have advised through involuntary pleasures^c the will of the first man, whose fall caused the disorder of nature. It was fitting that all men come from a single man, not only because this way is simple, but also for reasons that are too theological and too abstract to be deduced here. Finally, we must believe that this agrees with the order God follows and the wisdom He always consults in the formation and execution of his intentions. The sin of the first man produced an infinity of evils, it is true. But certainly order required God to permit it and to place man in a state of being able to sin, as I have proved elsewhere.^d

In willing to restore His work, God only rarely gives those victorious graces that overcome the malice of the greatest sinners. He often gives graces that are useless for the conversion of those receiving them, although He foresees their uselessness with respect to them. He sometimes distributes a great number of them, which nonetheless produce but very little effect in relation to our salvation. Why all these roundabout or indirect ways? He has only to will positively the sinner's conversion in order to produce it in an invincible and efficacious way. Is it not clearly because He acts through the simplest ways and because order would have it so, although we do not always see it so? For God can act only with order and wisdom, although His order and wisdom are often impenetrable abysses for the human mind. There are certain very simple laws in the order of grace^e

^aSee the seventh of the *Meditations chrétiennes*.

^bSee the Elucidation on the fourth chapter of the second part on Method. [This was Elucidation 16 in earlier editions; though the Elucidation was withdrawn from later editions, the reference to it stood.]

^cSee the second Elucidation on ch. 5 [5].

^dSee the second Dialogue of the *Conversations chrétiennes* of the Paris edition, 1702, pp. 60 ff.

^eSee the second discourse of the *Treatise on Nature and Grace*.

according to which God ordinarily acts, for this order has its rules as does the order of nature, although we do not know them as we see the rules for the communication of motion. Let us only follow the counsel that He who perfectly knows the laws of grace has given us in the gospel.

I say this to satisfy the unjust complaints of sinners, who despise the counsel of Jesus Christ and blame God for their malice and disorders. They would have God perform miracles in their favor and not follow the ordinary laws of grace. They live in pleasure and seek honors; they constantly reopen the wounds sensible objects have caused in their brain, and they often receive new ones; they would have God heal them through a miracle. They are like the wounded who, in the extremes of their pain, destroy their clothes, reopen their wounds, and then, at the sight of approaching death, complain of the cruelty of those who bandage them. They would have God save them because, they say, God is good, wise, and powerful; it is up to Him only to make us happy; He should not have made us in order to lose us. Let them know that God wills to save them and that, to this end, He has done everything He must according to the order of the justice He owes His attributes. We must not believe that He abandons us, because He has given us His own Son to be our Mediator and our victim. Yes, God wills to save us, and to save us all, but through ways we must study with care and exactly follow. God should not consult our passions in the execution of His intentions. He should consult only His wisdom, He should follow only order—and order would have it that we imitate Jesus Christ and that we follow His counsel in order to sanctify and save ourselves. But if God has not predestined all men to conform to the image of His Son, who is the model and exemplar of the elect, it is because in this God acts through the simplest ways in relation to His intentions, which all favor His glory; it is because God is a universal cause and must not act as do particular causes, which have particular volitions for everything they do; it is because His wisdom, which in this is only an abyss for us, would have it so. Finally, it is because this conduct is more worthy of God than some other that would be more favorable to the damned. For the damned are condemned by an order that is as worthy of our adoration as that by which the elect are sanctified and saved; and only ignorance of order and self-love would make one condemn conduct the angels and saints will eternally admire. Elsewhere^a I reply more fully to the difficulties that might be raised against divine Providence. But let us return to the proofs of the efficacy of secondary causes.

Fifth Proof

If bodies did not have a certain *nature* or *force* to act, and if God did all things, there would be only the supernatural in even the most ordinary effects. The distinction between the natural and the supernatural, which is so widely accepted and which is established by the universal assent of the learned, would be extravagant and chimerical.

^aSee the *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, the *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, and the *Réponses à M. Arnauld*, especially the *Réponse à sa Dissertation sur les Miracles de L'Ancien Testament*.

Reply

I reply that this distinction is extravagant in the mouth of Aristotle, for the *nature* this philosopher has established is a pure chimera. I say that this distinction is not clear in the mouth of the ordinary man, who judges things through the impressions they make on his senses, for he does not know precisely what he means when he asserts that fire burns by its *nature*. I say that this distinction is allowable in the mouth of theologians, if they mean that *natural* effects are those that are the consequences of the general laws that God has established for the production and preservation of all things, and that *supernatural* effects are those that do not depend on these laws. The distinction is genuine in this sense. But the philosophy of Aristotle combined with the impression of the senses renders it dangerous, it seems to me, because this distinction can turn away from God those who have too much respect for the opinions of this miserable and pitiful philosopher, or who consult their senses instead of withdrawing into themselves in order to consult the truth. Therefore, we should not make use of this distinction without explaining it. Having made use of the term *fortuna*, Saint Augustine^a retracted it, although there are few people who might be deceived with respect to it. Speaking of sacrificial flesh, Saint Paul^b warns that idols are nothing. If the *nature* of pagan philosophy is a chimera, if this nature is nothing, we must be advised of it, for there are many people who are mistaken with respect to it. There are more than we might think who thoughtlessly attribute to it the works of God, who busy themselves with this idol or fiction of the human mind, and who render to it the honors due only to the Divinity. They would have God be the author of miracles and certain extraordinary effects, which in one sense are little worthy of His grandeur and wisdom, and they attribute to the power of their imaginary *nature* the constant and regulated effects that the wise alone are able to admire. They even pretend that the marvelous disposition that all living bodies have for preserving themselves and begetting their kind is a production of their *nature*, for according to these philosophers, it is the sun and man that beget men.

We can still distinguish the supernatural order from the natural in several ways. For we can say that the supernatural order relates to future goods, that it was established in expectation of the merits of Jesus Christ, that it is the first and principal order in the intentions of God, and other things sufficient to preserve a distinction the elimination of which we perhaps fear without reason.

Sixth Proof

The main proof adduced by philosophers for the efficacy of secondary causes is drawn from man's will and his freedom. Man wills, he determines himself by himself; and to will and determine oneself is to act. Certainly, it is man who commits sin. God is not the author of sin any more than He is of concupiscence and error. Therefore, man acts through his own efficacy.

^aBk. 1 of the *Retract.*

^b1 Cor. 10:19.

Reply

I have sufficiently explained in several passages of the *Search after Truth* what the will is, and what man's freedom is, especially in the first chapter of the first book, and in the first Elucidation on the same chapter; it is useless to repeat it. I grant that man wills and that he determines himself; but this is because God makes him will by constantly leading him toward the good. He determines himself; but this is because God gives him all the ideas and sensations that are the motives by which he determines himself. I also grant that man alone commits sin. But I deny that in this He does something; for sin, error, and even concupiscence are nothing. They are only lacks of something. I have sufficiently explained myself on this topic in the first Elucidation.

Man wills, but his volitions are impotent in themselves; they produce nothing;^a they do not preclude God's doing everything, because God himself produces our volitions in us through the impression He gives us toward the good in general, for without this impression we would be able to will nothing. From himself man has only error and sin, which are nothing.

There is quite a difference between our minds and the bodies that surround us. Our mind wills, it acts, it determines itself; I have no doubts about this whatsoever. We are convinced of it by the inner sensation we have of ourselves. If we had no freedom, there would be no punishment or future reward, for without freedom there are no good or bad actions. As a result, religion would be an illusion and a phantom. But what we clearly do not see, what seems incomprehensible, and what we deny when we deny the efficacy of secondary causes is that bodies have the power to act.

The mind itself does not act as much as is imagined. I know that I will and that I will freely; I have no reason to doubt it that is stronger than the inner sensation I have of myself. Nor do I deny it. But I deny that my will is the true cause^b of my arm's movement, of my mind's ideas, and of other things accompanying my volitions, for I see no relation whatever between such different things. I even see clearly that there can be no relation between the volition I have to move my arm and the agitation of the animal spirits, i.e., of certain tiny bodies whose motion and figure I do not know and which choose certain nerve canals from a million others I do not know in order to cause in me the motion I desire through an infinity of movements I do not desire. I deny that my will produces my ideas in me, for I do not see even how they could produce them, because my will, which is unable to act or will without knowledge, presupposes my ideas and does not produce them. I do not even know precisely what an idea is. I do not know whether they are produced from nothing and whether they return to nothingness as soon as we cease to perceive them. I speak according to the view of some people.

I produce my own ideas, they will say, by the faculty that God has given me for thinking. I move my arm because of the *union* God has established between

^a"Nemo habet de suo nisi mendacium & peccatum." Conc. Araus. 2. Can. 22.

^bAccording to the sense explained in the chapter of which this is an Elucidation.

my mind and my body. *Faculty* and *union* are terms from logic; they are vague and indeterminate words. No particular being or mode of being can be a *faculty* or a *union*; these terms must be explained. If they say that the union of my mind with my body consists in the fact that God wills that when I will my arm to move, animal spirits disperse in the muscles of which it is composed in order to move it in the way I wish, I clearly understand this explanation and I accept it. But this is to say exactly what I maintain; for since my will determines the practical will of God, it is evident that my arm will be moved not by my will, which in itself is impotent, but by God's, which can never fail to have its effect.

But if they say that the union of my mind with my body consists in the fact that God has given me the *power*^a to move my arm, just as He has given to my body the power to make me feel pleasure and pain in order to apply me to this body and interest me in its preservation, then surely they suppose what is at issue and go in a circle. They have no clear idea of this power the soul has over the body, nor of that the body has over the soul; they do not fully know what they are saying when they positively assert it. They have arrived at this view through prejudice; they have believed it to be so since infancy and as long as they have been capable of sensing; but the mind, reason, and reflection have no role in it. This is sufficiently clear from the things I have said in the *Search after Truth*.

But, they will say, I know through the inner sensation of my action that I truly have this power; therefore, I am not mistaken in believing it. I reply that when they move their arm they have an inner sensation of the actual volition by which they move it; and they are not mistaken in believing that they have this volition. They also have an inner sensation of a certain effort accompanying this volition, and they also believe that they make this effort. Finally, I grant^b that they have an inner sensation that the arm is moved during this effort; and on this assumption I also agree to what they say, that the movement of the arm occurs at the instant we feel this effort, or that they have a *practical* volition to move it. But I deny that this effort, which is only a modification or sensation of the soul, which is given to us to make us understand our weakness, and to give us an obscure and confused sensation of our strength, is by itself able to impart motion to animal spirits, or to determine them. I deny that there is a relation between our thoughts and the motion of matter. I deny that the soul has the least knowledge of the animal spirits of which it makes use to move the body it animates. Finally, even if the soul had an exact knowledge of the animal spirits, and even if it were capable of moving them, or of determining their motion, I deny that it could

^aI still mean a true and efficacious power.

^bIt seems to me evident that through inner sensation or consciousness the mind does not even know the movement of the arm it animates. Through consciousness it knows only its own sensation, for the soul is conscious only of its thoughts. Through inner sensation or consciousness they know the sensation they have of the movement of their arm; but it is not through consciousness that they are informed of the movement of their arm, of the pain they suffer there, any more than they are of the colors they see on objects. Or if they do not wish to agree with this, I say that inner sensation is not infallible, for error is almost always found in these sensations when they are compound. I have sufficiently proved this in the first book of the *Search after Truth*.

thereby select the nerve ducts, of which it has no knowledge, in order to impel the spirits into them and thus move the body with the promptness, exactness, and force observed even in those who least know the structure of their body.

For, even assuming that our volitions were truly the motor force of our bodies (although this seems incomprehensible), how is it conceivable that the soul should move the body? Our arm, for example, is moved only because spirits swell certain of the muscles composing it. Now, in order for the motion that the soul impresses on the spirits in the brain to be communicable to those in the nerves, and thence to others in the muscles of our arm, the soul's volitions must multiply or change proportionately to the almost infinite collisions or impacts that would occur in the particles composing the spirits; for bodies cannot by themselves move those they meet, as I feel I have sufficiently shown. But this is inconceivable, unless we allow in the soul an infinite number of volitions for the least movement of the body, because in order to move it, an infinite number of communications of motion must take place. For, in short, since the soul is a particular cause and cannot know exactly the size and agitation of an infinite number of particles that collide with each other when the spirits are in the muscles, it could neither establish a general law of the communication of motion, nor follow it exactly had it established it. Thus, it is evident that the soul could not move its arm, even if it had the power of determining the motion of the animal spirits in the brain. These things are too clear to pause any longer over them.

The same is true of our faculty of thinking. We know through inner sensation that we will to think about something, that we make an effort to do so, and that at the moment of our desire and effort, the idea of that thing is presented to our mind. But we do not know through inner sensation that our will or effort produces our idea. We do not see through reason that this could happen. It is through prejudice that we believe that our attention or desires are the cause of our ideas; this is due to the fact that a hundred times a day we prove that our ideas follow or accompany them. Since God and His operations contain nothing sensible, and since we sense nothing other than our desires preceding the presence of ideas, we think there can be no cause of these ideas other than our desires. But let us take care. We do not see in us any power to produce them; neither reason nor the inner sensation we have of ourselves tells us anything about this.

I do not think it necessary to relate all the other arguments of which the defenders of the efficacy of secondary causes make use, because these arguments seem to be so weak that it might be imagined that my aim in doing so would be to ridicule them, and I would make myself ridiculous if I were to respond to them seriously. For example, one author says, quite seriously, in favor of his view, "Created beings are true material, formal and final causes; why will they not be efficient or efficacious causes as well?" It seems to me that I would not satisfy many people if to answer this author's question I paused to clarify so gross an equivocation, and to show the difference between an efficacious cause and the cause it pleased philosophers to call *material*. Therefore, I leave such arguments in order to come to those drawn from Sacred Scripture.

Seventh Proof

Those who maintain the efficacy of secondary causes commonly adduce the following passages to support their view: "Germinet terra herbam viventem: Producant aquae reptile animae viventis & volatile: Producat terra animam viventem."^a Therefore, the earth and the water have received through the word of God the *power* to produce plants and animals. God then commanded the birds and the fishes to multiply: "Crescite & multiplicamini, & replete aquas maris, avesque multiplicentur super terram."^b Therefore, He gave them the power to beget their kind.

In the fourth chapter of Saint Mark,^c Jesus Christ says that the seed that falls on good earth yields a hundredfold, and that the earth "produces of itself first the blade, then the ear, then the corn in the ear." Finally, it is also written in the book of Wisdom^d that fire had, as it were, forgotten in favor of God's people the *power* it has to burn. It is therefore certain from the Old and New Testaments that secondary causes have a true power to act.

Reply

I reply that in Sacred Scripture there are also several passages that attribute to God the alleged efficacy of secondary causes. Here are some of them.

"Ego sum Dominus faciens OMNIA, extendens coelos SOLUS, stabiliens terram, & NULLUS mecum." Isa. 44:24. "Manus tuae fecerunt me & plasmaverunt me TOTUM in circuitu." Job 10:8. "Nescio qualiter in utero me apparuitis. . . . Singulorum membra NON EGO IPSA COMPEGI, sed enim mundi creator qui hominis formavit navitatem," &c. Mach. 1:2, 7:22–23. "Cum ipse Deus det omnibus vitam, inspirationem, & omnia." Acts 17:25. "Producens foenum jumentis, & herbam servituti hominum, ut educas panem de terra." Ps. 103 and 148. There is an infinity of such passages, but these are sufficient.

When an author seems to contradict himself, and natural equity or some stronger reason obliges us to make him agree with himself, it seems to me that we have an infallible rule to discover his real view. For we have only to observe when this author speaks according to his lights, and when he speaks according to common opinion. When a man speaks as do others, that does not always signify that he is of their opinion. But when he positively says the opposite of what is customarily said, though he might say it only once, we have reason to judge that it is his view—provided that we know that he is speaking seriously, and after having given careful thought.

For example, an author speaking about the properties of animals will say in a hundred places that beasts sense, that dogs know their master, that they love and fear him, and in only two or three places will he say that beasts do not sense, that

^aGen. ch. 1 [vv. 11 and 20–21].

^bIbid. [v. 22].

^c"Ultero enim terra fructificat primum herbam; deinde spicam, deinde plenum frumentum in spica" [4:28].

^d"Etiam suae virtutis oblitus est." Ch. 16 [v. 23].

dogs are incapable of knowledge, that they neither fear nor love anything. How shall we make this author agree with himself, for he seems to contradict himself? Shall we group all the passages pro and con, and judge his view by the larger number? If so, I do not think there is a man to whom, for example, we can attribute the view that animals do not have a soul; for even the Cartesians always say that a dog senses when struck, and it rarely happens that they say it does not sense. And although I myself attack an infinity of prejudices in this work, several passages can be drawn from it by which it will be proved, unless the rule I am explaining be received, that I uphold them all, and even that I hold the view concerning the efficacy of secondary causes that I am now refuting; or perhaps it will be concluded that the *Search after Truth* is a book full of gross and obvious contradictions, as some people might conclude who perhaps do not have enough equity and penetration to set themselves up as judges of the works of others.

Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, and most men more often speak of sensible goods, riches, and honors according to the common opinion than according to the true ideas they have of them. Jesus Christ through Abraham says to the evil rich man: "Fili recepisti BONA in vita tua" [Luke 16:25], you have received *goods* during your life, i.e., riches and honors. What through prejudice we call *good*, our good, i.e., our gold and silver, is called in Sacred Scripture in a hundred places, our *support* or our *substance*, and even our *honor*, or what honors us. "Paupertas & honestas a Deo sunt."^a Do these manners of speaking used by Sacred Scripture and the most virtuous of people make us believe they contradict themselves, or that riches and honors are truly good with regard to us, and that we must love and seek them? Undoubtedly not, because as these manners of speaking agree with prejudice, they signify nothing, and because we see besides that Jesus Christ compared riches to thorns, that He said they must be renounced, that they are deceitful, and that all that is great and glorious in the world is an abomination before God. Passages from Scripture and the Fathers, then, must not be grouped to judge their true opinion by the greatest number of these passages, unless one wishes constantly to attribute to them the most unreasonable prejudices.

With this assumed, we see that Sacred Scripture says positively that it is God who makes everything, right down to the grass of the fields, that it is He who provides the lilies with the adornments that Jesus Christ preferred to those had by Solomon in all his glory.^b There are, not two or three, but an infinity of passages that attribute to God the alledged efficacy of secondary causes, and that destroy the *nature* of the Peripatetics.

Moreover, we are led by an almost natural prejudice not to think of God with respect to natural effects, and to attribute power and efficacy to natural causes; ordinarily only miracles make us think of God, and sensible impression initiates our view of secondary causes. Philosophers hold this view because, they say, their senses convince them of it; this is their strongest argument. In the end this

^aEccles. 1:14 [11:14].

^bMatt. 6:28-30.

view is held by all those who follow the judgment of their senses. Now, language is formed on this prejudice, and we say as commonly that fire has the power to burn as we call gold and silver our good. Therefore, the passages drawn from Scripture or the Fathers for the efficacy of secondary causes prove no more than those an ambitious or avaricious man would choose to justify his conduct. But the same is not true of the passages that can be adduced to prove that God does everything. For as this view is contrary to prejudice, these passages must be understood in a strict sense, for the same reason that we must believe the view of a Cartesian to be that beasts do not sense, although he might have said so only two or three times, and although he might constantly say to the contrary in ordinary discourse that they sense, perceive, and understand.

In the first chapter of Genesis, God commands the earth to produce plants and animals; He also orders the waters to produce fishes. And consequently, say the Peripatetics, the water and the earth have received a *virtue* capable of producing these effects.

I do not see that this conclusion is certain. And even if one were obliged to explain this chapter by itself and without appeal to other passages from Scripture, there would be no necessity to accept this consequence. This way of explaining creation is accommodated to our way of speaking about the production of things. Thus it is not necessary to take it literally. One should not make use of it to support prejudices. Since the animals and plants are on the earth, and since the birds live in the air and fish in the water, God, in order to make us understand that it is through His order that they are in these places, produced them there. From the earth He formed the animals and plants, not because the earth was capable of begetting anything nor because God gave it for this purpose a power or virtue that still subsists now, for there is agreement enough that the earth begets neither horses nor oxen, but because the bodies of these animals were formed from the earth, as is said in the following chapter: "Formatis igitur Dominus Deus de humo cunctis animantibus terrae & universis volatilibus coeli."^a The animals were formed from the earth, "formatis de humo," and were not produced by the earth. Thus, after Moses related how the animals and fishes were produced by virtue of the command God had made to the earth and water to produce them, he adds that *it is God Himself who made them*, in order not to attribute their production to the earth and water. "CREAVITQUE Deus cete grandia,"; and "omnem animam viventem atque motabilem quam PRODUXERANT AQUAE in species suas, & omne volatile secundum genus suum." And further below, after having spoken of the formation of animals, he adds "Et FECIT DEUS bestias terrae juxta species suas, & jumenta & omne reptile terrae, in genere suo" [Gen. 1:21, 25].

We might note in passing that where our Vulgate contains "Germinet terra herbam . . . producant aquae reptile animae viventis & volatile super terram" [Gen. 1:11, 20], expressions that might lead one to believe that the earth and the waters have received some true power to produce the animals and plants, the

^aV. 19 [2:19].

words of the original are far from this thought. They signify simply that God said let the earth be covered with plants, let the waters be abundant with fish, and let the birds fly in the air. The verbs and nouns in this passage have the same root, which cannot be translated in other languages. It is as though it had been, let the earth *be verdant with verdure*, let the waters *be fishy with fish*, let the *flying creatures fly*. The Vulgate has also omitted the word *vole*, which has made some people believe that the birds were drawn from the waters, but we find in the Hebrew, *volatile VOLITET*. This last omitted word shows that the birds were not produced by a virtue in the water. Moses' aim here, therefore, was not to prove that the waters had received a real *power* to produce these fishes and birds, but only to indicate the place destined for each thing by God's order, whether to live in it or to be produced in it; *volatile VOLITET super terram*. For ordinarily when we say that the earth produces trees and plants, we mean to signify only that it provides the water and salts necessary to the germination and growth of seeds. I do not pause to explain the other passages from Scripture that taken literally favor secondary causes, for one is not obliged, and it is even dangerous to take literally expressions that are based on the ordinary judgments according to which language is formed; since the ordinary man speaks of all things according to the impressions of the senses and the prejudices of youth, the mind of God often accommodates itself to their weakness in order to instruct the simple as well as more enlightened people. "Inclinavit Scripturas Deus usque ad infantium & lactentium capacitatem," says Saint Augustine.^a

The same reason that obliges us to take literally the passages from Scripture directly opposed to prejudice also permits us to think that the Fathers never had the express intention of maintaining the *efficacy* of secondary causes or the *nature* of Aristotle. For though they often speak in a way that favors the prejudices and judgments of the senses, they sometimes explain themselves in a way that sufficiently discloses the disposition of their mind and heart. Saint Augustine, for example, gives sufficient indication that he believes the will of God to be the *power* or *nature* of each thing when he speaks as follows:^b "We are wont to say that wonders are contrary to nature; but this is not true. For as the will of the Creator is the nature of each of the creatures, how could what occurs by the will of God be contrary to nature? Miracles or wonders are therefore not contrary to nature, but contrary to what is known to us about nature."

It is true that in several places Saint Augustine speaks according to prejudice. But I maintain that this proves nothing, because only passages contrary to prejudice need be explained literally. I have just related the reasons for this.

If in all his works Saint Augustine had never said anything against the efficacy of secondary causes, and had always favored this view, one perhaps might use his authority in order to establish it. But should it not appear that he seriously

^aIn Ps. 8 [8:8].

^b"Omnia quippe portenta contra naturam dicimus esse, sed non sunt. Quomodo enim est contra naturam quod Dei fit voluntate: cum voluntas tanti utique conditoris conditae rei cujusque natura sit? Portentum ergo fit non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura." St. Aug. *De civitate Dei*, bk. 21. ch.8. See also, *ibid.*, bk.5. ch.11, and his Letter 205 to Consentius, number 17.

examined this question, one would always have the right to think he had no fixed and settled view on this topic, and that perhaps he was carried along, as it were, by the impression of the senses to believe without reflection a thing that appears certain until examined with some care.

It is certain, for example, that Saint Augustine always spoke of animals as if they had souls—I do not say a corporeal soul, for this holy doctor knew too well to distinguish the soul from the body to think that there could be corporeal souls. I say a spiritual soul, for matter is incapable of sensation. Nonetheless, I believe that it is more reasonable to use the authority of Saint Augustine to prove that animals have no soul than to prove that they do; for^a from the principles he carefully examined and securely established, it manifestly follows that they do not, as Ambrosius Victor shows in his sixth volume of the *Philosophia Christiana*. But since the view that animals have a soul, or that they feel pain when struck, agrees with prejudice (for there is no child who does not believe it), we maintain the right to think that Saint Augustine spoke on this according to common opinion, that he did not seriously examine this question, and that had he begun to doubt it and reflect on it, he would not have said a thing so contrary to his principles.

Should the Fathers have favored the efficacy of secondary causes, therefore, perhaps one would not be obliged to consider their view unless it appeared that they had carefully examined this question and that what they said about it did not result from language formed and based on prejudice. But surely just the opposite is the case, for the Fathers and the holiest and most enlightened people in religion have ordinarily shown in several passages of their works what the disposition of their mind and heart was with respect to the question we are discussing.

The most enlightened, and even the greatest number, of theologians, seeing on the one hand that Sacred Scripture opposed the efficacy of secondary causes and on the other that the impression of the senses, public opinion, and especially the philosophy of Aristotle, which was esteemed by the learned, established it (for Aristotle believes that God does not involve Himself in the detail of what takes place in the sublunary region, that this attention is unworthy of His grandeur, and that the *nature* he supposes in all bodies suffices to produce everything occurring here below)—theologians, I say, in order to accord faith with the philosophy of the pagans and reason with the senses, have been inclined to the view that secondary causes would do nothing unless God lent them His *cooperation*. But because this immediate cooperation by which God acts with secondary causes involves great difficulties, some philosophers have rejected it, claiming that in order for them to act it is enough that God should conserve them with the *virtue*

^aSome of these principles of St. Augustine are: that what has never sinned can suffer no evil; now according to him himself, pain is the greatest of evils, and animals suffer it. That the more noble cannot have as an end the less noble; now according to him the soul of animals is spiritual & more noble than the body, & yet they have no other end than their bodies. That what is spiritual is immortal; & the soul of animals, although spiritual, is subject to death. There are many other such principles in the works of St. Augustine from which we can conclude that animals do not have a spiritual soul such as he admitted in them. See St. Augustine, chs. 22–23 *De anima & ejus origine*.

He gave them in creating them. And as this opinion agrees entirely with prejudice, since God's operation in secondary causes involves nothing sensible, it is ordinarily received by the common man, and by those who have attended more to the physics and medicine of the ancients than to theology and meditation on the truth. Most men imagine that God first created all things, that He gave them all the faculties or qualities necessary for their preservation, that, for example, He gave the first motion to matter and then left it to itself to produce by the communication of its motion this variety of forms we admire. It is ordinarily supposed that bodies can move each other, and this opinion is even attributed to Descartes, contrary to what he expressly says in articles 36 and 37 of the second part of his *Principles of Philosophy*. Since men cannot avoid the realization that creatures depend on God, they reduce this dependence as much as they can, whether through a hidden aversion for God or through stupidity and a dreadful insensitivity toward His operation. But as this view is ordinarily received only by those who have not studied religion, and who follow their senses and the authority of Aristotle rather than their reason and the authority of the holy books, there is no reason to fear their becoming too well established in the mind of those who have any love for truth and religion; for however little we apply ourselves to the examination of this view, we easily discover its falsity. But the opinion of the *immediate cooperation* of God with each action of secondary causes seems to agree with passages from Scripture, which often attribute the same effect to God and to creatures. I shall prove in the last Elucidation (number 43) that God alone can give the soul perceptions of objects, and that no creature, no finite intelligence whatever power it might have, can in this case be prepared to act and to require God's cooperation.

We must consider, then, that there are passages in Scripture where it is said that God alone acts: "Ego sum Dominus," says Isaiah,^a "faciens OMNIA, extendens coelos SOLUS, stabiliens terram, & NULLUS mecum." A mother moved by the spirit of God tells her children that it was not she who formed them: "Nescio^b qualiter in utero meo apparuistis, singulorum membra NON EGO IPSA COMPEGI, sed mundi creator," &c.^c It does not say, as do Aristotle and the school of Peripatetics, that it is to her and the sun that they owe their birth, but to the Creator of the universe. Now, this view that only God acts and forms children in their mother's womb does not agree with common opinion and prejudice.^d According to the principle I have previously established, these passages must be explained literally. But on the contrary, since the view of the efficacy of secondary causes agrees with common opinion and sensible impression, even if passages should be found that expressly say that secondary causes act alone, they

^a44:24.

^b2 Mach. 7:22-23.

^c"Sol & homo generant hominem." Arist. *Phys. Ausc.* 1.2 c.2. See St. Thomas on this text.

^d"Nec qui concumbit, nec qui seminat est aliquid, sed qui format Deus [. . .] Ipse namque operatione qua nunc usque operatur, facit ut numeros suos explicent semina & a quibusdam latentibus atque invisibilibus involucris in formas visibiles hujus quod aspicimus decoris evolvant." Aug. *De civ. Dei* bk. 22. ch. 24 n.2.

would have no force compared with these. Cooperation, then, is not enough to reconcile the different passages from Sacred Scripture; all force, power, efficacy must be placed on the side of God.

But even if God's immediate *cooperation* with secondary causes could reconcile the different passages of Sacred Scripture, I do not know if withal it should be received. For the holy books were not produced solely for contemporary theologians, but also for the Jewish people. As a result, if the Jews of yore were not enlightened or subtle enough to imagine a *cooperation* such as is admitted in Scholastic theology, or to agree with something the cleverest theologians have difficulty in explaining, it seems to me to follow that the Sacred Scripture that attributes to God, and even to God alone, the production and conservation of all things would plunge them into error, and that the authors of the holy books would have spoken to men a language not only unknown but deceptive. For in telling them that God does all, they would only have claimed that God provides His cooperation for all things; and certainly the Jews did not have this cooperation in mind, those nonphilosophical among them believing that God does everything and not that God cooperates with everything.

But for a surer judgment about cooperation, a careful explanation is required of the different systems the Scholastics have made of it. For besides the impenetrable obscurities common to all opinions that can be explained and supported only by vague and indeterminate terms, there is such a wide variety of views on this matter that we would have no great difficulty in discovering their cause. But I have no wish to involve myself in a discussion that would be too wearisome both for me and for those who will read this. I prefer on the contrary to try to show that my views might agree to some extent with those of the greater number of Scholastic theologians, although I cannot conceal the fact that their language appears to me quite equivocal and confused. I shall explain.

I hold, as I have said elsewhere, that bodies, for example, do not have the force to move themselves and that therefore their *motor force* is but the action of God, or in order not to use a term signifying nothing distinct, their motor force is but the will of God, always necessarily efficacious, which conserves them successively in different places. For I do not believe that God creates certain beings to make them the motor force of bodies—not only because I have no idea of this sort of being, and because I do not see that they could move bodies, but also because these beings would need others to move them, and so on to infinity. For only God is at once both motor and immobile.

This being so, when a body collides with and moves another, I can say that it acts through the cooperation of God, and that this cooperation is not different from its own action. For a body moves the one with which it collides only by its action or its motor force, which ultimately is but God's will, which conserves this body successively in several places—the transport of a body being not its action or its motor force but the effect of its motor force. Almost all theologians speak as follows: that the action of secondary causes is not different from the action by which God cooperates with them. For although they understand it in different ways, they hold that God acts in creatures through the same action as do

creatures. And they are obliged to speak this way, it seems to me; for if creatures acted through an action God did not produce in them, their action qua efficacious action would be, it seems to me, independent; now they believe, as they must, that creatures depend immediately on God, not only for their being, but for their operation as well.

Likewise with respect to free causes, I hold that God constantly gives to the mind an impression toward the good in general, and that He even determines this impression toward particular goods by the impression of them He places in us, as I have explained in the first Elucidation; and this is also held by theologians, who assert that God moves and predisposes our wills. Thus, the force that sets our minds in motion is the will of God, which animates us and leads us toward the good; for God does not create beings to make them the motor force of minds for the same reasons He does not create beings to make them the motor force of bodies. Since God's volitions are efficacious by themselves, it is enough that He should will in order to produce, and it is useless to multiply beings without necessity. In addition, everything real in the natural determinations of our impulses also comes solely from God's action in us; for I am not speaking here about our consent to these determinations. So much is clear from the first Elucidation. Now we act and produce nothing except through our volitions, i.e., through the impression of God's will, which is our motor force. For our volitions are efficacious only insofar as they come from God, just as moving bodies impel others only insofar as they have a motor force transporting them. Thus, we act only through God's cooperation,^a and our action viewed as efficacious and capable of producing some effect is not different from God's; as most theologians say, they are the same action: *Eadem numero actio*.

Now, all the changes occurring in the world have no other natural cause than the motion of bodies and the volitions of minds. For according to the general laws of the communication of motion, the invisible bodies surrounding visible bodies produce by their various motion all the changes whose cause is not apparent to our eyes; and according to the laws concerning the union of soul and body, when the bodies surrounding us act on our own, they produce in our soul an infinity of sensations, ideas, and passions. Likewise, our mind, according to the same laws, excites in itself by its volitions an infinity of different perceptions; for our volitions apply and modify our mind as natural causes, the efficacy of which nonetheless comes from the laws God has established. And when our mind acts on our body, it produces in it several changes, always in virtue of the laws concerning its union with the body; and by means of our body it also produces in those surrounding us a very great number of changes in virtue of the laws of the communication of motion. Consequently, no natural effect has any natural or occasional cause other than the motion of bodies and the volitions of minds. This is something to which one will easily agree however little one attends to it. For I assume that one is not prejudiced by those who speak without knowing what they say, who constantly imagine beings of which they have no clear ideas, and who

^aSee Suarez, bk. 1 *De concursu Dei cum voluntate* ch. 4.

claim to explain things they do not understand through things that are absolutely incomprehensible. Thus, since it has been shown that God executes through His cooperation, or rather through His efficacious will, everything the motion of bodies and the volitions of minds do as natural or occasional causes, there is nothing God does not do by the same action as His creature's—not because creatures have any efficacious action by themselves but because God's power is, as it were, communicated to them by the natural laws God has established in their favor.

This is all I can do to reconcile what I think with the view of theologians who maintain (a) the necessity of immediate cooperation and (b) that God does everything in all things through the same action as that of creatures. For as to the other theologians, I believe that their views are untenable in every way, especially Durand's,^a and that of certain ancients refuted by Saint Augustine,^b who absolutely denied the necessity of cooperation, and would have had secondary causes do all things through a power God gave them in creating them without further concerning Himself with them. For although this opinion might involve fewer difficulties than that of other theologians, it appears to me so contrary to Scripture, and so consonant with prejudice, to say no more of it, that I do not think it can be maintained.

I grant that the Scholastics who say that God's immediate cooperation is the same action as that of creatures do not understand it exactly as I have explained it, and that with the possible exceptions of Biel and Cardinal d'Ailly,^c all those I have read think the efficacy that produces effects comes from the secondary cause as well as the primary. But as I am attempting to observe this law, to say only what I conceive clearly and to side with what best agrees with religion, I believe I shall not be found amiss in relinquishing a view that to many people seems the more incomprehensible the more effort is spent to understand it, and in establishing another that perfectly agrees not only with reason but also with the sanctity of religion and Christian morality. This is a truth I have already proved in the chapter being elucidated; but it is appropriate for me to say something additional in order to justify fully what I have already said about the present question.

Reason and religion convince us that God wills to be loved and respected by His creatures—loved as a good, feared and respected as a power; this is a truth that cannot be doubted without impeity and foolishness. To love God as He wills and deserves to be loved, we must, according to the first Commandment of the Law and of the Gospel, and even according to reason, as I have shown elsewhere,^d love Him with all our strength or according to our capacity for loving. It is not enough to prefer Him to all things; we must also love Him in all things. Otherwise our love is not as perfect as it must be, and we do not render to

^aSee Durand, in 2. Dist. 1. Quest. 5. & Dist. 37.

^b*Lib. imp. de Gen. ad litt.* bk 5. ch. 20.

^cIn 4 Sent. Dist. 1. quest. 1. De Aliaco, *ibid.*

^dBk. 4, ch. 1.

God all the love He impresses in us, and impresses in us only for Himself because He acts only for Himself. And to render God all the respect due Him, it is not enough to adore Him as the sovereign power and to fear Him more than His creatures; we must also fear and adore Him in all His creatures, all our reverence must be directed toward Him, for honor and glory are due only Him. This is what God has commanded us with these words: "Diliges^a Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, & ex tota anima tua, & ex tota fortitudine tua." And with these: "Dominum Deum tuum timebis, & illi soli servies." Thus, the philosophy that teaches us that the efficacy of secondary causes is a fiction of the mind, that Aristotle's, and certain other philosophers', *nature* is a chimera, that only God is strong and powerful enough not only to act in our soul but also to give the least motion to matter, this philosophy, I say, agrees perfectly with religion, the end of which is to join us to God in the closest way.

We ordinarily love only things capable of doing us some good; this philosophy therefore authorizes only the love of God, and absolutely condemns the love of everything else. We should fear only what can do us some evil; this philosophy therefore sanctions only the fear of God and absolutely condemns all others. Thus, it legitimizes all the soul's impulses that are just and reasonable, and it condemns all those that are contrary to reason and religion. For by this philosophy you will never legitimize love for riches, passion for grandeur, debauched behavior, since the love of the body appears absurd and ridiculous according to the principles established by this philosophy.

It is an incontestable truth, a natural opinion, even a common notion that we should love the cause of our pleasure and should do so in proportion to the felicity it does or can make us enjoy. Not only is it right, it is even necessary, as it were, that the cause of our happiness be the object of our love. Thus, following this philosophy we should love only God, for it teaches us that only He is the cause of our happiness. According to this philosophy, the bodies surrounding us do not act on the one we animate, and *a fortiori*, do not act on our mind. It is not the sun that illumines us and gives us movement and life. It does not cover the earth with fruits and flowers and does not provide us with our food. This philosophy teaches us, as does Scripture, that it is *God who provides the rain and regulates the seasons, who gives to our bodies their food and fills our hearts with joy, that only He can do us good, and that He never ceases to witness thereby what He is, although in ages past He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.*^b Following the language of this philosophy, we must not say that *nature* provides us with goods;^c we must not say that it is God and nature. We must say

^aDeut. ch. 5 [6:5].

^b"In praeteritis generationibus dimisit omnes gentes ingredi vias suas. Et quidem non sine testimonio semetipsum reliquit benefaciens de coelo, dans pluvias & tempora fructifera, implens cibo & laetitia corda nostra." Acts 14:15-16.

^c"Ergo nihil agis, ingratisime mortalium, qui te negas Deo debere, sed naturae: quia nec natura sine Deo est, nec Deus sine natura, sed idem: est utrumque, nec distat. Officium si quod a Seneca accepisse, Annaeo te diceret debere, vel Lucio: non creditorem mutares, sed nomen." Seneca *De beneficiis* bk. 4, ch. 8.

that it is God alone and speak in this way without equivocation in order not to deceive the simple. For we must distinctly recognize the sole cause of our happiness if we wish to make it the sole object of our love.

It is also an incontestable truth that we should fear things capable of causing us evil, and fear them in proportion to the evil they can cause us. But this philosophy teaches us that only God can cause us evil—it is He, Isaiah^a says, “who creates the darkness as well as the light, who makes both good and evil”—and even that no evil occurs that He does not produce, as another prophet says. Thus, we should fear only Him. We should fear neither plague, nor war, nor famine, nor our enemies, nor even devils; we should fear God alone. We should flee a sword with which someone would stab us, we should avoid fire, we should leave a house about to crush us; but we should not fear these things. We can *flee* bodies that are the natural or *occasional* causes of evil; but we should *fear* only God as the *real cause* of all the misfortunes of the wicked, and we should hate only sin, which obliges the cause of all goods to become the cause of all our evils. In a word, *all the mind's impulses [mouvements] should be referred only to God, for only God is above the mind, and the motion [mouvements] of our body can be referred to those surrounding us.* This is what we are taught by the philosophy that does not admit the efficacy of secondary causes.

But on the assumption of the efficacy of secondary causes, it seems to me that we have some grounds for fearing and loving bodies, and that to regulate our love according to reason, it is enough to prefer God to all things, the first and universal cause to secondary and particular causes. It does not seem necessary to love God with all our strength: “*Ex tota mente, ex toto corde, ex tota anima, ex totis viribus,*” as the Gospel says [Mark 12:30].

Yet when one is content to prefer God to all things and to adore Him with a worship and love by preference, without continually striving to honor and love Him in all things, it often happens that one is deceived, that charity is lost and dissipated, and that one is concerned more with sensible goods than with the sovereign good. For if one were to ask the greatest sinners, and perhaps even idolaters, whether they preferred the universal cause to particular ones, they would perhaps have no fear in reply to us from the midst of their debauches and aberration that they do commit a breach of so essential a duty, and that they fully know what they owe God. I grant that they are mistaken, but without the efficacy of secondary causes they have no likely excuse to justify their behavior; and upon the supposition of this efficacy, the following is what they can say to themselves when their passions blind them and they listen to the reports of their senses.

I am made to be happy; I cannot prevent myself from wishing to be happy. I must therefore occupy my mind with everything that can give me what I invincibly want, and my heart must devote itself to it. Why then should I not love sensible objects, if they are the true causes of the happiness I find in their possession? I recognize the Sovereign Being as alone worthy of sovereign worship; I prefer Him to everything. But since I do not see that He wishes anything

^a“Ego Dominus, & non est alter, formans lucem & creans tenebras, faciens pacem & creans malum: Ego Dominus faciens omnia haec.” Isa. 47:7 [6–7]; Amos 3:6.

of me, I enjoy the goods He gives me by means of the secondary causes to which He has subjected me, and I do not uselessly concern myself with Him. That there is no good He affords me immediately and by Himself, or at least without creatures playing a role in it, is a sign that He does not will that my mind and heart apply themselves immediately to Him, or at least that He wills that the sentiments of my mind and heart be shared between Him and His creatures. Since He has communicated some of His power and glory to the sun, has surrounded it with brilliance and majesty, has made it sovereign over all His works, and since through the influence of this great star we receive all the goods necessary for life, why should we not use part of this life to enjoy ourselves in its light, and to bear it witness of the feeling we have for its grandeur and its benefits? Would it not be the ultimate ingratitude to receive the bounty of all things from this excellent creature and to have for it no feeling of gratefulness? And would it not be dreadful stupidity and blindness not to have any impulse of respect and fear for that the absence of which freezes and kills us, and which approaching us would burn and destroy us? I repeat, we must prefer God to all things and esteem Him infinitely more than His creatures; but we must also fear and love His creatures. This is how we justly honor Him who made them, merit His good graces, and require of God new benefits. It is clear that He approves of the honor we pay His creatures, because He has communicated His power to them, and every power deserves honor. But as the honor must be proportionate to the power, and as the power of the sun and other sensible objects is such that we receive from it all sorts of goods, it is right for us to honor them with all our strength, and to consecrate to them, after God, all that we are.

This is how one naturally reasons when following the prejudice of the efficacy of secondary causes. And this is manifestly how the founders of idolatry reasoned. This is what is thought by the one esteemed most learned among the Jews. He^a begins a treatise he composed on idolatry as follows: "In the time of Enos men fell into strange errors and the wise men of that age lost their sense and reason. Enos himself was among these deluded people. These were their errors. Because, they said, God created the stars and their heavens to govern the world, placed them in a high place, surrounded them with brilliance and glory, and uses them to carry out his orders, it is right for us to honor them and pay them our homage and respect. It is the will of our God that we honor these things He has raised up and covered with glory, just as a prince wishes his ministers to be honored in his presence because the honor paid them reflects on him. [. . .] After this thought came into their heads, they began to build temples to the stars, make sacrifices to them, speak their encomiums, and even prostrate themselves before them, imagining that they were thereby making themselves pleasing to Him who created them." This is the origin of idolatry.

It is so natural and fitting to have feelings of gratitude in proportion to the goods we receive that almost^b all people have adored the sun because they have all judged it to be the cause of the goods they enjoyed. And if the Egyptians

^aR. Moses Maimonides.

^bSee Vossius *De idololatria* bk. 2.

adored not only the sun, the moon, and the river Nile, whose overflow caused the fertility of their country, but also went as far as the vilest animals, it was, according to the report of Cicero,^a because of some utility they derived from them. Thus, since we cannot and indeed should not banish from the mind of men their natural inclination for the true causes of their happiness, it is clear there is at least some danger in maintaining the efficacy of secondary causes, although there might be joined to it the necessity of *immediate cooperation*, which involves something incomprehensible I know not what, and which comes after the event, as it were, in order to justify our prejudices and the philosophy of Aristotle.

But there is no danger in saying only what we see and attributing power and efficacy only to God, because we see only His volitions to have an absolutely necessary and indispensable connection with natural effects. I grant that men nowadays are sufficiently enlightened not to fall into the gross errors of the pagans and idolaters; but I have no fear in saying that often our mind is turned, or rather that our heart is disposed as was the pagans', and that there will always be a kind of idolatry in the world until the day when Jesus Christ 'restores^b His kingdom to God His father, having destroyed every empire, every dominion, and every power, so that God may be everything in all things.' For is it not a kind of idolatry to make a god of one's belly, as Saint Paul^c says? Is it not to be an idolater of the god of riches to work ceaselessly to acquire goods? Is it to render God the worship due Him and to adore Him in mind and in truth^d to have a heart full of sensible beauty and a mind dazzled by the brilliance of some imaginary grandeur?

Since men think they will receive from the bodies surrounding them the pleasures they enjoy in using them if they join themselves to these bodies with all the strength of their soul, the source of their disorder is therefore their sensible conviction in the efficacy of secondary causes. Only reason tells them that God alone acts in them. But beside the fact that this reason speaks so low that they almost do not hear it, and that the senses contradicting it cry so loud that their din stuns them, they are further confirmed in their prejudice in ways and by arguments all the more dangerous as they bear the external marks of truth.

Philosophers, and especially Christian philosophers, should constantly battle against the judgments of the senses or prejudices, and especially prejudices as dangerous as that of the efficacy of secondary causes; and yet, for I do not know what reason, people whom I rightfully respect a great deal try to confirm this prejudice, and even to pass off as superstitious and ridiculous a doctrine so holy, pure, and well-founded as that which maintains that only God is a true cause. They do not want us to love and fear God in all things, but, they say, to fear all things in relation to God. We should love creatures, they say, because they are

^a"Ipsi qui irridentur Aegyptii, nullam belluam nisi ob aliquam utilitatem, quam ex ea caperent, consecraverant." *De natura deorum* bk. 1 [ch. 36]. See Sextus Empiricus, bk. 8. ch. 2.

^b1 Cor. 15:24

^c"Quorum Deus venter est." Phil. 13:9. [3:19]. "Omnis ornicator, aut immundus, aut avarus, quod est idolorum servitus." Eph. 5:5.

^d"In spiritu & veritate oportet adorare." John 4:24

good; we must love and respect our father, honor our prince and our superior, because God commands it. I do not deny this, but I deny that we must love creatures as our goods, though they are good or perfect in themselves. I deny that we can serve and respect men as we do our master. Or, to explain myself more clearly, I claim that we must not serve our master, obey our father and our prince with any other intention than to serve and obey God. This is what Saint Paul^a says, *who became all things to all men and who obliged in all things* for the salvation of those to whom he preached: “*Servi, obedite Dominis carnalibus cum timore & tremore in simplicitate cordis vestri SICUT CHRISTO; non ad oculum servientes quasi hominibus placentes, sed ut servi Christi facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo, cum bona voluntate servientes SICUT DOMINO ET NON HOMINIBUS.*”^b And in another Epistle:^c “*Non ad oculum servientes quasi hominibus placentes, sed in simplicitate cordis Deum timentes. Quodcumque facitis ex animo operamini SICUT DOMINO ET NON HOMINIBUS.*” We should therefore obey our father, serve our prince, honor our superiors as UNTO GOD AND NOT UNTO MEN: “*Sicut Domino & non hominibus.*” This is clear and can have no evil consequences. Superiors will always be better honored and better served by it. But I believe I can say that a master who wished to be honored and served, as having in him a power other than God’s, would be a demon, and that those serving in this spirit would be idolaters; for I cannot help believing that honor and love unrelated to God are kinds of idolatry. SOLI DEO HONOR ET GLORIA.

^a1 Cor. 9:22, 10:33.

^bEph. 6:6 [5-6].

^cCol. 3:22 [-23]. “*Nos si hominem patrem vocamus, honorem aetati deferimus, non Autorem vitae nostrae ostendimus.*” Hier. in ch. 23. Matt.