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Robert Desgabets' eucharistic thought and the theological revision of Cartesianism

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ABSTRACT

The seventeenth-century French Benedictine philosopher Dom Robert Desgabets (1610–1678) has been taken by many historians as an idiosyncratic but ultimately loyal proponent of Cartesianism in the years following Descartes' death. As a Catholic cleric aware of the importance of squaring the new philosophical conclusions of the seventeenth-century with Church theology, Desgabets wrote extensively on the ways in which this could be achieved with regard to the most contentious and complex theological Church dogma of the time: transubstantiation. Through an examination of Desgabets' writings on transubstantiation, this article argues that he was emboldened by his particular religious context and preoccupations to undertake an in-depth theological interrogation and revision of Descartes' eucharistic thought, which motivated him to offer a more epistemologically and theologically ambitious account of transubstantiation than Descartes himself thought possible or wise. This article therefore uses Desgabets as an example of the complex interplay between theology and "new" philosophy in the early reception of Cartesianism. It shows how this interplay allowed early, theologically minded Cartesians like Desgabets to use the intellectual resources of the Catholic Church to fortify and safeguard the legacy of Cartesianism in a way Descartes himself did not do.

KEYWORDS

Descartes; Cartesianism; transubstantiation; Desgabets

Introduction

The relationship between Cartesianism and the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation is integral to a proper understanding of both René Descartes' (1596–1650) own intellectual history and the posthumous legacy of his thought. Roger Ariew has emphasised its importance by rightly criticising the narrative that Descartes was forced – by consistent questioning from Catholics sceptical of his theological orthodoxy – into engaging (unsuccessfully) with the question of how to philosophically explain Christ's Real Presence in the ostensibly physically unaltered Host of "bread" and "wine".¹ In fact, Descartes well understood that if he could show his philosophy to be both in line with the historic eucharistic teaching of the "true church" and able to coherently explain and defend a

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doctrine which was central to the Church's counter-reformational project, the Church's official approbation might follow.² This, in turn, could lead to the realisation of his ambition to replace Scholasticism as the premier philosophical authority in Catholic pedagogy. Equally welcome in further underlining the significance of the relationship between the Eucharist and the "new" philosophical ambitions of many seventeenth-century scholars are the small number of studies of attempts by subsequent early Cartesians to shore up Descartes' philosophical legacy by tackling the "eucharistic question".³

This article argues that further study of "Cartesian eucharistic thought", particularly that of the Benedictine philosopher, theologian, and early French Cartesian Dom Robert Desgabets (1610–1678), still has much potential for recovering and examining the diversity and complexity of the philosophical and theological advancement and reception of Cartesian thinking. More specifically, this article will contribute to our understanding of the legacy of Cartesianism and the nature of philosophical identity in early modern France through an examination of the theological detail and context of Desgabets' engagement with Descartes' eucharistic thought. It will be demonstrated that the Benedictine is an ideal case study for evidencing the ways in which Catholic theologians sympathetic to Descartes' thought understood the need for greater emphasis and reflection upon the affinity between Cartesian metaphysics and Catholic theology, Patristics, and Scholasticism in the decades after Descartes' death. Descartes himself consistently wrote of his desire to stay away from complex theological doctrine, at least publicly: representative of such a desire is his avowal to Marin Mersenne (1588–1548) when discussing his notion of God's instantiation of eternal and immutable truths that "I do not want to involve myself in theology".⁴ To be sure, such rhetoric was contradicted by, for example, Descartes' epistolary reflections on the Eucharist to Denis Mesland (1615–1672, treated below), in which he detailed how Christ comes to be really present in the Eucharist via the conjunction of his soul with the bread. I will argue, however, that Desgabets evidences a stronger recognition amongst later Cartesians that, if Descartes' thinking was to have any future as a philosophy palatable to the Catholic Church, it had to be more thoroughly and publicly interrogated through a theological hermeneutic. Consequently, I demonstrate that Desgabets recognised that Descartes' positions had to be developed or discarded to survive such a theological interrogation, particularly in relation to the Eucharist. Valuable work has already been done by Tad Schmaltz on Desgabets' "radical Cartesianism" and by Hans Thomas Adriaenssen on the continuing "scholastic heritage" of Desgabets' intentionality principle.⁵ I wish to build upon this historiography from an explicitly theological perspective, arguing that our understanding of Desgabets' "radical Cartesianism" and relationship with Scholasticism is greatly improved when we understand the ways in which his theological background and concerns emboldened him to develop and propose a variant of Cartesian eucharistic thought, the epistemic ambition of which Descartes himself would have been vexed by.

Desgabets was clear in his preference for a Cartesian philosophy able to progress beyond Descartes' own strict positions, who was, he writes, not himself always a "good Cartesian".⁶ This, by itself, is not a particularly unusual position: all Cartesians went beyond the strict letter of Descartes' own thought through the very act of philosophically engaging with it. Desgabets' eucharistic metaphysics, however, is particularly illustrative: it most clearly foregrounds the sometimes harmonious, sometimes non-harmonious intellectual relationship between Descartes and his Benedictine successor. Desgabets'

eucharistic work shows the considerable efforts he undertook to ensure the vitality of Cartesianism by attempting to square it with his particular conception of Church Tradition, and thus gain for it the Church approval unsuccessfully sought by Descartes. He attempted this most publicly in his quickly censured 1671 eucharistic tract *Considérations sur l'état présent de la controverse touchant le T. S. Sacrement de l'autel*. This pamphlet was influenced by the model of transubstantiation Descartes outlined to Denis Mesland, in which Desgabets gave an account of the sacrament based on the union between Christ's soul and the bread's matter during consecration. It equally evidences, however, that this process of amending Descartes' thought to Desgabets' own theological worldview meant that, in practice, amendments became substantial revisions to Cartesian metaphysics which underscore Desgabets' own intellectual originality and the theological reasons for his disagreements with Descartes. More specifically, I show below that some of Desgabets' central metaphysical arguments (e.g. his argument for the indefectibility of substance and its attendant consequences for God's omnipotence) and methodological assumptions (e.g. his belief in the necessity of philosophical empiricism and its implications for our knowledge of the Eucharist) demonstrate intellectually original revisions of Descartes' own thought; a central motivation for which is Desgabets' context as a Catholic cleric and Church theologian.

In sum, I develop and revise assessments of Desgabets as a “champion of Cartesian transubstantiation” and loyal proponent of the *theologia cartesiana* in the decades following Descartes' death; a conclusion originally and most comprehensively stated by Jean-Robert Armogathe. I argue that we need to interrogate further what exactly it meant to promote “Cartesian Transubstantiation” and *theologia cartesiana*; the intellectual and institutional motivations behind such championing; and how thinkers like Desgabets dealt with circumstances in which the separate “Cartesian” and “theological” elements of *theologia cartesiana* ostensibly clashed. It will be seen that theological influences and requirements often led Desgabets to radically develop Descartes' metaphysics in a way in which Descartes would likely have had issue with, but which Desgabets thought fundamental to Cartesianism's longevity.⁷

In this article, I will firstly set out my definition of what it means to be a Cartesian in this period. Secondly, I will place Desgabets' eucharistic thought in the context of the Council of Trent, Descartes' earlier engagements with transubstantiation, and Desgabets' life and wider intellectual output. Thirdly, I will set out my contention that Desgabets theorised a mutual interdependence between philosophical and theological authority, which is particularly evident in his eucharistic metaphysics and essential to understanding his relationship with Cartesianism. Lastly, I will examine three substantive metaphysical doctrines which constitute the strongest evidence for the intellectual significance and originality of Desgabets' particular theological approach to Cartesian eucharistic metaphysics: indefectibility, substantial form, and empiricism.

Cartesianism: a definitional preamble

The validity of my argument that Desgabets developed and reinterpreted Descartes' eucharistic metaphysics in line with a greater insistence on meeting the demands of Catholic theology necessarily turns on the disputed question of what constitutes a Cartesian proposition. Arieuw is undoubtedly correct that “to be a Cartesian does not entail

agreeing with everything Descartes' propounded".⁸ Such a restrictive position denies the label to nearly every early modern who professed themselves to be such. The label should also be flexible enough to incorporate ambitious and idiosyncratic revisions to Descartes' thought. For example, Tad Schmaltz has categorised Desgabets as a "radical Cartesian". These radical Cartesians, for Schmaltz, were philosophers whose amendments to Descartes' philosophy were often striking, but always erected on a "profoundly Cartesian basis" and undertaken to "shore up Descartes' doctrine" through demonstrating his philosophical cogency.⁹ Schmaltz's idea of later Cartesian amendments to Descartes' thinking, which are significantly original but simultaneously do not stray so far as to be wholly inimical to Descartes' arguments, is the most helpful and capacious metric for evaluating the extent to which later Cartesians amended or diverged from Descartes' own philosophical principles. Of course, Descartes' own philosophy was not defined by a universally agreed, finite set of maxims; it is therefore necessary to proceed by recovering the extent of a scholar's commitment to the defence of *their* interpretation of Descartes' philosophical principles. I must begin, then, by explaining the context and detail of Descartes' eucharistic thought alongside Desgabets' interpretation of it.

Descartes' and Desgabets' eucharistic thought in context

The Tridentine legacy

The Council of Trent's (1545–1563) emphasis in its 1551 thirteenth session on the essentiality of belief in transubstantiation to Catholic identity was simultaneously a great help and a potential challenge to the "new" philosophers of the seventeenth century.¹⁰ It was helpful in that it offered them a way to gain credibility in the Church's eyes by cogently explaining "the most holy sacrament" in terms able to rebuff the attacks of Protestant detractors, who saw the literality of the doctrine as theologically and philosophically untenable.¹¹ Further, Trent lacked a particular philosophical allegiance on this matter: aside from a vague, non-doctrinal endorsement of the Thomist-Aristotelian terminology of "substance" and "species" to explain the sacramental conversion, it left the metaphysical particulars of the consecration open to further delineation and exploitation by later philosophers.¹² Trent's ambiguity constituted a potential hindrance to the Catholic *novatores* in that it said of Christ's Real Presence: we can "scarcely express it in words".¹³ Whilst not an outright denial that the Real Presence was philosophically explicable, this injunction sketched a real (if ill-defined) boundary to the jurisdiction of philosophical knowledge in relation to that of necessary fideism. At the heart of the seventeenth-century Catholic polemic on the Eucharist was the question of where exactly this boundary lay and determining which philosophers had unacceptably crossed it. Unfortunately for both Descartes and Desgabets, the secular French authorities and Church mechanisms of censorship would judge them as two such philosophers.

Descartes on transubstantiation

Descartes' engagement with transubstantiation demonstrates his awareness of the potential opportunities and pitfalls the Tridentine legacy offered the ambitious Catholic philosopher. His first-published discussion on the nature of the Eucharist was contained

within his 1641 *Fourth Replies* to the Jansenist Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694, a proponent of much Cartesian philosophy). Here Descartes rejected scholastic “real accidents”: qualities of bread which give it its appearance and which are divinely sustained even after the substance of bread has been vitiated after consecration. These, for Descartes, are not the reason for our unchanged perceptions. Instead, he proposed that the Host, post-consecration, possesses the same number of particles at its surface boundary as the pre-consecration bread did: they are therefore treated identically by the senses on Descartes’ account of sense perception (which holds that dispositions of matter cause sensation).¹⁴ The tone of the *Fourth Replies*’ treatment of the Eucharist is assuredly confident. Concerning Trent, Descartes writes the following about its statement that, notwithstanding the absolute conversion of the bread’s substance into Christ’s, its physical form remains unaltered: “I do not see what can be meant by the ‘form’ of the bread if not the surface [...] common to the individual particles of the bread and the bodies which surround them”.¹⁵ As such, the rationality of right-thinking “orthodox theologians” will inevitably lead them to accept his explanation as “indubitable”.¹⁶

Descartes’ other treatment of the Eucharist – his 1645 letter on Christ’s Real Presence to the Jesuit Denis Mesland – initially appears more cautious. To begin, Descartes tells Mesland that Trent’s pronouncement that we can “hardly express in words” the manner of Christ’s Real Presence – in conjunction with the fact that he is not a “theologian by profession” – freed him from having to discuss the Real Presence in detail.¹⁷ Yet, despite the topic’s sensitivity, Descartes could not resist privately demonstrating to Mesland (a figure active in the Jesuit college at La Flèche, an ideal pedagogical foothold for Cartesianism) that his metaphysics could explain the mode of Christ’s presence in the Host. Descartes explains that Christ’s soul is “supernaturally joined” with the bread’s matter and, through this, the Host becomes Christ just as the matter of the human body is “informed by the human soul” and “taken for a whole and entire human body”.¹⁸ Aware of the potentially inflammatory nature of an explanation of the Real Presence which eschewed the Church’s historic fideism in favour of a metaphysical explanation drawn from contemporary philosophical understandings of bodily individuation, Descartes asked Mesland to keep his authorship of it private. Indeed, belief in its potential to ignite further condemnation of Cartesianism was strong enough that Descartes’ posthumous literary executor, Claude Clerselier (1614–1684), kept knowledge of the “Mesland position” to a trusted group of sympathetic individuals.¹⁹

Even if the Mesland position was kept semi-private, however, Descartes’ publicly known model of transubstantiation was sufficiently controversial to be used by Catholic censors and educationalists after his death as a justification for the censure of his general philosophical system: it formed the explicit basis of the University of Leuven’s condemnation of his philosophy in 1662, and it was the implicit motivation for his work being placed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1663.²⁰

Descartes’ high-risk strategy for attaining Church sanction was unsuccessful: he had miscalculated his ability to walk the tightrope between legitimate philosophical speculation and heterodoxy constitutive of the legacy of Trent’s thirteenth session. Yet, in a Catholic intellectual climate which had already shown its hostility to any explanation of transubstantiation based on Cartesian philosophy, Desgabets demonstrates the continuing importance of transubstantiation to “new” philosophical aspirations in taking up the seemingly impossible challenge of convincing the Church to change its mind. The

remainder of this article will unpack the motivation and method behind Desgabets' efforts.

Desgabets' life and eucharistic thought: an overview

Desgabets occupied two distinct but connected worlds. The first was that of the institutional Church as a member of the Benedictine Congregation of Saint-Vanne, into which he entered from a noble Lorraine family in 1636, and in which he took an active part through many roles of varying seniority.²¹ The second was the Cartesian world, to which he was first formally introduced in 1658 whilst in Paris (on business as *procureur général* of Saint-Vanne) through the conferences of Henri de Montmor (c. 1600–1679).²² Desgabets' insistence on the necessity of unifying philosophy and theology was in part influenced by his simultaneous identities as Benedictine and “new” philosopher. Whilst at Saint-Vanne, he engaged in debates with other Cartesians and gave a lecture on novel methods of blood transfusion to Montmor's Cartesian gathering in 1658. Further, he penned several theological and philosophical works, three of which were published (anonymously) during his lifetime: *Discours de la communication ou transfusion du sang* (1668), *Considérations* (1671), and *Critique de la Critique de la Recherche de la Vérité* (1675).

It is unsurprising that Desgabets considered being a Benedictine as synthesisable with his Cartesianism. As Paul Lemaire notes, “the Cartesian Benedictines were numerous at Saint-Vanne”, counting amongst their numbers Antoine Vinot (1621–1679) and Jean Oudet (?–1736).²³ It is clear that other Cartesian Benedictines felt Desgabets to be an original if an idiosyncratic defender and critic of Descartes' ideas. In 1677, the Cardinal de Retz (Jean Francois-Paul de Gondi, 1613–1679) gathered them at Commercy to question Desgabets on his fidelity to Cartesianism.²⁴ Fellow Catholic divines clearly viewed Desgabets as a persuasive and original metaphysician, particularly on the matter of transubstantiation. He wrote to Clerselier in 1674 of the Bishop of Chalons and Abbé de Saint-Michel's endorsement of his eucharistic thought: the Abbé had no doubt that the early Church was “of my opinion” on transubstantiation, and “we can assure ourselves” of Chalons' protection from any further censorship.²⁵ Moreover, Jean Mabillon (1632–1707, who did not know Desgabets) sent him his dissertation on transubstantiation for approbation and publicity, which Desgabets was happy to give.²⁶ Desgabets' enjoyment of a considerable reputation in monastic and wider theological circles as an authority on both eucharistic metaphysics and original interpreter of Cartesianism thereby make him an important case study for investigating the ways in which Catholic theology and Cartesian philosophy interacted after Descartes' death.

Desgabets was a prolific writer on transubstantiation: he composed numerous, still largely unstudied, manuscripts on the subject.²⁷ His first, polemical entry into the wider debate on the permissibility of applying Cartesianism to the eucharistic question was an exchange of letters between himself and a doctor Pastel in 1654. Desgabets and Pastel were brought into the debate by, respectively, Clerselier and Father Viogué (a University of Paris theologian). The latter two had skirmished earlier that year. Viogué had asked Clerselier: if (as Descartes held) “extension is the essence of a body”, how can Christ be really present in the Eucharist given that, on a Thomist understanding, Christ is present in the Host in an unextended form?²⁸ Further, Viogué interpreted

Descartes' position in the *Fourth Replies* as holding that the accidents of bread and wine do not, as the Church requires, cease to exist after consecration, but persist as *superfices* (surfaces); this has the subversive consequence that they remain as "true extensions [...] as a true body [...] since [their] properties are there".²⁹ Clerselier's response, which prioritised, as Desgabets later would, Descartes' explanation of Christ's Real Presence in the Mesland correspondence, did not satisfy Viogué at all. Pastel was informed of the exchange by Viogué and intervened in a series of objections: the *Instances*.³⁰ Pastel rejected Clerselier's argument as both going beyond Descartes' own views and being wholly contrary to the requirements of Church and Scripture. Clerselier asked Desgabets to respond, which he did by disputing Pastel's interpretation of the manner of the union between Christ's soul and the matter of the bread.³¹

Desgabets' work on the Eucharist after this initial debate with Pastel is difficult to date, given the "pell-mell" state of his manuscripts.³² Nevertheless, early and mature iterations of his thinking are discernible. The former is represented by the first *dissertation théologique*, which Jean Armogathe dates to around 1663, given its lack of patristic citation (something integral to his more mature argument).³³ It is primarily concerned with refuting the scholastic (Scotist) notion that the matter of the bread is annihilated during the consecration (i.e. adduction theory) and the Thomist position that Christ can be at many altars at once, given that he is sacramentally, not locally, present (which Descartes accepted).³⁴ Desgabets refutes the latter by arguing that Christ's body must have local extension, and that matter cannot exist in more than one place at a time.³⁵ Desgabets' mature eucharistic thought (publicly presented in the *Considérations*) begins with the second *dissertation théologique*, which Armogathe dates to sometime between 1664 and 1667.³⁶ It differs from the first in invoking the patristic authority of a Church father (later to be the crux of the *Considérations'* argument) as supporting his explanation of transubstantiation: the Syrian monk Saint John of Damascus (c. 675–749). The essence of Desgabets' argument in this work is that, during the sacrament, the matter of the bread is informed by, and miraculously united to, Christ's soul: this occasions a "substantive, perfective change".³⁷ Through this, the bread's substance is converted into Christ's locally extended body. However, the "modes" of the bread (i.e. the particular dispositions of matter creating the Host's physical appearance) remain to sustain our unchanged sense perceptions. Thus, whilst Desgabets allows the bread's matter to remain in the Host to become Christ's matter, safeguarding our previous sensory perceptions, the bread's form has substantially changed, now being Christ's soul. In accordance with the maxim *forma dat esse rei*, its form is no longer categorisable as bread.

There are significant commonalities here between Desgabets' and Descartes' models of transubstantiation. That Desgabets' notion of a "substantive" union between Christ's soul and the Host and his theory of the Host's unchanged modes owe philosophical debts to Descartes' position in the *Fourth Replies* and his 1645 letter to Mesland (which Clerselier had shown to Desgabets³⁸) is indisputable. Yet, as I show below, Desgabets' idea of this substantive union demonstrates a continuing allegiance to scholastic thinking on the soul and a divergence from Descartes' opinions on this topic; one which allows us to better see the distinct intellectual contexts of the two men.

It was the publication of the *Considérations* (an abridged version of the second *dissertation's* argument) that had great significance for Desgabets individually and French Cartesianism more generally. Sharing Descartes' compulsion to advance his philosophical

reputation – and assure others of the theological orthodoxy of “new” philosophy – by disseminating his eucharistic thought amongst fellow Catholics, Desgabets circulated his pamphlet. In 1669, he sent an initial version of the *Considérations* to an unnamed correspondent (almost certainly l’abbé Le Roi³⁹). This correspondent forwarded it to Antoine Arnauld at the Jansenist enclave of Port Royal. Arnauld – himself an undeniable, though more cautious, proponent of Cartesian eucharistic thought⁴⁰ – interpreted its argument as “contrary to all that was taught in the Church for six hundred years” and forwarded it to a fellow Jansenist, Pierre Nicole (1625–1695), who had a similarly negative judgement.⁴¹ From here, the semi-private work gained public notoriety. In 1671, to Desgabets’ annoyance, it was anonymously published without permission and the process of censorship began.⁴² Jean Ferrier (1614–1674), Jesuit confessor to Louis XIV, condemned the work to the King as “heretical and very pernicious”.⁴³ By September, the University of Paris and the King had condemned Cartesianism. Desgabets was interrogated before his Benedictine superiors, forced to recant his views, and prevented from writing anything more on theology for a public audience; he continued to do so privately.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, the censorship of the *Considérations* frustrated Desgabets’ attempts, and those of other like-minded philosophers in seventeenth-century France, to present Cartesianism to the Church as a legitimate, non-heterodox philosophy. Given the fact that the French Catholic Church had unequivocally demonstrated their hostility to a “new” philosophical explanation of transubstantiation with the earlier censure of Descartes, it is perhaps tempting to read Desgabets’ efforts as unreasonably idealistic. Desgabets, however, evidently felt that his model of transubstantiation was so persuasive that it could, if it had the support of sympathetic Catholics, lead to the institutions of French Catholicism and the Vatican reassessing their positioning of the boundary between philosophical explanation of the Eucharist and non-negotiable fideism; it is the particulars of this model – and its implications for our understanding of Desgabets’ identity – to which I now turn.

Desgabets’ proposed union of theology and philosophy

In the second theological dissertation (c. 1664–1671), Desgabets discusses the necessity of philosophy to theology. We must “employ reasoning to theological explanations of which the principal usage is seeing that God was the principal author of both wisdoms of faith and reason”.⁴⁵ In the *Considérations*, this belief in the necessary interdependence between theology and philosophy manifests in his argument that a proper explanation of transubstantiation requires a union between the two. Moreover, this union could only be affected at a particular moment in the history of the two disciplines’ relationship: in “our century” there has been “a very great reformation in philosophy [... through] its union with mathematics [...] especially in matters which relate to the Eucharist”.⁴⁶ Desgabets does not explicitly state which mathematical advances he is specifically referring to here, but he is perhaps alluding to Descartes’ position that mathematical extension is physically essential to bodies, which is axiomatic to his (and Descartes’) rejection of the scholastic position that the real accidents of the Host (i.e. its appearance as bread) exist apart from any bodily extension after the Host’s consecration and thus explain our unchanged perceptions.⁴⁷

Of course, the notion that philosophy is of use in demonstrating a belief's veracity is by no means anathema to Catholic intellectual tradition. It is a sentiment found in the work of the most famous Church Father, Augustine: "do not try to understand in order to believe, but believe, to understand".⁴⁸ For Augustine, subsequent philosophical underpinning of a theological proposition further evidences its veracity, but belief should always be formed unconditionally, entirely separate from philosophical discourse. Augustine elsewhere elaborates on the sources of understanding and belief: respectively, *ratio* and *auctoritas*. For him, what we understand "we should hold as coming from reason [*ratione*]" and "what we believe as coming from authority [*auctoritate*]"⁴⁹ *Ratio* is knowledge of an object in itself, obtained through individual use of the *aspectus mentis* (gaze of the mind).⁵⁰ *Auctoritas* is defined as the testimony of "worthy witnesses" (i.e. theologically authoritative individuals and Scripture).⁵¹ For Augustine, the priority of *auctoritas* over *ratio* has theological justification: "authority, he insists, opens the door to deeper knowledge, for it alone can cure the soul of its disorders".⁵² This prioritisation filtered into medieval scholastic theology: even in emphasising the close relationship between faith and reason, Aquinas encapsulated the scholastic prioritisation of *sacra doctrina* in affirming that philosophy is the "handmaid" to theology.⁵³ When treating the Eucharist, Trent had also made clear that it subscribed to this view of the relationship between philosophy and theology: as noted above, Trent's thirteenth session simultaneously held that we can "scarcely express" Christ's Real Presence in words, but then followed this up with its statement that an understanding of the sacrament "illuminated by faith" is ascertainable, going on to proffer Thomism as a potential route to it.⁵⁴ This brief overview of the Church's precepts concerning the relationship between philosophy and theology allows us to fully appreciate the idiosyncrasy of Desgabets' own argument for their unity, which had two significant corollaries.

The first such corollary is Desgabets' comprehension of *auctoritas*: if Augustine (and the historical Church) had raised a barrier between the sources of knowledge and faith, Desgabets allowed *ratio* to become a criterion for what we can legitimately take to be a satisfactory theological authority. Desgabets writes in strong terms that: "all the reasonings of theologians are false when they find themselves contrary to a philosophical truth".⁵⁵ What constitutes such a truth for Desgabets is implicitly clear: it is a tenet of his own philosophical system. Concerning the Eucharist, the axiomatic tenet for Desgabets is that "the matter of bread unites itself to the soul and divinity of our Lord in order to lose being as bread and acquire that of his adorable body".⁵⁶ As such, Desgabets' interpretation of patristic authority (from the second theological *dissertation* onwards) consistently emphasises the Church Father whose explanation of the sacrament he interprets as conforming to this position: the Syrian monk Saint John of Damascus. For Desgabets, he was "the first of all the fathers and all the ecclesiastical writers to explain the Real Presence of our Lord in [...] transubstantiation by way of the union of the bread's matter to the soul [...] of our Lord".⁵⁷ Desgabets thus approaches his interpretation of what constitutes correct patristic *auctoritas* with the criterion of *ratio* firmly in mind; the determination of correct theological authority is not antecedent to its philosophical counterpart but predicated upon it.

The second corollary relates to his eucharistic epistemology. He is clear that the sacrament is not absolutely "inexplicable by men living on the Earth".⁵⁸ More specifically, Desgabets takes the position that, "although miracles change the ordinary course of things,

they cannot change the clear ideas of them, nor their essence or their definition”.⁵⁹ Desgabets’ epistemology thus used eucharistic metaphysics to widen the scope of what we can philosophically *know* about transubstantiation. This belief in the possibility of a generally indubitable philosophical explanation, we will see, is largely influenced by Desgabets’ theological argument for empiricism.

For all his apparent radicalism, however, Desgabets, of course, did not wish to be seen as heterodox. Desgabets was a Benedictine, subject to the institutional authority of his order. At the core of his defence of Cartesian eucharistic thought was, therefore, patristic thinking. For him, *auctoritas* informed what could be taken as a satisfactory philosophical authority: the legitimacy of any contemporary philosophical opinion was to be determined by its accordance with patristic and conciliar precedent. It is no accident that, structurally, both the second theological dissertation and the *Considérations* begin by affirming that Descartes’ and Desgabets’ account of Christ’s Real Presence is a direct continuation of the thinking of John of Damascus.⁶⁰ This also nuances our understanding of Desgabets as inheritor of the *theologia cartesiana*; Armogathe’s term for the Cartesian theology at the heart of Desgabets’ project. For Desgabets, his and Descartes’ philosophical systems did not possess any *de novo* theological significance: they constituted recoveries of the pure Tradition of the early Church before “it was obscured by scholastic maxims”.⁶¹ Predictably, Desgabets’ interpretation of this Tradition was selective and overtly polemical. It engaged in an interpretative practice also evident in Descartes’ invocation of Trent as supporting his explanation of “continuing surfaces”: the positive or negative interpretation of the theological *auctoritas* as permitting or disallowing philosophical explanation of an element of transubstantiation. It is therefore apparent that Desgabets, unlike Descartes, took much pain to show in detail how the legitimacy of Cartesian eucharistic thought derived not just from new philosophical reasoning but also its ability to square and rationalise the theological writings of the early Church.

In positive terms, Desgabets viewed patristic authority (specifically John of Damascus) as strong precedent. He historicised the Church’s pronouncements on transubstantiation as being silent on the permissibility of philosophically explaining the sacrament, and thus implicitly allowing it. He states that the Church affirmed transubstantiation to combat the heresies of Berengar of Tours (c. 999–1088) and others in the eleventh century (and that Trent reaffirmed the doctrine). The Church, however, did not want to examine philosophical questions “which we call essentials [...] concerning which even the Scholastics do not agree amongst themselves”.⁶² Schmaltz correctly reminds us that “the Council of Trent refrained from choosing between the Scotist and Thomist explanations of the manner in which Christ comes to be present in the Eucharist” (i.e. between a Scotist preference for the annihilation of the bread’s matter and a Thomist preference for its conversion).⁶³ Positively, this allowed Desgabets to prefer a Thomist conversion (or “substantial change”) of the matter of the bread. Negatively, Desgabets challenged Scholasticism’s claim that its model of transubstantiation had historical precedent: in reality, it was a later interference with the earlier and “proper doctrine” of John of Damascus, which the Church “had always acknowledged for its own”.⁶⁴

Thus, we can better comprehend the historico-theological vein of Desgabets’ “radical Cartesianism” in that he agreed with and sought to build upon Descartes’ earlier strategy of presenting Cartesianism as the only legitimate heir to Church Tradition by providing a detailed exegesis of patristic thought which fleshed out Descartes’ less-detailed

designation of scholastic positions on the Eucharist as being opposed to right-minded theology. In putting forward a reading of John of Damascus which, at least ostensibly, supported Descartes' "Mesland position", Desgabets made the dual claims that Descartes' metaphysics was harmonious with Church Tradition (something Descartes would have agreed with) and that it was effectively a new philosophical restatement of the theology of Saint John of Damascus (an explicitly theological reflection of the type Descartes himself avoided making).⁶⁵ Ultimately, like Descartes, Desgabets attempted to co-opt Church Tradition for "new" philosophy, similarly misjudging contemporary Church and state authorities in France and beyond as far more tolerant of a plurality of opinions on what constituted correct eucharistic *auctoritas* than was actually the case. At the same time, Desgabets was more emboldened than Descartes in his use of theology, taking the battle over the correct way to understand the sacrament directly onto the terrain of anti-Cartesian Church theologians and Scholastics by holding their opinions as a direct violation of Church *auctoritas*, not vice versa.

Having fleshed out the implications of Desgabets' argument for the union between theology and philosophy at a methodological level, I will now demonstrate more specifically how his eucharistic thought can be viewed as an example of what an ideal union of philosophical and religious thinking looked like for Desgabets. To do this, I will utilise three case studies from Desgabets' metaphysics which best evidence the complex interplay between Catholic articles of faith and necessary philosophical intelligibility in his work.

Three metaphysical case studies

Desgabets' indefectibility thesis and the eucharist

Desgabets' indefectibility thesis is a core philosophical tenet of his; its most systematic expression was in his unpublished *Traité de l'indéfectibilité des creatures*.⁶⁶ We know from a letter to Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) that he started working on the *Traité* as early as 1649, and therefore that his eucharistic philosophy was written with the argument for indefectibility already in mind.⁶⁷ As Patricia Easton puts it, Desgabets held that "material substance, in its essence and existence was eternal, indivisible, immutable and indestructible".⁶⁸ This position finds its clearest expression in his eucharistic thought through the polemical rejection of Scotist adduction theory. For Desgabets, once Scotism is denied status as Church doctrine, it can be treated in purely philosophical terms and found wanting. For our purposes, the most pertinent question is how Desgabets' rejection of any notion of the annihilation of matter in the Eucharist is inflected by his particular theological concerns, and the ways in which such concerns led him to revise and challenge Descartes' own metaphysics. By understanding this, we can more clearly recover the theological bases for Desgabets' indefectibility thesis, which I demonstrate below have not been adequately foregrounded.

There has been considerable debate on the ways and extent to which Desgabets' position that matter cannot be annihilated is Cartesian. Patricia Easton and Tad Schmaltz have argued that Desgabets' argument is a critique of, but loyal supplement to, the Cartesian doctrine of eternal truths.⁶⁹ Emmanuel Faye, in contrast, argues that Desgabets' use of this doctrine exhibits only "instrumental Cartesianism": "Descartes is not so much an inspiration as a privileged authority".⁷⁰ In brief, the Cartesian doctrine in

question was set out in a series of 1630 letters from Descartes to Mersenne. It argued that “mathematical truths, [...] have been established by God and depend on him entirely [...] he has established these laws in nature as a king establishes laws in his kingdom”.⁷¹ Desgabets’ main revision to the original position is that he extends indefectibility from mathematical truths to all things: “all simple things [...] have received from God a perfectly indefectible being”.⁷² Thus, for Desgabets, the non-intrinsic attributes of Cartesian physics (e.g. figure, disposition of matter’s parts) are the basis upon which a distinction can be made between that which can be annihilated (the modal and temporal parts of bodies) and that which cannot (their atemporal substantial parts).⁷³ Schmalz also views a central motivation for Desgabets’ extension of the Cartesian doctrine of eternal truths to all substances to be defensive and remedial. Desgabets, Schmalz has shown, was reacting to a potentially damaging objection to the eternal truths doctrine made by the canon and sceptic Simon Foucher (1644–1696) in a work he authored against Malebranche: *Critique de la Recherche de la vérité* (1675). Foucher took Descartes and Malebranche to task on the question of the longevity of eternal truths. What is to stop God, Foucher writes, omnipotently willing such truths and laws of nature to be subject to the “vicissitude of time” as opposed to eternal? Crucially for Foucher, if God decided to will such truths temporarily, “his will would be no less immutable”, as the temporary creations He makes to sustain the “beauty of the universe” do not imperil His divine omnipotence in any form, but are a product of omnipotent preference.⁷⁴ Desgabets responded to Foucher’s account in his *Critique de la Critique* (1675) by considering the question of the relationship between God’s will, created substance, and time. He posited that divine will and the substantial essences it creates are necessarily atemporal. Similar to his argument in the *Traité* that God’s will is outside “past, present, and future”, Desgabets’ writes in the *Critique* that He atemporally institutes the “essences, natures, and truths” of substances which similarly exist outside of time, unlike the “anterior and posterior parts” or modes of appearance and movement.⁷⁵ As he writes in the *Traité*, “it is a contradiction to say that they [substances] can lose the being that God has given them”.⁷⁶ God would contradict Himself in eternally and simultaneously willing that something be created and destroyed, and God cannot be self-contradictory.⁷⁷

As Schmalz recognises, however, Desgabets’ demarcation between atemporal substances and temporal modes goes well beyond Descartes’ own metaphysics in saying that “the essence of matter has an atemporal existence that sets it apart from particular bodies in time”, viewing bodily extension as an immutable and eternal quality.⁷⁸ Descartes never suggested that his idea of eternal truths be extended so far. Schmalz has persuasively shown the philosophical and defensive reasons for Desgabets’ enlargement of the eternal truths doctrine, particularly in relation to Foucher, but I wish to further underline the theological motivations for it which have not been as adequately discussed. These motivations can be helpfully bracketed under two categories: Desgabets’ desire to square scholastic, scriptural, and patristic sources with Cartesian metaphysics, and his wider reformist zeal to alter the way in which theologians interact with reason and philosophical discovery.

Regarding Desgabets’ use of sources, it is clear that he believes that indefectibility squares wholly with Church historical *auctoritas*. In the *Considérations*, he emphasises that the annihilation of matter was “unknown to Scripture and all antiquity”.⁷⁹ In Chapter ten of the *Traité*, Desgabets goes into more depth to conclusively demonstrate

that annihilation of substance is not supported by Church Tradition. For example, he notes the potential objection that both Genesis 1 (“In the beginning [*in principio*] God created Heaven and Earth”) and Chapter thirty-two of Augustine’s *Soliloquies* (“God from the beginning of time created spiritual and corporeal creatures”) heavily suggest that God created substances in time, and that substances on Desgabets’ reading are thus temporal and liable to destruction.⁸⁰ The Benedictine counters by emphasising that the Church Fathers disagreed about the meaning of Genesis’ *in principio*, and it cannot therefore be uncomplicatedly taken as shorthand for “within time”; it simply signals the creation of the Heavens and not the beginning of time itself. More positively, Desgabets argues that Augustine’s statement in the *Soliloquies* should be taken to mean that substance itself has a life before time and the time Augustine refers to begins after eternal, pre-existing matter was formed into specific permutations by God when “time has begun to be a measure of their existence” in the way we comprehend.⁸¹ Desgabets also explicitly credits as influences the Thomist doctrine that a modal property of a body *non es ens sed entis* alongside the medieval Scholastic Henry of Ghent and his idea of creatures having a “certain indefectibility” which is indestructible and has an existence “independent of time”.⁸² Desgabets as both a Cartesian and Catholic theologian well-trained in scholastic and scriptural discourse considers the sources of Church *authoritas* and ultimately concludes that extending the Cartesian notion of eternal truths to all extended, eternal substances is the only theologically legitimate way forward.

Concerning Desgabets’ wider vision for a reformed theological method, we have already seen how he required divines to take more seriously the demands of reason when considering their theological argument. Interestingly, in the *Critique de la Critique*, whilst defending his variant of Descartes’ eternal truths doctrine from Foucher, this criticism rears its head once again. This time, however, it is directed at Descartes’ own understanding of divine omnipotence:

Monsieur Descartes was so convinced of his principle as to have been embarrassed by it having agreed that God might have able to change the essences of things, prevent that two and two equal four, and other such things that can only be regarded chimerical [...]. [Surely] it is not impossible to [...] defend the rights of God without shuttering the lights of natural reason of which he is the Author.⁸³

Desgabets was evidently unhappy with the ambiguities and lack of rationality he saw in Descartes’ account of divine power, believing that if it were to be defensible it had to be more rational. In the *Avertissement* to the *Critique*, Desgabets mounts a polemic against Foucher and the other “academicians” for subscribing to a form of scepticism which unacceptably holds that we can know neither “body nor soul” by reason and whose fideism in theology legitimates the attacks upon religion by impious *libertins* sceptical of the immortal soul. As he did in the *Considérations*, Desgabets welcomes a new contemporary age of discovery, in which we can now separate the obscure from the clear in our theological judgement.⁸⁴ A corollary of this, then, is that Descartes’ account of omnipotence is unfortunately akin to such unambitious theology in shuttering the “lights” of reason and not going far enough to establish the rational operation of divine power and eternal truths. Desgabets’ remedy of interrogating and fleshing out the relationship between rationally comprehensible Cartesian extension and eternity should thus be seen in the context of a reformist zeal to prevent his fellow theologians (and Cartesians) relying too heavily upon theological fideism.

The implications Desgabets' desire for certainty in theological reflection had for his eucharistic metaphysics are twofold. First, Desgabets' recognised God to have restricted His power *viz* transubstantiation: He can only affect a miraculous union of Christ's soul to the bread's matter (which is eternal and thus indestructible) to *convert* the Host's substance. Even miraculously, God could not act during consecration to annihilate the matter as this would violate His eternal will. Second, epistemologically, we can have certainty that Scotist adduction theory is incorrect. More positively, we can certainly know that what occurs during consecration is a conversion of the bread's substantial form into Christ. In sum, Desgabets delimits the mystery of the sacrament by using his philosophy of indefectibility to ascertain certainty concerning the process of consecration in a way contrary to Descartes' belief that his example of the Eucharist is simply the most probable.⁸⁵ Desgabets, unlike Descartes, possessed a desire to explore in detail the implications Cartesian metaphysics had for the way in which Church theologians explored mysteries of faith, and possessed a more developed theological acumen and comprehension of Church Tradition, which emboldened him to be more assertive about the ways in which Cartesianism was the only legitimate heir to the thinking of the historical Church on eucharistic matters.

This part of Desgabets' Eucharist thought evidences his faith in new philosophical conclusions about indefectibility and their harmony with elements of Church *auctoritas*. I now turn to his understanding of the union between Christ's soul and the bread's matter, which evinces an even stronger belief in the persuasiveness of a revised version of Scholasticism, with equally important implications for understanding the ways in which theology and his scholastic learning became tools for Desgabets to both fortify and amend Cartesian metaphysics in a way which went beyond Descartes' own doctrine.

Desgabets and the soul as substantial form

Desgabets viewed his eucharistic work as a complement to elements of Scholasticism. For example, in the *Considérations*, he endorses the Thomist notion of the necessity of the bread's quantity remaining after consecration.⁸⁶ There is, however, another largely unexplored area in which Desgabets synthesises scholastic philosophy with his own eucharistic metaphysics: his conception of the soul as a substantial form.

Descartes exempted the rational soul from his general rejection of substantial form as an independent entity existing separately from matter (*per* Aristotelian hylomorphism).⁸⁷ He states to Henricus Regius (1598–1679) that the soul is “the true substantial form of the human being”.⁸⁸ Descartes, however, is equivocal as to whether the soul's union to the body constitutes a singular *ens per se*. In 1641, Descartes writes to Regius that the soul and body are “incomplete substances” and that, together, they constitute an “*ens per se*”; he also repeats this notion to Princess Elisabeth and in the *Fourth Replies*.⁸⁹ The scholarly consensus, however, is that Descartes did not, overall, view the soul as being the metaphysical unifier of itself and the body, producing a singular being.⁹⁰ Robert Pasnau, for example, argues that Descartes never publicly argued this position in any of his published work; conversely, he argued contrary to it. Pasnau, treating Descartes' views on the ontology of human bodies, cites his argument in the *Passions of the Soul* (1649) that “the difference between the body of a living and dead man” is the same as that of a working watch and the “same watch or machine” when it is broken.⁹¹ He concludes from this that, given

Descartes held there to be a shared identity between a living body and a dead one (i.e. one without a soul), he opted for a mechanistic understanding of what constitutes a body in physical terms, and rejected the metaphysical position that the soul *qua* substantial form is the body's defining ontological attribute.⁹² It appears that, in the *Passions* (his last work), Descartes sought to give a final, strongly mechanist interpretation of bodily identity which offset his private metaphysical equivocation.

Desgabets, however, did view the union between Christ's soul and the bread's matter in the Host in metaphysical terms as constituting an *ens per se*. He tells Pastel that the soul and body of Christ are united "as one single body".⁹³ This position is derived from his loyalty to the scholastic maxim *forma dat esse rei*. Desgabets, an educated Catholic philosopher, would have read Scholastics who held that the soul and body form a single *ens* (argued most explicitly by Francisco Suarez, 1548–1617⁹⁴), and come across Aquinas' prioritisation of formal cause in the *Summa*.⁹⁵ Armogathe notes Desgabets' indebtedness to this maxim, but I wish to more explicitly consider how holding it constitutes an outright departure from Descartes' own conclusions, and the importance recognising this has for how we understand any *theologia cartesiana*.⁹⁶ In holding Christ's Real Presence in the Host (a cornerstone of eucharistic theology) to be occasioned by a union between His soul as substantial form and the bread's matter – resulting in Christ's presence as a singular *ens* – Desgabets illustrates that there was a complex interplay and sometime tension between the "theological" and "Cartesian" elements of *theologia cartesiania*, which even the Benedictine could not fully sublimate. Concerning indefectibility, Desgabets understood that Cartesianism required theologians to reflect upon their own disciplinary practices and ultimately be more emboldened and rational in their theological conclusions. Conversely, however, his continuing loyalty to *forms dat esse rei* demonstrates that some of Descartes' positions, such as the soul not being a singular *ens per se*, had to be culled and replaced with more orthodox scholastic thinking if Cartesianism was to be theologically palatable. In short, Desgabets' *theologia cartesiana* gave greater accommodation to and had a greater need for Church Scholasticism than Descartes himself was willing to acknowledge.

Desgabets' empiricism and the eucharist

Notwithstanding this scholastic deviation on Desgabets' part from Descartes' understanding of the relationship between Christ's soul and the bread's matter, there were other areas in which he adheres to the fundamentals of Cartesian eucharistic metaphysics: one notable example of this was his rejection of real accidents inhering apart from substantial form.⁹⁷ The necessity of such a rejection for Desgabets, however, resulted from his empiricism, which is at first sight distinctly non-Cartesian in character. Patricia Easton argues that Desgabets "strongly rejected the rationalist epistemology which often dominates in Descartes, and argued that Descartes's own principles favour a sensory foundation for knowledge".⁹⁸ This is clear in the *Supplément à la Philosophie de M. Descartes*: Desgabets explicitly rejects Descartes' "hyperbolic doubt" (i.e. his belief that sensory information should be deemed untrustworthy) and rationalist position "that the soul is a lot better known than the body".⁹⁹ In positing that our senses allow us to "know ourselves intuitively" and give us certain ideas and perceptions, Desgabets refutes a Cartesian epistemology that prioritises *a priori* knowledge over that gained by perception.¹⁰⁰ Easton, however, does still categorise

Desgabets' epistemology as a "Cartesian Empiricism", given that it holds with Descartes that things are categorised by "extrinsic denomination" (i.e. are giving their status as individual objects) by internal mental processes, whilst at the same time taking the more empiricist line that the soul "knows itself by the senses" and that all rational consideration of an object's state requires that its matter and extension are first known in the senses before then being categorised.¹⁰¹ This is a convincing argument, but examination of Desgabets' Cartesian Empiricism in the context of his eucharistic thought is helpful in further delineating the ways in which Desgabets' empiricism further breaks from Descartes' own metaphysics.

Desgabets' empiricism concerning the Eucharist is demonstrated by the negative epistemic consequences he believes real accidents necessitate. Their existence means the senses could deceive us as to whether there were "truly men on Earth [...] a true world, a true religion".¹⁰² The contrasts with Descartes are several. First, Descartes held in the *Fourth Replies* that he did not deny that real accidents could exist, but that they were philosophically unnecessary and of no use to him.¹⁰³ Desgabets' empiricism, however, requires him to state emphatically that real accidents *cannot* exist: if they could, our senses and reason might deceive us in a way surpassing all "Pyrrhonist excesses".¹⁰⁴ Second, Descartes accepted God's absolute omnipotence in his own treatment of real accidents: he wrote to Arnauld that accidents "can be separated from substance by the power of God".¹⁰⁵ Desgabets, as he did with indefectibility, discerns divine self-limitation of omnipotence in this regard. He rejects his fellow Cartesian Jacques Rohault's (1618–1672) argument that God's intervention supports our unchanged perceptions of the Host.¹⁰⁶ For Desgabets, the dispositions of matter that constitute the modes of the Host must actually persist after consecration, affecting our senses just as they did before. The possibility of God interfering with our sensory perceptions compromises their ability to provide certain knowledge.¹⁰⁷ This knowledge aids faith: it prevents us from doubting the "true religion" and whether anyone actually exists to return God's love.¹⁰⁸ The implication here is that God rules out interfering with our senses to preserve our faith in Him. For Desgabets, the only permissible theological conclusion is that real accidents simply cannot exist apart from their substances.

To be sure, Desgabets does recognise the mysteriousness of the eucharistic rite. We cannot perceive the actual process whereby Christ's soul and the bread's matter are united: we "discover it by faith and not by the senses".¹⁰⁹ However, he categorises this as an exception to the rule: the senses of those who have had faith in this part of the eucharistic mystery "were not misled' more generally".¹¹⁰ Desgabets' meaning here is vague, but the most plausible interpretation of this statement is that it references his preceding argument for the veridical and definitively non-occasionalist nature of our perceptions of the Host's appearance. Ultimately, Desgabets' blend of empiricist refusal to countenance the idea of real accidents and uncompromising support for the theological necessity of refuting real accidents leads him, once again, to be more assertive than Descartes in stating what we can epistemically *know* (not just conjecture) about the Eucharist; an assertiveness founded upon an imperative for preserving Catholic belief in God and His Creation. Desgabets forges a direct link between empiricism and the security of Catholic belief, and when confronted by the choice between fidelity to the strict letter of Descartes' metaphysics and the preservation of such a link, it is unsurprising that Desgabets chooses the latter. Whilst unsurprising, it remains vitally important, however, for our understanding of Desgabets and the reception of early Cartesianism

more generally to note that such theological preoccupations equally gave Desgabets licence to be more ambitious and conclusive about the proper model of the Eucharist than Descartes was able to be.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Desgabets was emboldened by his theological background and priorities to undertake what Descartes had not wished to: a public and detailed discussion of the relationship between Cartesian metaphysics and the *auctoritas* of the historical Church. Such a discussion gave Desgabets the impetus to both alter Descartes' own philosophy when its conclusions were not agreeable to Church theology (as we have seen he did regarding substantial form and empiricism), and to be more ambitious in presenting his version of Cartesian eucharistic thought as the sole means to attain greater theological knowledge and reform the intellectually unambitious theological *status quo* of the Catholic Church. Recovering the intellectual tension, compromise, and ambition inherent in Desgabets' *theologia cartesiana* demonstrates "new" philosophical Cartesianism did not easily or wholly supplant the "old" theological and scholastic authorities it was often seen as contradicting. For committed Cartesian theologians like Desgabets, Cartesianism required such theological authorities to provide for it an intellectual foundation and certitude that Descartes himself was unable to bequeath.

Notes

1. See Ariew, *Descartes and the Last Scholastics*, 140–144. Ariew has in his sights here the positions of e.g. Bouillier (e.g. *Histoire* I, 450) and Jolley (e.g. "Reception of Descartes' Philosophy").
2. Descartes, *Fourth Replies*, in Descartes, *Œuvres de Descartes* VII, 251. (hereafter e.g. Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 251). All translations in this article are my own unless otherwise indicated.
3. For other early French Cartesians' eucharistic thought, see: Nadler, "Arnauld, Descartes, and Transubstantiation" on Antoine Arnauld; Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, Armogathe, "Cartesianism and Eucharist Physics", Schmaltz, "Robert Desgabets", and Lennon, *The Battle of the Gods and Giants*, on Robert Desgabets.
4. Descartes, Letter to Marin de Mersenne, (6 May 1630) AT I, 130.
5. See generally Schmaltz, *Radical Cartesianism*; Adriaenssen, "Scholastic Heritage".
6. Desgabets, *Supplément*, in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophiques Inédites*, 156.
7. For the first characterisation, see Watson, "Transubstantiation", 136. For the second, see Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 86–113.
8. Ariew, "Descartes and Pascal", 401.
9. Schmaltz, *Radical Cartesianism*, 18; Schmaltz, "Robert Desgabets", 351.
10. For a helpful general treatment of the Council of Trent and its aims, see O'Malley, *Trent*.
11. Waterworth, *Canons and Decrees*, 76. Desgabets at several points in the *Considérations* (e.g. 5, 14) intimates his approach as integral for the rejection of the Lutheran position.
12. For examples of this Thomist-Aristotelian lexicon, see e.g. Desgabets, *Considérations*, 11.
13. *Ibid.*
14. For Descartes' "continuing surfaces" explanation, see Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 247–56. For Descartes on sense perception, see Descartes, *Dioptrics* AT VI, 130.
15. Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 251.
16. *Ibid.*, 197. An equally confident tone is apparent in Descartes' letter to Marin Mersenne (31 March 1641) AT III, 349.

17. See Descartes, Letter to Denis Mesland (9 February 1645) AT IV, 165.
18. *Ibid.*, 168.
19. See Ariew, *Descartes and the First Cartesians*, 124.
20. On the censorship of Descartes for his eucharistic views, see Ariew, *Descartes and the Last Scholastics*, 142.
21. See Bouillier, *Histoire* I, 330. The most detailed discussion of Desgabets' life remains the "Chapitre Préliminaire" in Lemaire, *Le cartésianisme*, 39–59.
22. For further discussion of the context and proceedings of Montmor's conferences, see Roux, "Cartesian Experimentalism", 59.
23. See Lemaire, *Le cartésianisme*, 26. For biographies of other Cartesian Benedictines, see e.g. François, *Bibliothèque générale* III, 204 for Antoine Vinot (1640–1679) and IV, 172 for Jean Oudet (1685–1737).
24. On Retz (whose birth name was Jean de Gondi) and the conferences at Commercy, see Cousin, *Fragments*, 114–29; Retz, *Œuvres* IX, 209–364.
25. Desgabets, Letter to Clerelier (July 1671), quoted in Lemaire, *Le cartésianisme*, 278.
26. See Desgabets, Letter to Mabillon (17 March 1674), in Thuillier, *Ouvrages Posthumes* I, 201–4.
27. These are housed between the Bibliothèque d'Épinal and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. For an exhaustive list, see Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 120–32.
28. Viogué, F. Letter to Clerelier (March 1654), quoted from Lemaire, *Le cartésianisme*, 104. For Descartes on extension, see Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* AT VIII, 42. For the Thomist position that Christ is not locally but sacramentally present in the Host, see S.T III.q.75.a.2.ad.3 in Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* LVIII, 109.
29. Viogué, Letter to Clerelier (March 1654), quoted from Lemaire, *Le cartésianisme*, 105.
30. Pastel, "Instances" in (compiler/s unknown) Français 13262, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, "Recueil de lettres", 286–304.
31. See Desgabets, "Réponse" in *ibid.*, 304–33.
32. Cousin, *Fragments*, 168.
33. Desgabets, MS Épinal 43, BMI Épinal, "Dissertation", 1–49.
34. For a nuanced comparison of Scotist adduction theory and Thomist conversion theory, see McCord Adams, *Later Medieval Theories*, 137–52; for the Thomist position on sacramental presence see endnote 28. For Descartes' affirmation that Christ is sacramentally present, see Descartes, *Fourth Replies*, AT VII, 251.
35. See Desgabets, "Dissertation", 13.
36. See Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 96.
37. Desgabets, "Second Dissertation", 69.
38. For evidence of this see Desgabets, MS Épinal 43, BMI Épinal, "Traité", 216.
39. See Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 105.
40. See Arnauld, *Examen*. Though, for him, any speculation on the details of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist was heterodox: see e.g. Arnauld, *Examen*, 32–3.
41. Arnauld, "Lettre à M***" (October 1699), in Arnauld, *Œuvres* I, 670; see Arnauld's report of Nicole's judgement to the same M*** (November 1699) in *ibid.*, 671.
42. Desgabets expresses his annoyance, and gives an account of the events leading to the publication, in a letter to the Bishop Bossuet (September 1671), which can be found in Lemaire, *Le cartésianisme*, 379.
43. See letter from the *procureur général* of the Benedictines to Desgabets (September 1671), in which he quotes Ferrier's language; an extract is replicated in Lemaire, P. *Le cartésianisme*, 126.
44. See Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 105. Desgabets did continue to write on theology privately: see, for example, the 1671 "Traité" referenced in endnote 38.
45. Desgabets, "La Philosophie eucharistique", 1 V.
46. Desgabets, *Considérations*, 5.
47. See Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 248–9, for his rejection of real accidents as a necessary explanation of the Eucharist. For Desgabets' rejection of real accidents, see Desgabets, *Considérations*, 8.
48. Augustine, "Homily 29", in Augustine, *Homilies*, 493.

49. Augustine, *Advantage of Believing*, 137.
50. For more on the *aspectus mentis*, see Kloos, *Augustine's Transformation*, 167.
51. Augustine, *Revisions*, 66.
52. Kenney, "Faith and Reason", 285.
53. See. ST.I.q.1.a.5, in Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 17.
54. Waterworth, *Canons and Decrees*, 76.
55. Desgabets, "La Philosophie Eucharistique", 52 V.
56. Desgabets, *Considérations*, 5.
57. Ibid., 3. Desgabets is likely referring to chapter XIII of John of Damascus' *Exposition*.
58. Desgabets, "Réponse", 305.
59. Desgabets, "Second Dissertation", 43.
60. See Desgabets, "La Philosophie Eucharistique", 5 V-12 R ; Desgabets, *Considérations*, 3.
61. Desgabets, "La Philosophie Eucharistique", 14 R.
62. Desgabets, "La Philosophie Eucharistique", 76 V.
63. Schmalz, *Radical Cartesianism*, 40. See also Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 39.
64. Desgabets, "La Philosophie Eucharistique", 12 R.
65. For Descartes' characterisation of Scholasticism as incompatible with Catholic theology, see Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 254.
66. A complete version of the "Traité" is available in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophiques Inédites*, 15–98.
67. See Desgabets to Malebranche (September 1674), in Malebranche, *Œuvres Complètes* II, 85.
68. Easton, "Desgabets' Indefectibility Thesis", 25.
69. See *ibid.*; Easton, "Robert Desgabets", 39–62; Schmalz, *Radical Cartesianism*, 88–102.
70. Faye, "The Cartesianism of Desgabets", 199.
71. Descartes to Mersenne (April 1630) AT I, 145. For more on Descartes' doctrine of eternal truths, see Curley, "Descartes".
72. See Desgabets' preface to the "Traité" in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophiques Inédites*, 15.
73. For a discussion of temporality in Desgabets' indefectibility thesis, see Easton, "Robert Desgabets", 30–31.
74. Foucher, *Critique*, 30.
75. Desgabets, "Traité", in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophiques Inédites*, 21, 15; Desgabets, *Critique de la Critique*, 84.
76. Desgabets, "Traité" in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophique Inédites*, 21.
77. Descartes to Arnauld (July 1648) AT V, 224.
78. Schamlitz, *Radical Cartesianism*, 96.
79. Desgabets, *Considérations*, 5.
80. Desgabets, "Traité", 62.
81. *Ibid.*
82. For the reflection on Thomist treatment of modality, see *ibid.*, 81. For Henry of Ghent's endorsement of a form of indefectibility, see *ibid.*, 26.
83. Desgabets, *Critique*, 79. Translation from Jordan, *Naked Wax and Necessary Existence*, 480.
84. *Ibid.*, 15, 16.
85. For Descartes' avowal of probability, see *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 249.
86. See Desgabets, *Considérations*, 7.
87. For substantial form and Descartes' rejection of the concept, see Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 549–73. For Aristotelian hylomorphism generally, see Manning, *Matter and Form*.
88. Descartes to Regius (January 1642) AT II, 367.
89. See Descartes to Regius (December 1641) AT III, 460; Descartes to Princess Elisabeth (June 1643) AT III, 693; Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 223.
90. See Pasnau, "Form, Substance, and Mechanism"; Schamlitz, "Substantial Forms as Causes", 147–8; Rozemond, *Descartes's Dualism*, 151–5.
91. See Descartes, *Passions of the Soul* AT XI, 330–1.
92. Pasnau, "Form, Substance, and Mechanism", 57.
93. Desgabets, "Réponse", 310.

94. See Suarez, “Metaphysical Disputation XV”, esp. sect. 6, 20.
95. See S.T. I.q.5.a.5, in Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II, 75.
96. See Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 92.
97. See Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 249.
98. Easton, “Robert Desgabets” (*Stanford Encyclopaedia*). For a more detailed examination of Desgabets’ empiricism, see Easton, “Myth of Cartesian Rationalism”, 116–90.
99. Desgabets, “Supplément”, in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophiques Inédites*, 177. For Descartes on hyperbolic doubt, see Descartes, *Meditations* AT VII, 17–34. For Desgabets’ rejection of it, see Desgabets, “Supplément” in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophiques Inédites*, 170.
100. Desgabets, “Supplément” in Desgabets, *Œuvres Philosophiques Inédites*, 175.
101. Easton, “Robert Desgabets on the Physics and Metaphysics of Blood Transfusion”, 197.
102. *Ibid.*, 12.
103. See Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 248.
104. Desgabets, *Considérations*, 12.
105. Descartes, *Fourth Replies* AT VII, 249.
106. See Rohault, *Entretiens*, 124.
107. See Desgabets, MS Épinal 43, BMI Épinal, “Troisième dissertation théologique”, 157. For a discussion of Desgabets and Rohault’s debate on this point, see Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana*, 110–11.
108. Desgabets, *Considérations*, 12.
109. *Ibid.*, 14.
110. *Ibid.*

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