

unsurprisingly, Prémontval's *Philosophical Views* was placed on the index of prohibited books in 1761.<sup>51</sup>

Given the controversy surrounding his unorthodox views, it is also unsurprising that Prémontval was passed over for the position of censor of historical books, for which he was proposed in 1758.<sup>52</sup> Shortly thereafter he put aside his work in philosophy and took on a different project, which sought to examine—and fiercely critique—the use of French by scholars in Germany. As a vehicle for this, Prémontval established a new periodical, *Préservatif contre la corruption de la langue françoise* [Preservative against the corruption of the French language], which ran from 1759 until his death five years later.<sup>53</sup> A principal target was Formey, who was savaged not for his philosophical views but for his writing style and fitness to lead the Academy.<sup>54</sup> After several years, in the face of declining public interest in the invectives of his *Preservative* as well as increasing pressure from allies and academicians concerned that he was harming public perception of the Academy by his tireless attacks on its perpetual secretary, Prémontval decided to rein himself in and make peace with Formey.<sup>55</sup>

The final year of Prémontval's life was also one of his most productive, resulting in him giving no fewer than twelve separate memoirs to the Academy between June 1763 and June 1764, half of which were devoted to sketching out a fourth solution to the Cartesian mind-body problem—a solution to which he gave the grand name of “psychocracy” (i.e., the dominion of the soul). But Prémontval's newfound burst of academic activity was not to last. On August 27, 1764, while dining with other savants at the house of the Russian envoy, he received the news (delivered in a slightly mocking tone by Euler, according to some)<sup>56</sup> that a chair of eloquence that Frederick II had established at a military school was to be offered to Toussaint, one of Prémontval's bitter enemies and against whom he had directed his *Rascal Panage* of 1750. Prémontval, who coveted the position, was said to be so aggravated by the news that on his way back home he developed a fever from which he did not recover, dying eight days later on September 3.

### “A CHAOS OF METAPHYSICS”

As the Academy's perpetual secretary, the task of delivering Prémontval's eulogy fell to Formey. Despite the acrimony that had existed between them for much of Prémontval's time as an academician, Formey's eulogy was largely balanced and fair. He praised Prémontval's ability to identify weaknesses, gratuitous assumptions, and equivocations in the most respected hypotheses, and stated “No-one knew better than he how to follow the thread of an analysis, handle distinctions, and sometimes extract gold from the mud,

though much more often extract mud from what had hitherto been regarded as gold.”<sup>57</sup> There were, he said, two things that prevented Prémontval from fulfilling his true potential: first, that he was only able to attend to his projects so long as he maintained an extreme passion for them, and second, hardly ever being able to maintain a cool head, he sometimes exaggerated the strength of his own arguments and the weaknesses of others. Regarding Prémontval’s principal philosophical work, the two-volume *Philosophical Views*, Formey asserted that “it is mainly about Leibnizianism and Wolffianism, whose principal doctrines excited in Mr. Prémontval a sentiment approaching indignation.”<sup>58</sup> This gave rise to the portrayal of Prémontval as a man who had, in one writer’s words, an “‘emotional aversion’ to Leibniz and Wolff,”<sup>59</sup> which is potentially misleading for two reasons. First, it suggests that Prémontval was especially hostile to Leibniz and Wolff, even though the works of Descartes, Locke, Malebranche, and Rousseau attracted his vituperation no less than did those of Leibniz and Wolff, and in some cases rather more: Prémontval’s treatment of Locke’s writings on education is especially vicious.<sup>60</sup> Second, to intimate that Prémontval was particularly affected by Leibniz and Wolff is to overlook the clear points of agreement between their respective philosophies. Prémontval himself openly acknowledged that he agreed with Leibniz and Wolff on several key points of doctrine, namely optimism, the existence of simple beings, and the principle of indiscernibles;<sup>61</sup> this should not go unnoted, even if Prémontval’s agreement on such matters often did not extend to his endorsing the doctrines in quite the way either Leibniz or Wolff had understood them.

Nevertheless it is fair to say that Prémontval’s philosophy is often best understood in relation to that of the dominant figures of Leibniz and Wolff. Nowhere is this clearer than in the matter of Prémontval’s ontology, which is detailed at the start of his essay, “The theology of being”:

That which exists is only a single being, or there are several beings.

If there is something that is only a single being and not several beings, I call it *simple being*.

If there is something that is several beings and not a single being, I call it *composite being*.

Every composite being, or every collection of several beings, is not a single being, but several beings...

*Several* presupposes the *unity* of that of which there are several.

*Several beings* presuppose the *unity of being*.

Several beings presuppose something that is only one being and not several beings.

Every composite presupposes the simple.

If there are beings, there are simple beings, and strictly speaking there are only simple beings.

That is, strictly speaking, every composite being is not a being, but a collection of several beings.

Lastly, I lay it down as an axiom *that a being is not several beings, but a single being*.<sup>62</sup>

Much of this reads like the opening sections of Leibniz's "Monadology,"<sup>63</sup> though Prémontval claims that his inspiration was not Leibniz but rather a brief passage on unity in a mathematics textbook written by Nicolas de Malezieu (1650–1727).<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, Prémontval makes a number of other claims that again map well on to those found in Leibniz's "Monadology," for example, that every simple is different from every other;<sup>65</sup> that every simple has a plurality (possibly even an infinity) of properties,<sup>66</sup> giving each simple being different degrees of force;<sup>67</sup> and that change in composites presupposes change in some or all of the simples that compose the composites.<sup>68</sup> Prémontval stops short of adopting a full-blown Leibnizian monadology by refusing to endow simples with a force or power to generate representations.<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, Prémontval is actually closer to a Wolffian ontology of simple substances than to a Leibnizian ontology of monads. Like Wolff, Prémontval supposes that extended bodies are composites of indivisible elements, that is, simples,<sup>70</sup> though unlike Wolff, who describes these elements as unextended "atoms of nature,"<sup>71</sup> Prémontval refuses to be drawn on whether the simples of the body have extension or not. To understand his reluctance, we should note that while he is adamant that the soul is not extended by virtue of the fact that it thinks and feels,<sup>72</sup> he is agnostic as to whether the simples that compose bodies can think, or feel, or neither (this being an issue he claims he is in no position to determine).<sup>73</sup>

Where Prémontval does depart quite significantly from both Leibniz and Wolff is over the origin and quantity of these simple substances. Leibniz and Wolff both claimed that whatever substances exist were brought into existence by God in a single act of creation and thereafter sustained in existence through a process of conservation or continued creation.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, both believed that as some possible substances are impossible (i.e., incompatible) with others, God freely chose one set of compossible substances, this being the most perfect of all possible sets that, when created, constitutes the best of all possible worlds.<sup>75</sup> Prémontval's account differs here in virtually every respect. He rejects the idea of creation outright, supposing instead that all beings exist of themselves, or necessarily. He also implicitly rejects the idea of impossibility when he claims that *all* possible beings exist, and exist necessarily. He is also cautious on the matter of optimism: while he accepts that the world is the best as regards that which depends upon God,

who ensures that the world contains as much perfection at each moment as is possible, he holds that it is not best as regards that which depends upon free beings, though he envisages these beings improving continuously under the influence of God, who acts out of necessity to remove as much imperfection from the whole as possible.

At the root of Prémontval's divergence from the Leibnizian/Wolffian position is his belief that God's principal (and indeed overriding) aim is to make all beings holy and happy as quickly as possible, as no other aim would be consistent with his perfect goodness.<sup>76</sup> Prémontval was incredulous at the oft-made suggestion that God could have made all happy and holy from the outset but opted not to do because it conflicted with more important considerations. To Leibniz's assertion that God did not will all to be virtuous and happy because such uniformity would rob the universe of variety,<sup>77</sup> Prémontval responded that a God prepared to put variety above virtue and happiness could not be perfectly good or indeed a God of love.<sup>78</sup> And to Malebranche's assertion that God prizes simplicity of means above all else, which meant *inter alia* using the fewest number of wills or miraculous interventions,<sup>79</sup> Prémontval responded that it would take just one act of will to establish as a general law that all be happy and holy. He added that if it turned out that such an effect could only be achieved by a perpetual series of miracles then a perfectly good God would perpetually perform these miracles in order to his realize his aim, being unprepared to subordinate it to any other considerations.<sup>80</sup>

Convinced that God would do nothing to compromise his aim of making all happy and holy, Prémontval notes that a creator God would have been capable of creating all beings happy and holy from the outset since such a state is not just possible in itself, in that it implies no contradiction, but also possible for God by dint of his omnipotence.<sup>81</sup> The fact that beings clearly had not been created this way suggested to Prémontval that God had not created beings at all and that therefore the doctrine of creation was false.<sup>82</sup> Although Prémontval offers no formal disproof of the doctrine, he does identify a number of further reasons not to endorse it. For example, he argues that to suppose God the creator of all is effectively to burden him with being the author of evil, as he would have created (and conserved) creatures that sin along with other evils.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Prémontval also notes, using none other than Formey as an authority, that the idea of creation was unknown in antiquity, even to early Christians, which would at least suggest that it cannot be (or should not be) an article of faith for Christians today.<sup>84</sup>

Having found good reasons not to accept the traditional doctrine of creation, Prémontval supposes instead that all existing beings are uncreated, that is, exist of themselves, or necessarily, and so have always existed and always will exist.<sup>85</sup> Although the property of aseity (existing of oneself) was

traditionally granted only to God, Prémontval extends it to *all* possible beings on the grounds that it is absurd to suppose that some possible beings would have it, and so exist necessarily, while others would not, and so not exist at all.<sup>86</sup> Thus what exists does not exist because of some divine choice, though Prémontval claims that if God were a creator then the end result would have been the same in any case, as his perfect goodness would have prevented him from refusing existence to any possible being, and hence he would have chosen to create all of them.<sup>87</sup>

The idea that every possible being exists of itself, which Prémontval terms the principle of universal aseity,<sup>88</sup> forms the basis of his novel proof for the existence of God. The proof begins with the claim that atheists are committed to the principle of aseity, which holds that existing things exist of themselves. Although Prémontval does not identify any particular atheists who endorsed it, it is likely he has in mind Epicurus and his followers, who posited an infinity of uncreated atoms moving randomly through an uncreated void.<sup>89</sup> Since such thinkers would accept that existing things exist of themselves, Prémontval reckoned they should also accept that aseity is universal, extending to all possibles, for the aforementioned reason (that it would be absurd to think that some possible beings have it while others do not). On the assumption that the atheist would have to concede this point, Prémontval finishes off his proof by arguing that as an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good God is among the number of possible beings, as he implies no contradiction, it follows that he too exists, and necessarily, consequently, the atheist is compelled by his own principle to admit the existence of God.<sup>90</sup> Prémontval's proof is unusual in that it seeks to start from premises the atheist would accept, and as such reveals a degree of understanding of the atheist position lacking in other proofs. Since the proof rests upon an atheist principle, it is not implausible to conjecture that it captures the sort of reasoning that led Prémontval back to theism from the atheistic Pyrrhonism of his youth.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that he did not consider the supposedly "atheist" principle of universal aseity to be in any way inconsistent with theism.

The God that emerges from Prémontval's proof differs from the God of Leibniz and Wolff (and many other theists) in that he is "the creator only of order, and of the good which results from it."<sup>92</sup> On this account, God presides over a world of beings he did not create and which together lack any inherent order and harmony.<sup>93</sup> Prémontval refers to this disorderly collection of beings as "matter" and describes it as "supreme wickedness," not because it is driven to evil acts by any understanding or will but because it is inherently chaotic and disorderly, and as such is not as the supreme goodness of God would want it to be.<sup>94</sup> God therefore submits it to order as best he can. Such a view is likely indebted to the account in Plato's *Timaeus* of the formation of the cosmos by a craftsman, the demiurge, who acts on preexisting matter,

which is by nature disorderly, chaotic, and unpredictable. In conferring order upon this material the demiurge seeks to bring about the best arrangement, though as the material has natural properties that are in opposition to the order imposed on it, the effects of these properties can only be partially subjugated by the demiurge, never wholly eradicated.<sup>95</sup> On Prémontval's account, the natural property that prevents God simply imposing the order he wants on the collection of beings (matter) is the free will with which some or all beings are naturally endowed, as this puts them beyond God's direct control.

What lies behind such thinking is Prémontval's endorsement of what would later be termed a libertarian conception of free will, according to which a choice is truly free if it is not in any way determined beforehand, either by circumstances or by character; accordingly, a free choice is one that could quite literally have been otherwise even under exactly the same antecedent conditions.<sup>96</sup> Prémontval insists that only if choices are not determined or rendered inevitable either by circumstances or character—neither of which is under the control of an agent—can the agent be said to be the author of her choices and thus be held accountable for them, as morality demands.<sup>97</sup> To illustrate the difference between free and unfree choices, Prémontval devised the following thought experiment. Take any given choice and then suppose the world is annihilated and subsequently recreated exactly as it was immediately before the choice was made. Would the choice be the same the second time around, or the third, or fourth, etc.? If a being is genuinely free, Prémontval insists that it would sometimes make a different choice, thus reflecting the fact that it is not infallibly determined to one choice either by its circumstances or character.<sup>98</sup> If a being would always make the same choice in precisely the same circumstances, then it is devoid of free will and consequently its choices are necessary rather than contingent. Prémontval claims that this is the case with God who, on account of his perfect nature, would invariably act in the same way in the same circumstances, which is to say that he would always choose the best course of action.<sup>99</sup> God is therefore subject to necessity, not to some external necessity but rather the necessity of his own nature.

According to Prémontval, the free choices of beings function much like the random motion of Epicurean atoms, inasmuch as they inject chance into the universe, that is, undetermined and contingent actions.<sup>100</sup> This makes the future genuinely open and unknowable in advance, even to God. Prémontval echoes Socinus' belief that God does not stand outside time and so is unable to behold all the events of history in one timeless gaze,<sup>101</sup> and also holds that free choices are inherently unpredictable even to a temporal God because there is often quite literally no reason for them at all; this is not just the case for indifferent choices, where *ex hypothesi* there can be no reason to choose one alternative over another, but for the great majority of free choices.<sup>102</sup>

Prémontval was well aware that such thinking ran counter to the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason, which holds that there is a reason (in fact a complete reason) for each and every thing, event, or choice.<sup>103</sup> Unfazed, he undertook an examination of the principle and claimed that when formulating it, its supporters—Leibniz, Wolff, and their followers—either contradict themselves, give circular definitions, or beg the question.<sup>104</sup> However, Prémontval did not reject the principle of sufficient reason outright; he merely denied that it applied universally, as the Leibnizians and Wolffians claimed. While Prémontval accepted that there was always a sufficient reason for God's (necessary) choice, he denied that this was always the case for the choices of other beings that stemmed from their free will.<sup>105</sup>

Whereas philosophers had traditionally conceived free will as a divine gift, Prémontval insisted that it was more of an imperfection or curse in that it enables those who have it to go wrong as well as right.<sup>106</sup> Because this conflicts with God's principal aim of bringing about a harmonious whole in which all creatures are holy and happy, Prémontval supposed that if it had been possible for God to remove or override the free wills of human beings then he would have done so; the fact that he hadn't suggested it wasn't possible at all.<sup>107</sup> This meant that God always has been and always will be restricted to *guiding* and *influencing* these beings to his goal of universal happiness and holiness, which he seeks to bring about as swiftly as possible.<sup>108</sup> As the universe was still a long way from its perfected state, Prémontval was reluctant to claim, as Leibniz and Wolff had, that the world was the best *per se*. Instead, he stated that the world is the best in that which depends absolutely upon God, but not in that which depends upon free beings.<sup>109</sup> Prémontval is thus more accurately described as a meliorist rather than an optimist, even if there are clear strains of optimism in his thought. The difference between Prémontval and his German protagonists is evident when we consider the place of evil in the world. Whereas Leibniz and Wolff had envisaged evil as being part and parcel of the best system of things, and indeed as contributing to its perfection,<sup>110</sup> Prémontval sees it as something to be eliminated, as it detracts from the world's perfection. However, God cannot rid the world of evil in an instant (as that would be tantamount to making all holy and happy by fiat, which can be assumed impossible on the grounds that God would have done it if it wasn't) and so is restricted to doing so by degrees, as quickly as he can.<sup>111</sup> Because God is not in any way responsible for or implicated in the world's evil—either the inherent chaos of matter or the bad choices of free beings—and because he seeks to eliminate it as quickly as possible, Prémontval sees no reason to develop a Leibnizian-style theodicy, that is, a defense of God's justice in the face of the world's evil.

It is notable that Prémontval considers God's aim is to make *all* beings happy and holy, not just all human beings.<sup>112</sup> This brings nonhuman creatures

within the sphere of God's concern: a remarkable thought for early modern times, in which philosophers typically did not take the suffering of nonhuman creatures seriously, or at least as evidence against God's justice. Some, like Malebranche, simply denied that nonhuman creatures experience pain and suffering at all,<sup>113</sup> while others, such as Leibniz, accepted that animals experience pain while arguing that its intensity was so slight that it did not speak against God's justice.<sup>114</sup> By contrast, Prémontval insists not only that nonhuman creatures suffer as much as if not more than do human beings, but that this suffering is an evil to which God is not indifferent.<sup>115</sup> Quite how God will manifest his concern for nonhuman creatures is not spelled out, though Prémontval's talk of "developments," "improvements," and "progress" for all beings suggests that such creatures will someday undergo great changes to their own advantage,<sup>116</sup> so that they too will be happy and holy. This, presumably, will occur in the afterlife, as indeed it will for all humans. The idea that there will be an afterlife for animals, although unusual, is foreshadowed by Leibniz's claim—which Prémontval endorses—that animals and humans, *qua* simple beings, are naturally indestructible, and so do not experience true death.<sup>117</sup> While there has to be an element of conjecture when reconstructing Prémontval's views on the place of animals in God's plan, none is required to understand the place of humans therein, as he indicates support for the doctrine of universalism (which holds that all will ultimately be saved)<sup>118</sup> and firmly rejects the doctrine of eternal punishment.<sup>119</sup>

As noted at the outset, some of Prémontval's doctrines anticipate later developments. His belief that the future is genuinely undetermined and cannot be known in advance even by God anticipates the doctrine of open theism as defended, for example, by William Hasker, who explicitly rejects divine foreknowledge on the grounds that the future is open.<sup>120</sup> Prémontval's belief, that all beings exist just as necessarily as God, that God is the creator of the world's order rather than the world *per se*, and that God is restricted to acting on the world by influence rather than by fiat, anticipates the process theology/theodicy of David Ray Griffin, who describes God as creating out of a necessarily existing chaos of finite existents rather than out of nothing, and holds that God has the power to persuade and influence rather than coerce and control.<sup>121</sup> Finally, Prémontval's belief that God is not indifferent to the suffering of animals and will seek to rectify it anticipates the animal theodicy of Trent Dougherty, who argues that at least some animals will be perfected in the eschaton, a process that will defeat the evils they have suffered and grant them admission into heaven.<sup>122</sup> There is no evidence that Prémontval himself influenced the development of any of these modern doctrines; nevertheless, it remains the case that key elements of his philosophy, especially those connected with his philosophical theology, are more in line with modern thinking than they were with the thinking of his age, which denounced them

as heretical. Ironically, he expected just such an alignment, claiming that the age that would be most receptive to his philosophy was not the one in which he happened to live, and that therefore it would be for posterity to judge of the merit of his ideas.<sup>123</sup> Given that views very close to his own have been independently developed and are now seriously entertained, he may perhaps expect a warmer reception in our age than he got in his own.<sup>124</sup>

## NOTES

1. [Anon.], *Le Nécrologe des hommes célèbres de France. Tome second* (Maastricht: J. E. Dufour, 1775), 106.

2. MEM 6.

3. Francis Bacon, *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 371.

4. MEM 220.

5. St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul* (New York: Dover, 2003). The poem was written in the 16th century.

6. MEM 225.

7. See René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–1991), II: 12–5.

8. MEM 227.

9. MEM 227.

10. MEM 233.

11. MEM 355.

12. MEM 18.

13. MEM 19. One report claims that it was at this time he adopted the name Prémontval, which implies that this was not the name of his birth. I have found no evidence to support this, however. See [Anon.], *Biographie Universelle, Ancienne et Moderne. Tome trente-sixième* (Paris: L. G. Michaud, 1823), 45.

14. MEM 25.

15. Some are printed in MEM 34–43 and 45–7.

16. In order of publication, these are: *Discours sur l'utilité des mathématiques* (Paris: Antoine-Urbain Coutelier, 1742); *Discours sur la nature des quantités que les mathématiques ont pour objet* (Paris: Antoine-Urbain Coutelier, 1742); *Discours sur diverses notions préliminaires à l'étude des mathématiques* (Paris: Antoine-Urbain Coutelier, 1743); *Discours sur la nature du nombre* (Paris: Antoine-Urbain Coutelier, 1743).

17. The most scurrilous account is to be found in Denis Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* [Jacques the Fatalist], written between 1762 and 1780. There Diderot recalls that Pigeon was a pupil of a mathematics school Prémontval ran with a Mr. Gousse, and tells that "One of the teachers, Prémontval, fell in love with his pupil and in the midst of propositions concerning solid bodies inscribed within a sphere, a child was conceived." According to Diderot, this enraged Pigeon's father, and forced the two

lovers to flee, aided by their friend Gousse. See Denis Diderot, *Jacques the Fatalist and his Master*, trans. David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 55–6. While entertaining, Diderot’s account is entirely fictional: the character Gousse was not a real person (he was based on a Louis Goussier (1722–1799), who drew the plates for Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*), and Jean Pigeon died in 1739, five years before Prémontval left Paris with his daughter. It is also worth noting that Prémontval and Pigeon were childless.

18. MEM 347 and 363.

19. MEM 201.

20. See Beauzée, “Aux auteurs du journal,” in *Journal de Paris* 83 (March 24, 1778): 330–1. Prémontval himself claimed that his free mathematics lectures came to an end in 1744 because his apartment had fallen into disrepair, making it unsafe to hold further meetings there, and his search for new lodgings with a suitably large room proved unsuccessful as he could not afford the rents demanded. In the meantime, he says, rumors began to spread that his lectures had stopped due to his incapacity, his bad faith, or because they had been forbidden. See MEM 49–51.

21. [André-Pierre Leguay de Prémontval], *L’esprit de Fontenelle ou recueil de pensées tirées de ses ouvrages* (The Hague: Pierre Gosse, 1744).

22. MEM 200.

23. MEM 209–10.

24. Prémontval to Michaelis, August 30, 1754, in Johann Gottlieb Buhle, ed., *Literarischer Briefwechsel von Johann David Michaelis*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1794), I: 105.

25. Prémontval, *Memoires*.

26. André-Pierre Leguay de Prémontval, *Panagiana panurgica, ou le faux evangeliste* (The Hague: Jean Neaulme, 1750). The title alludes to Toussaint’s oft-used pseudonym, Panage, although *Les moeurs* was published anonymously.

27. [François Vincent Toussaint], *Les moeurs* (n.p.: n.p., 1748).

28. André-Pierre Leguay de Prémontval, *La monogamie, ou l’unité dans le mariage; ouvrage dans le quel on entreprend d’établir, contre le préjugé commun, l’exacte & parfaite conformité des trois loix, de la nature, de Moïse, & de Jesus-Christ, sur ce sujet*, 3 vols. (The Hague: Pierre van Cleef, 1751–2).

29. For further information, see Carol Blum, *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction, and Power in Eighteenth Century France* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002), especially chapter 5.

30. See König to Mauvertuis, November 24, 1750, in Achille Le Sueur, ed., *Mauvertuis et ses correspondants* (Paris: Champion, 1896), 123–6.

31. See VP I: 239–40.

32. See VP I: 275.

33. See VP I: 18–32. In his twelve years as a member, Prémontval attended 356 sessions of the Academy; see the registers held by the Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften under the shelfmarks I IV 31/06 – I IV 31/12. In that time he gave twenty-six memoirs.

34. See “Theotimus: fragment of a discourse read at the Academy, October 19, 1752.”

35. See “Thoughts on freedom,” and “Remark on Mr Wolff’s definition of the word ‘something’.”

36. See “Letters to Leonhard Euler and Louis Bertrand on Epicureanism.”

37. As it happens, the reason for Prémontval’s spurt of book publishing, namely his frustration early in 1754 at the Academy overlooking his work, evaporated soon after, as several of his memoirs from 1754, 1755, 1757, and 1758 were selected for publication in the Academy’s proceedings for those years.

38. See Buhle, *Literarischer Briefwechsel* I: 96.

39. PL.

40. André-Pierre Leguay de Prémontval, *Le Diogene de d’Alembert; ou Diogene décent: pensées libres sur l’home & sur les principaux objets des connoissances de l’home* (Berlin: n.p., 1754).

41. André-Pierre Leguay de Prémontval, *De Dieu et de la Religion: Suite du Diogene décent* (Frankfurt: n.p., 1754).

42. The two books were reissued together a year later under the title of *Le Diogene de d’Alembert; ou Diogene décent*.

43. [Samuel Formey], *Bibliothèque impartiale, pour les mois de Janvier et Février, MDCCLV. Tome XL. Première partie* (Göttingen and Leiden: Luzac, 1755), 111.

44. *Ibid.*, 110.

45. André-Pierre Leguay de Prémontval, *Du hazard sous l’empire de la providence* (Berlin: J. C. Kluter, 1755).

46. See Buhle, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, I: 96.

47. See *ibid.*, I: 142–3.

48. The first volume was published in March 1757, the second in June. See Buhle, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, I, 142–3. The two volumes were reprinted in 1761.

49. VP.

50. VP I: xxvi.

51. See [Anon.], *Index librorum prohibitorum juxta exemplar romanum jussu sanctissimi domini nostri* (Mechelen: P. J. Hanicq, 1838), 287–8.

52. See Euler’s letter to Maupertuis, December 16, 1758, in Le Sueur, *Maupertuis et ses correspondants*, 166.

53. For an account of the affair, see Avi Lifschitz, *Language & Enlightenment: The Berlin Debates of the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially chapter 6.

54. In 1767, years after the spat had been concluded, one of the directors of the Academy, the Marquis d’Argens (1704–1771), claimed that Prémontval had told him he was angry at Formey for preventing him receiving a pension from the Academy. See Jean Baptiste de Boyer d’Argens, *Histoire de l’esprit humain, ou mémoires secrets et universels de la republique des lettres. Tome VIII* (Berlin: Haude and Spener, 1767), 564.

55. See Prémontval to Formey, November 25, 1763; unpublished letter held by Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Kraków.

56. See Abbé Denina, *La Prusse littéraire sous Frederic II, ou histoire abrégée de la plupart des auteurs, des académiciens et des artistes qui sont nés ou qui ont vécu*

dans les états prussiens depuis MDCCXL jusqu'à MDCCLXXXVI. Par ordre alphab. Tome troisième et dernier (Berlin: H. A. Rottmann, 1791), 172.

57. Samuel Formey, "Eulogy of M. de Premontval," in *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres de Berlin Année MDCCLXV* (Berlin: Haude and Spener, 1767), 537.

58. *Ibid.*, 538.

59. Lifschitz, *Language & Enlightenment*, 158.

60. This did not go unnoticed by reviewers of Premontval's *De l'autorité de Locke dans La Science de l'Ame, surtout relativement à l'Enfance* (Berlin: Vogel, 1764). One reviewer wrote, "According to this discourse, Locke is a fool, a pitiful sophist, a nonsense-talker, a man without experience, without insight, without judgment. ... What to think of a philosopher who admits to having read and reread Locke for 25 years and who speaks like that!" [Anon.], *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France, depuis MDCCLXII jusqu'à nos jours. Tome second* (London: John Adamson, 1780), 34.

61. Buhle, *Literarischer Briefwechsel*, I: 101.

62. "The theology of being," 170.

63. See "Monadology" §§1–3 in LM 14.

64. See Nicolas de Malezieu, *Elémens de Géométrie de Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne* (Paris: Jean Boudot, 1705), 135.

65. "The theology of being," 171–2. Compare "Monadology" §9 in LM 15.

66. "The theology of being," 172–3. Compare "Monadology" §8 and §13 in LM 15–6.

67. "On psychocracy," 261.

68. "The theology of being," 174. Compare "Monadology" §8 in LM 15.

69. "The continuation of psychocracy," 283.

70. "On psychocracy," 248. Compare CG 146 (§182).

71. See CG 148 (§186).

72. "On psychocracy," 242.

73. "Theology of being," 177.

74. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Leibniz on God and Religion*, trans. Lloyd Strickland (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 76; Christian Wolff, *Theologia naturalis methodo scientifica pertractata. Pars prior, integrum systema complectens, qua existentia et attributa dei a posteriori demonstrantur* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: n.p., 1736), 749 (§760) and 828–9 (§844).

75. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. G. H. R. Parkinson, trans. Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Everyman, 1973), 145–6; Wolff, *Theologia naturalis*, 133 (§152) and 358 (§382).

76. "Thoughts on freedom," 25–8; "On chance under the rule of providence," 94–5; "Conclusion of psychocracy," 309.

77. See LM 204.

78. "Conclusion of psychocracy," 308.

79. See Nicolas Malebranche, *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, trans. Patrick Riley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 116–7.

80. "Thoughts on Freedom," 28.

81. "The theology of being," 181–2.
82. *Ibid.*, 182.
83. *Ibid.*, 181–2; "Conclusion of psychocracy," 301.
84. "Theology of being," 192 (note 51).
85. *Ibid.*, 184–7.
86. *Ibid.*, 187.
87. "The Diogenes of d'Alembert," 69.
88. "The theology of being," 184.
89. See Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Robert Drew Hicks, 2 vols. (New York: Witch Books, 2011), II: 300–1.
90. "The theology of being," 189 and 209–10.
91. Although it should be noted that prior to outlining the proof Prémontval claims that he knows of God's existence not through any argument but by feeling, and that the proof is for the benefit of those who lack that feeling. See "The theology of being," 181.
92. "Conclusion of psychocracy," 304.
93. "On chance under the rule of providence," 101–2.
94. "The theology of being," 199–200.
95. See Francis MacDonald Cornford, trans., *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 33 (*Timaeus* 29E–30A).
96. "Thoughts on freedom," 17.
97. *Ibid.*, 18–19.
98. *Ibid.*, 17; "On chance under the rule of providence," 116, and 119–22.
99. "On chance under the rule of providence," 120.
100. *Ibid.*, 101.
101. "Thoughts on freedom," 21.
102. "On chance under the rule of providence," 101.
103. See for example "Monadology" §32 in LM 20.
104. "On chance under the rule of providence," 102–12.
105. *Ibid.*, 103.
106. "Thoughts on freedom," 18 and 23.
107. *Ibid.*, 18.
108. "The theology of being," 207.
109. "On chance under the rule of providence," 94.
110. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Shorter Leibniz Texts*, trans. Lloyd Strickland (London: Continuum, 2006), 36–7; Wolff, *Theologia naturalis*, 632–3 (§675).
111. "The theology of being," 204 and 207.
112. "On chance under the rule of providence," 95.
113. See Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 494–5.
114. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*, trans. E. M. Huggard (Chicago: Open Court, 1985), 280–1.
115. "On the state of simple sensation," 236.
116. "The theology of being," 184 and 203–7.
117. *Ibid.*, 203. For Leibniz, see "Monadology" §77 in LM 30.

118. "The Diogenes of d'Alembert," 70.
119. "The theology of being," 184.
120. See William Hasker, *Providence, Evil and the Openness of God* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
121. See David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), and *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).
122. See Trent Dougherty, *The Problem of Animal Pain: A Theodicy for All Creatures Great and Small* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
123. "Thoughts on freedom," 12.
124. I here acknowledge my thanks to Daniel J. Cook for his helpful comments on a previous draft of this chapter.

## About the Texts and Translations

All of the texts Prémontval wrote for delivery in the Berlin Academy display a very distinctive style, typically bombastic, caustic, and dismissive. Prémontval was clearly comfortable with this style, adopting it even when writing essays not intended for oral delivery. In my translations I have not sought to soften these features of Prémontval's writing, largely because doing so would blunt what he wants to achieve, which is often to cajole, ridicule, and even embarrass his opponent into submission. In making the translations, I have consulted the surviving manuscripts of his philosophical writings, of which there are only three: "The theology of being," "On the physical self and moral self," and "On the state of simple sensation." In each case, the manuscript features the memoir Prémontval read at the Berlin Academy, and in each case, the memoir was revised prior to publication. All of the differences between the manuscripts and the published version of these memoirs are indicated in the endnotes.