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## *Religious Epistemology of Agnès Arnauld* (1593–1671)

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An abbess of the Jansenist convent at Port-Royal, Agnès Arnauld developed an apophatic philosophy of the divine attributes in her writings, especially in her controversial *Private Chaplet*. (Apophatic theology stresses the transcendence and unknowability of God.) Privileged negative attributes of God include inaccessibility, incomprehensibility, illimitability, and incommunicability. Authentic knowledge of God, recognizing the finitude of the human mind, underscores the unfathomable chasm between the perfect Creator and the all too imperfect creature. Even the traditional positive attributes of God are given an apophatic interpretation by the abbess. God's holiness, for example, is manifest in a radical otherness from the sinful humanity that attempts to approach God. The noetic agent does not arrive at the affirmation of these negative divine attributes through logical reflection. This illumination emerges as the fruit of contemplative adoration before the mystery of God, wherein the human self and its inadequate images of God undergo a spiritual annihilation.

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