

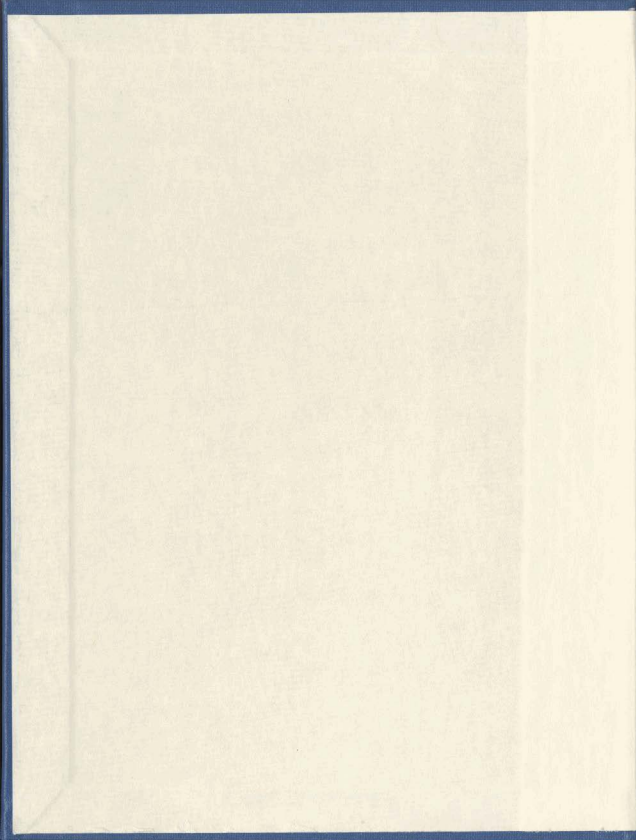
THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LEIBNIZ'S
RESPONSE TO OCCASIONALISM

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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The Philosophical Significance of Leibniz's Response to Occasionalism

by

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Abstract

Leibniz's disagreements with Malebranche are more than theologically significant. By tracing Leibniz's philosophical development, in response to the occasionalism of Malebranche and criticisms of Arnauld, the significance of Leibniz's response to Malebranche's criticism of the Scholastic concept of causation becomes evident. Moreover, as Leibniz recognized in his fully developed philosophy, his criticism of Malebranche had application more widely to Locke and Newton. Much of the eighteenth century movement from Hume to Kant had its predecessors in the seventeenth century debate between Malebranche and Leibniz: while Malebranche creates the context for Hume's critique of the ordinary concept of causation, Leibniz's response to Malebranche suggests the direction of Kant's response to Hume.

Introduction

This is a study of Leibniz's reaction and response to the 'occasionalism' of Malebranche. While Leibniz's disagreements with Malebranche may seem to be of merely theological significance, his attempts to differentiate himself from Malebranche prefigure and have probably influenced the direction of the great eighteenth century developments concerning the nature of causation in Hume and Kant. Thus, although Leibniz's attempts to differentiate himself from Malebranche do occur in the context of a theological debate, there is much more of interest to the history of modern philosophy here than a simple debate over God's dignity and power.

Since this study is focused on Malebranche, Leibniz, and their influence on the eighteenth century positions of Hume and Kant with respect to causality, it is divided into three chapters: one on Malebranche's philosophy with specific attention to his critique of the Scholastic concept of causation, one on the history of Leibniz's development as it arises in reaction to Malebranche and through the prompting of Arnauld, and one on its importance to the history of modern philosophy.

Chapter I offers an account of the occasionalism of Malebranche and Leibniz's initial sympathy with it, although with reservations. This chapter is focused on Malebranche's critique of the Scholastic concept of causation as it appears in The Search after Truth. It also is concerned with Leibniz's early statements about the philosophy of Malebranche in their correspondence. I have benefited from the work of Charles McCracken, who situates Malebranche in his proper context through a very full account

of Malebranche's relation to both the New Physics of the seventeenth century and the Scholastic Aristotelian tradition.

Chapter II presents a reading of the history of Leibniz's development as a reaction to Malebranche and through his confrontation with Arnauld. It covers a range of the Leibnizian corpus from the Discourse on Metaphysics through the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence to Leibniz's correspondence with Samuel Clarke. I have found Stuart Brown's recent article on Leibniz and Malebranche particularly helpful. In it he interprets the development of Leibniz's philosophy as a reaction to Malebranche through the prompting of Arnauld. Nicholas Jolley's work on Leibniz and Locke, and Ezio Vailati's account of the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence have been invaluable for the later reaction of Leibniz to Locke and Clarke.

Chapter III draws out the implications of Leibniz's development for the eighteenth century debate between Hume and Kant. Charles McCracken gives a very full account of Malebranche's relation to Hume; Donald Rutherford provides an intriguing interpretation of Leibniz's mature account of space, time, and intersubstantial causation; and Gottfried Martin provides a helpful interpretation of relations in Leibniz's philosophy with specific reference to space and time.

I have drawn together these matters in the following conclusion: this seventeenth century debate prefigures the eighteenth century discussion of causality in Hume and Kant. In so doing, I consider myself to have revealed a major philosophical significance of Leibniz's response to occasionalism. This is not just what it appears to be, a dispute between two theologians over God's dignity and power. It is a dispute of much more

philosophical significance. Leibniz's response to Malebranche prefigures what is arguably one of the most significant developments in the history of modern philosophy – the response of Kant to Hume.

Chapter I: Malebranche on Causation

What is the difference between the concepts of causation of Malebranche and Leibniz? This question deserves particular attention since Leibniz's disagreements with Malebranche are often presented as a mere theological dispute about God's dignity and wisdom when, much more significantly, the philosophy behind this debate prefigures (and has actually influenced) the famous eighteenth century debate over the nature of causation. Although much of this seventeenth century debate is theologically inspired, in the movement from Malebranche through Leibniz we can see a development away from the Cartesian concept of causation (where, for example, bodies are considered to be entirely passive and without causal force) toward the skepticism concerning the concept of causation in Hume or the subjective explanation of causation in the Kantian philosophy.

Much of the development of the concept of causation in the philosophy of Leibniz occurs within the context of the mind-body problem, which has its origin in the philosophy of Descartes. In his Meditations on First Philosophy Descartes separated mind, whose principle attribute is thought, and body, whose principle attribute is extension, as distinct substances that cannot interact with each other in any way. Much of Descartes' philosophy, including this substantive distinction between mind and body, is a reaction against Scholastic Aristotelianism. In The World, for example, Descartes highlights his difference from the Aristotelian tradition by focusing on their different

concepts of motion.¹ While a scientific Scholastic Aristotelian explanation of, for example, the decent of a rock after it has been thrown would be grounded in its inherent qualities or formal nature (the formal nature as an *immaterial* principle of unity and causal action), a Cartesian explanation would consist solely in *material* mechanical causes. Thus, instead of admitting a variety of inherent qualities as explanatory in the natural sciences, the Cartesian distinction between mind and body allows Cartesians to offer scientific explanations solely in terms of the mechanical interaction of the geometrical properties of matter.

Nicholas Malebranche, the 17th Century Augustinian Cartesian and contemporary of Leibniz, accepts Descartes' denial of mind-body interaction and takes this argument even further, beyond what Descartes had commonly been interpreted to argue², denying body-body (the external action of one body on another body) and mind-mind interaction (internal mental activity, such as my attempt to imagine a chimera) as well. Now,

¹ Descartes writes: "They admit themselves that the nature of their motion is very little understood. To render it in some way intelligible they have not yet been able to explain it more clearly than in these terms: *Motus est actus entis in potentia, prout in potentia est*. For me these words are so obscure that I am tempted to leave them in Latin because I cannot interpret them [...]. By contrast, the nature of the motion I mean to speak of here is so easy to know that the geometers themselves, who among all men are the most concerned to conceive very distinctly the things they study, have judged it simpler and more intelligible than the nature of their surfaces and lines – as is shown by the fact that they have explained 'line' as the motion of a point and 'surface' as the motion of a line" (Descartes, "The World", *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Trans. John Cottingham et al, pp. 93-94).

² As Malebranche correctly points out, Descartes also denied that bodies have any motive force of their own. Malebranche (*Elucidations of the Search after Truth*; *Elucidation* 15, p. 677) refers us to the occasionalist sounding articles 36 and 37 of Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* where Descartes states that God is the primary cause of motion, and identifies God's action in creating the universe with his action in preserving and maintaining the universe. McCracken draws attention to a passage from Descartes' correspondence with Princess Elizabeth that comes even closer to occasionalism: "He [Descartes] could, for example, declare to Princess Elizabeth that it would be contrary to God's sovereign perfection 'if something could happen in the world that did not come wholly from Him'. From this he concludes that 'God is the universal cause; He is likewise the total cause, and thus nothing can happen unless He wills it'" (Charles McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy*, p. 92).

although Malebranche's occasionalism may not have been either exclusively or even primarily designed to solve the problem of apparent mind-body interaction,³ it does provide an answer to this problem (as well as to the problems of body-body and mind-mind interaction).

Malebranche's occasionalism, much like Descartes' philosophy, can be understood as a reaction against the Scholastic concept of nature. According to Charles McCracken, it is best understood when it is opposed to the new physics of the Seventeenth Century.⁴ In fact, occasionalists make the same objection to the new physics as they make to Scholastic Aristotelianism. According to the new physics (where, for example, the particular motion of the earth around the sun is explained by Kepler's three laws), these laws are in turn explained by more general laws. However, according to the proponents of the new physics, the most general laws could be explained only as the most immediate effects of God's will. In opposition to this view of the natural world, occasionalists such as Malebranche ask why in such an explanation one would need nature's laws intervening between God's will and particular events, and further, if we are to of think them as something anyway, then just what are they? They are forces and powers (i.e., the force of gravity and the force of inertia). But Cartesians in their rejection of Scholastic Aristotelianism have vigorously opposed explanations of the natural world in terms of 'forces' and 'powers' of which we can form no clear idea except that they are the purported 'cause' of whatever they are thought to explain – as

³ Charles McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1983) p. 89ff.

⁴ McCracken, p. 89ff.

the nutritive power of bread or the dormative power of opium. Occasionalists such as Malebranche charge that the new physics would be as guilty as the schoolmen of giving empty explanations.⁵

A central and well-known aspect of Malebranche's occasionalism is his critique of the concept of causation. In his The Search after Truth (1674), Malebranche explicitly directs this critique against the Scholastic view of the natural world with its real powers and causes. Malebranche has two primary objections to the Scholastic concept of causation: One is moral, the other is metaphysical. Although these are distinct objections, they both have strong theological components and could thus be accurately described as moral-theological and metaphysical-theological objections.

Malebranche's moral objection to the Scholastic concept of causation involves his belief that the Scholastic concept of nature, where natural things are considered to possess their own force and be causally efficacious, leads to paganism. According to Malebranche, if we accept the Scholastic understanding of bodies as having entities in them that are distinct from their matter, then we can easily come to imagine that they are the true causes of the effects that we observe (i.e., if we accept that opium has a dormative power, then we can easily come to imagine that opium can actually cause us to sleep). Next, he argues that our idea of cause or of power to act represents something divine. He writes: "For the idea of a sovereign power is the idea of sovereign divinity, and the idea of a subordinate power is the idea of a lower divinity, but a genuine one, at

⁵ McCracken, p. 89ff.

least according to the pagans, assuming that it is the idea of a genuine power or cause.”⁶ Therefore, when we posit the forms and powers of Scholastic philosophy as causally efficacious entities, as do the Scholastics themselves, we can easily fall into the error of admitting something divine in all the bodies around us and thus find ourselves adopting paganism out of our respect for Scholastic philosophy. As he puts it: “if we assume this false opinion of the philosophers, which we are trying to destroy, that bodies that surround us are the true causes of the pleasures and ills we feel, reason seems to some degree to justify a religion similar to that of the pagans.”⁷ This, according to Malebranche, is what is dangerous about the philosophy of the ancients.

However, if we do not assume the Scholastic view of the natural world, reason does not lead us to paganism. Reason, according to Malebranche, leads us rather to occasionalism. If we follow reason over our confused inductions from sense experience, we will understand that there can be only one true cause -- God. Here Malebranche makes the transition from his moral to his metaphysical objections to the Scholastic philosophy, where he argues that God is the only possible true cause. Malebranche's argument for God as the only possible true cause relies on the rejection of the possibility that either bodies or minds can move bodies. In his rejection of the possibility that bodies can move themselves, Malebranche follows the Cartesian conception of matter as entirely passive. He writes: “It is clear that no body, large or small, has the power to move itself. A mountain, a house, a rock, a grain of sand, in short, the tiniest or largest

⁶ Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, Trans. and Ed. Thomas Lennon and Paul Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1997) 6.2.3, p. 446. Henceforth RV.

body conceivable does not have the power to move itself.”⁸ After rejecting the possibility that bodies can move themselves, he uses the Cartesian distinction between body and mind to inquire about the power of mind to move body, observing that when we examine our idea of finite minds, we see that there is no necessary connection between their will and the motion of any body. He writes: “We must therefore conclude, if we wish to reason according to our lights, that there is absolutely no mind created that can move a body as a true or principle cause, just as it has been said that no body could move itself.”⁹ Finally, Malebranche looks to the idea of God as a possible cause of bodily motion. The idea of God is different from the idea of body or finite minds, for when we think of the idea of God, an infinitely perfect and consequently all-powerful being, we know that there is a necessary connection between His will and the motion of all bodies - it is impossible for Him to will that a body be moved and for the body to remain unmoved. Thus, despite what our senses seem to tell us, it is only God’s will, and not finite minds or other bodies, that can move bodies, and apparent causes (natural causes, those inferred from confused sense experience) are not real causes as the Scholastics would suggest; they are merely occasional causes, hence not causally efficacious.

After establishing that God is the only possible true cause, Malebranche proceeds to clarify his rejection of the possibility that finite minds could move bodies. His rejection of this possibility rests on his conception of the relationship between knowledge and the power to act. According to Malebranche, one must know how to do something in

⁷ RV: 6.2.3, p. 447.

⁸ RV: 6.2.3, p. 448.

order to be able to do it. Since we do not know how the process of mental-physical causation occurs, my will (as a finite mind) to move my arm, for example, cannot possibly be the true cause of my arm's movement. He writes:

For how could we move our arms? To move them, it is necessary to have animal spirits, to send them through certain nerves toward certain muscles in order to inflate and contract them, for it is thus that the arm attached to them is moved; or according to the opinion of some others, it is still not known how that happens. And we see that men who do not know that they have spirits, nerves and muscles move their arms, and even move them with more skill and ease than those who know anatomy best. Therefore, men will to move their arms, and only God is able and knows how to move them. If a man cannot turn a tower upside down, at least he knows what must be done to do so; but there is no man who knows what must be done to move one of his fingers by means of animal spirits. How, then, could men move their arms?⁹

Not only is it true that we are not the true causes of the movement of our own arms, but Malebranche also sees a contradiction in the very possibility of our being able to move our own arms. He finds the contradiction in the possibility that God could bestow His power to move bodies on men or angels, or that our apparent power to move our arms is a true power. The contradiction rests on his identification of God's power with His will. According to Malebranche, since God is all-powerful (i.e., "it is a contradiction that He should will and that what He wills should not happen"¹¹), He does not require any instruments to act. In this sense, God's power is identical with His will. Thus to bestow His power upon a created being would be to bestow the efficacy of His will upon this being. However, to bestow this causally efficacious Divine will is to do

⁹ RV: 6,2,3, p. 448.

¹⁰ RV: 6,2,3, pp. 449-450.

¹¹ RV: 6,2,3, p. 450.

nothing more than for God to will that whenever a person wills to move his arms, for example, then his arms actually move. In this case two wills concur: the will of God and that of the person. Which of the two wills is the true cause of the body's movement? As we have seen, there is a necessary connection between God's will and whatever He wills to happen. What is happening in this instance is that when the person wills that the body be moved, God wills that the body be moved. In this case, God is the true cause of the body's movement while the person's will is only the occasional (and non-*efficacious*) cause of this movement. Thus, God cannot communicate His power to move bodies to created beings since to do so is merely to will that what they will to happen actually occurs (which is, strictly speaking, not to communicate any power at all). But suppose that, despite the preceding contradiction, God could actually communicate His power to a created being so that the person in the above example is a true and not an occasional cause of the body's movement. Malebranche's position is that even if we were to grant the impossible, that God could communicate His power to this person, then there is even a contradiction in holding that the apparent, non-*efficacious* power of created beings to move bodies could be a true power. If we grant that the person in the above example is the true cause of the body's movement then, in the same way that God bestowed this power upon this person, God could also communicate His power to create and annihilate bodies to this person. This implication places anyone who still holds that the person in the above example is a true cause of the body's movement in the awkward position of having to hold that this same person could be the true cause of the creation and destruction of the universe. Malebranche's point in revealing these contradictions is to

show that the only possible true efficient cause is God. As Malebranche writes: "There is therefore only one single true God and one single cause that is truly a cause, and [...] one should not imagine that what precedes an effect is its true cause. God cannot even communicate His power to creatures, if we follow the lights of reason; He cannot make true causes of them, He cannot make them gods."¹²

Although Leibniz, in his correspondence with Malebranche (1679), does not specifically mention Malebranche's critique of the concept of causation, he does demonstrate an approval of this sort of critique with his approval of Malebranche's conclusion that bodies do not, strictly speaking, act upon us.¹³ This fact places Leibniz more on the side of Malebranche than on the side of the Scholastics or the orthodox Cartesians. However, he also vaguely hints that, although he agrees with Malebranche's criticisms of Descartes, Malebranche's occasionalism does not go far enough. Leibniz writes: "I believe that you have gone only halfway and that still other consequences can be drawn than those which you have made. In my opinion it follows that matter is something different from mere extension, and I believe, besides, that this can be demonstrated."¹⁴ At this point these general criticisms of Malebranche's occasionalism remain vague. However, by the time of the writing of the Discourse on Metaphysics and subsequent correspondence with Antoine Arnauld (1686-87), as Leibniz develops his

¹² RV, 6.2.3 p. 451.

¹³ G. W. Leibniz, Philosophical Papers and Letters, 2nd ed, Trans and Ed. Leroy Loemker (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989) p. 210. Henceforth L.

¹⁴ L., p. 209.

own philosophical position, his criticisms become much more specific and clearly articulated.

Chapter II: Leibniz's Philosophical Development

This chapter offers an account of the history of Leibniz's philosophical development as a reaction to occasionalism, and through his confrontation with Arnauld. It is divided into three parts. The first part covers the Discourse on Metaphysics and the early part of Leibniz's subsequent correspondence with Arnauld. The second part deals with Leibniz's thought as it develops in the latter part of his correspondence with Arnauld. There is a discernible division in the correspondence with Arnauld between these two periods. The last part of the chapter shows the influence of Malebranche and the impact of Arnauld in Leibniz's most mature philosophical works.

Part I: The Discourse on Metaphysics and Early Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence

Although Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld (1686-90) eventually leads to a discussion of occasionalism, it does not begin with this discussion. Instead, it begins with the summary of Leibniz's 'short discourse on metaphysics' that he sent to Arnauld via the Landgrave Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels. This summary consists of little more than the section headings from what is now known as Leibniz's Discourse on Metaphysics (1686). One of the thirty-seven propositions that Leibniz sent to Arnauld contains Leibniz's concept of an individual substance:

13. Since the individual concept of each person contains once and for all everything that will ever happen to him, one sees in it the *a priori* proofs or reasons for the truth of each event, or why one event has occurred rather than another. But these truths, though certain, are nevertheless contingent, being based on the free will of God and of creatures. It is true that there are always reasons for their choice, but they incline without necessitating.¹⁵

Unlike the short summary that he sent to Arnauld, the complete text of the Discourse on Metaphysics offers an elaboration, explanation, and justification of this proposition and it is likely that, if he had received the full Discourse on Metaphysics, then Arnauld would probably not have objected to this proposition in the way that he did. However, this does not mean that their correspondence is a mere waste of paper since, as we shall see, Leibniz's dialogue with Arnauld seems to have prompted a development in the philosophy of Leibniz, especially in its relation to Leibniz's thoughts about occasionalism.

¹⁵ G. W. Leibniz, The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence, Trans. and Ed. H. T. Mason (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1967) p. 5. Henceforth LA.

Arnauld, in his initial response to Leibniz, states that he is frightened and shocked by Leibniz's short discourse. He picks out Proposition 13 for criticism, seeing it as a threat to human and Divine freedom. Arnauld argues that, if this proposition were true and everything that will ever happen to Adam is therefore contained in his individual concept, once God decides to create Adam then all other human events would be pre-determined by Adam's (qua first person) individual concept so that no humans would have any freedom and even God would not have any power over us. As Arnauld writes:

If that is so, God was free to create [or not create Adam; but supposing he wished to create him,] everything that has happened since and will ever happen to the human race was and is obliged to happen though a more than fatal necessity. For the individual concept of Adam contained the consequence that he would have so many children, and the individual concept of each of these children everything that they would do and all the children that they would have: and so on. There is therefore no more liberty in God regarding all that, supposing he wished to create Adam, than in maintaining that God was free, supposing he wished to create me, not to creature a nature capable of thought.¹⁶

The early part of Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld is centered around their respective disagreements about this proposition. In the following letter, Leibniz writes back in defense of this proposition which he considers to have been unfairly attacked. He argues that Arnauld's criticism is misplaced since it confuses 'absolute necessity' with 'hypothetical necessity'; it fails to distinguish "between what God is free to do absolutely and what he has obliged himself to do by virtue of certain decisions already taken."¹⁷ According to Leibniz, we must not think of God as a person whose decisions

¹⁶ LA, p. 9 (G, p. 15).

¹⁷ LA, p. 13 (G, p. 18).

depend upon the circumstances in which he finds himself. Thus, although God's first decision, i.e., the creation of Adam, is connected with future events, with everything concerning Adam's posterity, this does nothing to diminish God's freedom. An additional problem with Arnauld's objection is that it makes the mistake of falsely separating God's will into separate acts of willing, as though they are not all interrelated. We must not make the mistake of thinking of God's will to create Adam apart from His will to create Adam's posterity as He sees fit. God's creation of Adam was not the creation of a vague and indeterminate Adam; that is, God did not, indeed could not, realize an incomplete concept of Adam. Instead, God chose a particular determinate Adam whose complete concept includes "among other predicates also that of having in the course of time a particular posterity; God, I repeat, choosing him is already taking his posterity into consideration and is choosing both at the same time. In this I cannot understand how there may be any harm. And if he were to act otherwise, he would not act as God."¹⁸ Thus, instead of conceiving of God as having numerous unrelated wills, we must conceive of God as having a comprehensive will regarding the whole order of the universe. This will includes the other acts of will, those regarding whatever enters into this universe. These particular acts of will differ from the comprehensive will "as the situation of a town looked at from a certain viewpoint differs from its ground plan."¹⁹ Yet these wills are not really separate since they are all an expression of the same willed

¹⁸ L.A. p. 14 (G. p. 19).

¹⁹ L.A. p. 15 (G. p. 20).

universe “as each situation is an expression of the town.”²⁰ Leibniz takes this harmony of wills as a sign of God’s wisdom and perfection. He writes:

Indeed the wiser one is, the fewer separate acts of will one has and the more one’s views and acts of will are comprehensive and linked together. And each particular act of will contains a connexion with all the others, so that they may be harmonized to the greatest possible degree. Very far from finding something shocking in that, I should think that the opposite destroys God’s perfection.²¹

In response, Arnauld explains that, although he agrees with most of what Leibniz has just said, he does not see how it solves his difficulty since he has not confused ‘hypothetical necessity’ with ‘absolute necessity’. Thus, in this letter, Arnauld clarifies his objection: “I find it merely strange that all human events are as necessary by hypothetical necessity from this single supposition that God wished to create Adam, as it is necessary by hypothetical necessity that there was in the world a nature capable of thought from the supposition alone that he wished to create me.”²² Thus, although Arnauld agrees that we must distinguish between what God is free to do absolutely and what he has obliged himself to do by virtue of His previous decisions; that we must not conceive of God as a person who makes decisions according to the circumstances in which he finds himself; and that we must not separate God’s acts of will since they are all interrelated, he still objects to the thirteenth proposition in the summary of Leibniz’s ‘short discourse’.

²⁰ LA, p. 15 (G, p. 20).

²¹ LA, p. 15 (G, p. 20).

²² LA, p. 26 (G, p. 27).

Arnauld agrees with Leibniz on the following points: God's knowledge of Adam when He determined to create him contained the knowledge of everything that will happen to him and his posterity; and God's act of will in the creation of Adam was not separate from His will regarding Adam's posterity. However, a problem still remains, since we must still ask whether the connection between Adam and his posterity exists independently of God's decrees or whether it is dependent upon God's decrees, that is:

if it is only as a consequence of the free decrees whereby God ordered everything that would happen to Adam and his posterity that God know everything that would happen to Adam and his posterity: or if there exists, independently of these decrees, an intrinsic and necessary connexion between Adam on the one hand, and what has happened and will happen to him and his posterity on the other.²³

Thus, Arnauld presents Leibniz with a dilemma: It seems that Leibniz must either choose the first alternative (which he cannot do without directly contradicting his proposition that the individual concept of each person contains everything that will happen to him) or he must chose the second alternative (which, as we will see, is also incompatible with Leibniz's thirteenth proposition). Arnauld assumes that Leibniz will not disagree that possible things are prior to God's free decrees. From this it follows that "what is contained in the concept of possible things is contained there independently of all the free decrees of God."²⁴ Now, Leibniz also holds that God found, among possible things, a possible Adam who possesses, amongst other predicates, also that of having a particular posterity. Thus, there is an intrinsic connection (i.e., independent of and prior to God's decrees) between this possible Adam, qua possible thing, and his posterity. However,

²³ L.A. pp. 27-28 (G, p. 28).

this possible Adam, whom God chose in preference to other possible Adams, is linked in the same way to the same posterity as the created Adam since he is the same Adam considered now as possible and now as created. Here is where Arnauld's difficulty, and the problem with the second alternative in Arnauld's dilemma, lies: Arnauld, as a theologian, holds that an infinite number of human events (such as the Incarnation) have happened as a result of God's particular wills. But it then seems to be impossible to hold that all of these things, which have occurred through the free decrees of God, were contained in the individual concept of the possible Adam since (as Arnauld has just demonstrated) any possible thing must contain all of its predicates independently of God's decrees.

In his replies, Leibniz agrees with Arnauld that the first alternative lies in opposition to his thirteenth proposition, that the connections between Adam and his posterity are dependent upon God's decrees, and for the reasons that Arnauld has just explained. However, he does not, as Arnauld suggests, choose the second alternative (that there is an intrinsic and necessary connection between Adam and his posterity). Instead, Leibniz finds 'some middle way' to avoid Arnauld's dilemma. According to Arnauld, Leibniz must choose the second alternative since Leibniz considers the individual concept of Adam as possible (meaning that amongst an infinite number of possible concepts God chose that of a particular Adam), and possible concepts do not depend on the free decrees of God. However, according to Leibniz, this reasoning is flawed since "God's free decrees, considered as possible, enter into the concept of the

²⁴ L.A. p. 28 (G, p. 29).

possible Adam, while it is these same decrees, once they become actual, which were the cause of the actual Adam."²⁵ This claim allows Leibniz to avoid Arnauld's dilemma and hold that the connection between Adam and his posterity is intrinsic but not necessary independently of God's free decrees. Thus, with God's choice of Adam, all human events are necessary, not mainly because of the individual concept of Adam, but because of God's comprehensive plans which both enter into the possible individual concept of Adam, thus determining the concept of the entire universe, and which determine each of the individual substances in this universe. Again, Leibniz points out the connection that exists among all things because of the interrelationships among God's wills.

In the same set of letters, Leibniz offers his hypothesis of concomitance, the doctrine of the pre-established harmony, and his critique of occasionalism as these follow from his thirteenth proposition. He writes,

The proposition in question is of very great importance and merits a clear demonstration, for it follows that every soul is like a world apart, independent of everything except God; that it is not only immortal and, so to speak, incapable of being acted upon, but that it retains in its substance indications of everything that happens to it. From it also follows the nature of the commerce between substances, and particularly that of the union between soul and body.²⁶

According to Leibniz, the true nature of the 'commerce between substances' (as it follows from this thirteenth proposition) lies in opposition to both 'the ordinary hypothesis of the physical influence' and the 'hypothesis of occasional causes'. The true nature of the commerce between substances does not conform to the hypothesis of

²⁵ LA, p. 56 (G, p. 51).

²⁶ LA, p. 51 (G, pp. 46-47).

physical influence since “every present state of a substance occurs to it spontaneously and is only a consequence of its preceding state,”²⁷ and it does not conform to the hypothesis of occasional causes since, against the occasionalists, God does not intervene in the ordinary course of the natural world. Instead, the true nature of the commerce between substances conforms to the ‘hypothesis of concomitance’, that is, that change is the result of the internal activity of substances. As he expresses it:

That is to say, each substance is an expression of the entire sequence of events in the universe according to the view or relationship peculiar to it, whence it happens that they exist in perfect harmony with one another; and when one says that one substance acts upon the other, the distinct expression of the passive one decreases, and increases in the active one in conformity with the succession of thoughts embraced by its concept. For although every substance is an expression of everything, one is correct in attributing to it in practice only the most distinctive expressions according to its relationship.²⁸

Thus the cause of change is not a matter of constant divine intervention, but a matter of the internal activity of a substance. Furthermore, since all created beings are a continual production of the one God ‘in accordance with the same plans and are an expression of the same universe or of the same phenomena’ they harmonize exactly among themselves. This harmonizing leads us to believe that real intersubstantial causation exists and that one substance acts upon the other

because one is a more distinct expression than the other of the cause or of the reason for the changes, more or less as we attribute motion to the vessel rather than to the whole sea [...] This is how, in my opinion, one must understand the commerce between created substances, and not from

²⁷ LA, p. 51 (G, p. 47).

²⁸ LA, p. 52 (G, p. 47).

a real physical influence or dependence, of which one can never have a distinct concept.²⁹

This claim leads Leibniz to his critique of occasionalism. The fact that we cannot have a distinct concept of real intersubstantial physical influence is, according to Leibniz, why many thinkers, including Malebranche and the other occasionalists, have been obliged to agree that a direct commerce between mind and body is inconceivable. Although a direct commerce between mind and body is inconceivable, occasionalism is not a satisfactory alternative. According to Leibniz, it is not a satisfactory alternative since it amounts to a continual miracle, and requires God constantly to intervene in the ordinary course of the natural world. Leibniz writes:

it introduces a sort of continual miracle as though God were constantly changing the laws of bodies on the occasion of the thoughts of minds, or changing the regular course of the thoughts of the soul by arousing in it other thoughts, on the occasion of the movements of bodies; and in general as though God were ordinarily to intervene in any other way than by maintaining each substance in its course of action and in the laws established for it.³⁰

The hypothesis of concomitance or pre-established harmony is an acceptable alternative since it “explains everything in a conceivable manner and one worthy of God, and which even is conclusive and inevitable, in my opinion, according to the proposition that we have just demonstrated.”³¹

²⁹ LA, p. 65 (G, p. 57).

³⁰ LA, p. 65 (G, pp. 57-58).

³¹ LA, p. 65 (G, p. 58).

Part II: The Late Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence and Leibniz's Philosophical Development

In the second part of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence, the focus of their discussion shifts from Leibniz's thirteenth proposition to more general issues such as the nature of concomitance or the pre-established harmony, whether nature possesses force or power, and the nature of miracles.³² The discussion shifts focus in this way for in the letter of September 28, 1686, as Leibniz had expected, Arnauld agreed to his thirteenth proposition. He writes: "It [Leibniz's response] was more than enough to make me decide to confess to you in good faith that I am satisfied by the way you explain what had at first shocked me regarding the concept of the individual nature."³³ However, he does not agree to everything that supposedly follows from it. In this letter he objects to a number of other issues that have come up in the correspondence, including Leibniz's pre-established harmony and hypothesis of concomitance. Thus begins the second part of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence.

However, before we actually proceed to the ensuing dialogue between Leibniz and Arnauld, I should pause to point out that Leibniz's critique of occasionalism, as it is stated in the early part of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence, is not accurate. His critique is therefore unsuccessful, and fails to distinguish adequately his pre-established harmony from occasionalism. Leibniz's argument that occasionalism requires God's constant intervention in the natural order is, at least as far as Malebranche is concerned, inaccurate. Malebranche, the occasionalist whose work Leibniz clearly knew, did not

³² Cf. Loemker, L., p. 331.

hold that God regularly intervenes in the natural order. Instead, according to Malebranche, God exercises his power through a few general acts of will. In the

Elucidations of The Search after Truth Malebranche explains that

God does not multiply his volitions without reason; He always acts through the simplest ways, and this is why he uses the collision of bodies to move them, not because their impact is absolutely necessary for their motion, as our senses tell us, but because with impact as the occasion for the communication of motion, very few natural laws are needed to produce all the admirable effects we see.³⁴

And in The Search after Truth itself he writes: “He moves all things, and thus produces all the effects that we see happening, because He also willed certain laws according to which motion is communicated upon the collision of bodies; and because these laws are efficacious, they act whereas bodies cannot act.”³⁵ Thus, with the impact of two bodies, body A and body B, body B is not moved by body A. Instead, body B is moved by God’s will. However, God’s will is a general will, and it is identical with the laws of nature; that is, God does not directly and particularly will that the second body move; rather, the body’s movement is a result of God’s general will that when any bodies ‘collide’ in a certain way then a certain amount of motion will be ‘transferred’. Although God’s will is merely a general will and is efficacious without any intermediary, God can cause bodies to move through His general will since, as we have seen in Chapter I, His will necessarily is causally efficacious.³⁶ If we take Malebranche’s statements about God as acting through general will rather than particular interventions in the natural order seriously,

³³ L.A. p. 77 (G, pp. 63-64).

³⁴ Elucidations of the RV, p. 663.

³⁵ RV, p. 449.

then Malebranche's occasionalism is hardly different from Leibniz's pre-established harmony, in the way that Leibniz explains his hypothesis to this point. Thus, against Leibniz, Malebranche's occasionalism does not require God's constant intervention in the natural order and it is therefore not any less worthy of God than Leibniz's own doctrine of a pre-established harmony.

One of Arnauld's objections in the second part of his correspondence with Leibniz, not surprisingly, is directed at this very issue of Leibniz's criticism of occasionalism as it is contrasted with his own doctrine of a pre-established harmony. Arnauld suggests that Leibniz's pre-established harmony is identical with occasionalism, that he is merely "saying the same things in other words."³⁷ He makes this suggestion in response to Leibniz's account of apparent mind-body interaction. Leibniz claims that although my arm rises when I will it to rise, it is not my will which causes my arm to move. Instead, when I will to raise my arm, my body is arranged so that my arm rises. Bodies are moved by their own laws, there being no real interaction between mind and body. Apparent mind-body interaction (e.g., my arm's movement when I will it to move) is the result of the harmony between substances which God has established prior to this apparent interaction. This account of apparent mind-body interaction, according to Arnauld, is the same as the occasionalist's account, it is the same as saying that "my will is the occasional cause of the movement of my arm and that God is the real cause of

³⁶ RV, p. 450.

³⁷ LA, p. 105 (G, p. 84).

it."³⁸ How are these accounts the same? Leibniz's doctrine might seem to be different from occasionalism because it does not involve God's constant intervention in the natural order. However, as Arnauld correctly points out, "they [the occasionalists] do not claim that God does that in time through a new act of will which he exercises each time I wish to raise my arm; but by that single act of the eternal will, whereby he has wished to do everything which he has foreseen that it would be necessary to do, in order that the universe might be what he deemed it was to be."³⁹ With this accurate reading of occasionalism in mind, the similarity between Leibniz's pre-established harmony and Malebranche's occasionalism becomes apparent. As Arnauld writes: "Now, is that not the substance of your remarks when you say that the cause of the movement of my arm, when I wish to raise it, is 'the wonderful but unfailing harmony between things, which comes from the fact that God took it into consideration in advance when he made his decision about this succession of all things in the universe'?"⁴⁰ Arnauld points out that, if we look for a real cause in Leibniz's pre-established harmony (as it has been articulated so far), we find that Leibniz will not agree that my own will is the real cause of my arm's movement, nor my or any other body the real cause of my arm's movement. The only remaining option is that it is this 'consideration by God' which is the real cause of my arm's movement. The rest of Arnauld's identification of Leibniz's pre-established harmony with occasionalism is simply a matter of word-substitution. As Arnauld writes: "Now, you yourself call this consideration by God 'his decision', and decision and will

³⁸ LA, p. 105 (G, p. 84).

³⁹ LA, pp. 105-106 (G, p. 84).

are the same thing: therefore, according to you, every time I wish to raise my arm, it is God's will which is the real and efficient cause of this movement."⁴¹

In response to Arnauld, Leibniz clarifies his difference from the occasionalists through a new account of miracles different from that of the Discourse on Metaphysics.⁴² In the Discourse, Leibniz wrote that "the miracles and extraordinary interventions of God have this peculiarity – that they cannot be foreseen by the reasoning of any created spirit, no matter how enlightened, because the distinct understanding of the general order is beyond all such spirits"⁴³ which claim, as Stuart Brown points out, "makes it appear that miracles for the author of the *Discourse* are like contingency in Spinoza - a mere appearance due to human ignorance and without any basis in the nature of things."⁴⁴ Here, in response to Arnauld, Leibniz redefines a miracle. He writes: "God performs a miracle whenever he does something that exceeds the forces which he has given to creatures and maintains in them."⁴⁵ In this sense, even miracles do not occur through a new act of God's will, since they can be included in His general plan and yet still be miraculous. Thus, according to Leibniz, the occasionalists "introduce a miracle which is no less one for being continual. For it seems to me that the concept of the miracle does not consist of rarity."⁴⁶ He provides an example to clarify his new account of miracles.

⁴⁰ LA, p. 106 (G, pp. 84-85).

⁴¹ LA, p. 106 (G, p. 85).

⁴² Stuart Brown, "Malebranche's Occasionalism and Leibniz's Pre-established Harmony: an 'Easy Crossing' or an Unbridgeable Gap?," Nicolas Malebranche: His Philosophical Critics and Successors, Ed. Stuart Brown (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1991) p. 88.

⁴³ L, p. 313.

⁴⁴ Brown (1991), p. 88.

⁴⁵ LA, p. 116 (G, p. 93).

⁴⁶ LA, p. 116 (G, p. 92).

If God were to cause a body to continue in a circular motion after being released from a rotating sling, then that would be a miracle since, according to natural laws, the body should continue along a straight line at a tangent when released from the sling. Furthermore, if God were to cause this to happen every time a body is released from a sling in this way, then this movement would still count as miraculous since this movement would still be inexplicable by natural means. In fact, if the continuation of any movement exceed the force of the bodies involved, then the continuation of this movement is a true miracle. The occasionalists hold that God moves all bodies in this way, that is, that the continuation of the movement of all bodies exceeds the force of the bodies involved since God causes all movement through his general wills which are identical with the laws of nature, since they hold that bodies possess no power to cause or maintain any movement at all. Leibniz, on the other hand, holds that "bodily substance has the force to continue its changes according to the laws that God has placed in its nature and maintains there."⁴⁷ Here it becomes clear that there is a real difference between occasionalism and pre-established harmony. According to the occasionalists, there are no causal forces or powers in created things. According to Leibniz, created things possess causal force and power of their own.

The emphasis on natural powers that is necessitated by this new account of miracles, and the precise account of Leibniz's difference from occasionalism are evident in Leibniz's reply, in the latter part of their correspondence, to Arnauld's question about how the soul comes to feel pain. Leibniz's earlier attempts to answer this question

⁴⁷ LA, p. 116 (G, p. 93).

involved an identification of the monad as an expression of the universe. As Leibniz wrote in the earlier part of their correspondence: "To be sure, certain thoughts occur to us when there are certain bodily movements, and certain bodily movements occur when we have certain thoughts; but it is because each substance is an expression of the whole universe after its own manner, and this expression of the universe, which constitutes a movement in the body, is perhaps a pain so far as the soul is concerned."⁴⁸ This answer involves an account of perception that seems to require an independent and objective world. This answer is similar to Leibniz's account of expression in the Discourse on Metaphysics where Leibniz writes:

there thus results from each perspective of the universe, as it is seen from a certain position, a substance which expresses the universe in conformity to that perspective, if God sees fit to render his thought effective and to produce that substance. And since God's perspective is always true, our perceptions are always true; it is our judgments, which come from ourselves, which deceive us [...] these phenomena maintain a certain order which conforms to our nature or, so to speak, to the world which is within us⁴⁹

If this account is not especially novel to seventeenth-century philosophy, if the underlying structure of Leibniz's account of perceptions and phenomena seems to assume that phenomena conform to us instead of being in some way produced by us, it will shortly be otherwise for Leibniz. In the latter part of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence, Leibniz offers an account with some subtle, but significant, differences. Here, in response to Arnauld's question about the cause of pain, Leibniz writes:

⁴⁸ LA, p. 84 (G, p. 69).

⁴⁹ L., p. 312.

I maintain that every substance contains in its present state all its states past and future, and even expresses the whole universe according to its point of view, since nothing is so far removed from other things that it does not have communication with them, and in particular according to the connexion with the parts of its body, of which it is a more immediate expression; and consequently nothing occurs to it except from its own depth and by virtue of its own laws, provided that one adds God's concurrence. But it perceives other things because it expresses them naturally, having been originally created in such a way that it can subsequently do so and adapt itself to it as necessary, and it is in this obligation imposed from the beginning that there consists what is called the action of one substance upon another.⁵⁰

Here the basic structure of Leibniz's account of our perceptions seems to be reversed. In agreement with the new emphasis on natural powers that comes hand-in-hand with Leibniz's new account of miracles, his account of perception shifts to the point where phenomena are now considered to be produced by the monad itself. This new account of perception as an activity of expression that belongs to the monad itself, and Leibniz's new emphasis on natural power continue beyond Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld and are evident in Leibniz's latter philosophical statements in such works as A New System (1695), On Nature Itself (1698), New Essays on Human Understanding (1704), and Leibniz's correspondence with Samuel Clarke (1715-16).

⁵⁰ LA, p. 161 (G, p. 126).

Part III: The Final Stage in Leibniz's Philosophical Development

The final stage in Leibniz's philosophical development is marked by Leibniz's increased confidence in his critique of occasionalism and emphasis on natural powers. In this final stage, the great influence of his correspondence with Arnauld and the impact of his disagreements with Malebranche become evident. Here, Leibniz's new emphasis on natural power is still presented as following from his new account of miracles (and difference from Malebranche) in the same way as in the latter part of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence. The influence of Arnauld and impact of Malebranche are further emphasized by the fact that Leibniz considered publishing his correspondence with Arnauld where, as we have seen, Leibniz discovers his true difference from Malebranche through Arnauld's prompting with his A New System of the Nature and the Communication of Substances, as well as the Union Between the Soul and the Body⁵¹ (1695), the first public statement of his philosophical position.

By the time that Leibniz wrote the New System he had discovered his true difference from the occasionalists. Thus, in the New System, Leibniz's position on power in nature, perception, and his critique of occasionalism remains consistent with his statements in the latter part of his correspondence with Arnauld (1686-90). In the New System he presents his new critique of occasionalism as leading to the doctrine of pre-established harmony and his conceptualization of perception as an activity of expression which belongs to each monad. In this text Leibniz explains that, although he accepts the

⁵¹ G. H. R. Parkinson, "Introduction," The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1967) p. xiii.

basic claim made by the occasionalists that there cannot be any real interaction in the created world, he disagrees with the occasionalists' conclusion that there is no power in nature and that God is therefore the only true cause. Against this claim he writes that problems such as apparent mind-body interaction are not solved

merely by making use of a general cause and calling in what is called the *deus ex machina*. To do this without offering any other explanation is, properly speaking, to have recourse to a miracle. In philosophy we must try to give a reason which will show how things are brought about by the Divine Wisdom in conformity with the particular concept of the subject in question.⁵²

Thus Leibniz presents his doctrine of pre-established harmony as following from his critique of occasionalism, for keeping the occasionalist's claim that there is no real interaction within the created world and dropping the claim that God is the only true cause naturally leads one to the hypothesis of a pre-established harmony. As Leibniz writes:

Being constrained, then, to admit that it is impossible for the soul or any other true substance to receive something from without, except by the divine omnipotence, I was led insensibly to an opinion which surprised me, but which seems inevitable, and which has in fact very great advantages and very significant beauties. This is that we must say that God has originally created the soul, and every other real unity, in such a way that everything in it must arise from its own nature by a perfect *spontaneity* with regard to itself, yet by a perfect *conformity* to things without.⁵³

Furthermore, Leibniz's conceptualization of perception as an activity of expressing what is perceived which belongs to each monad also follows from this emphasis on natural power. He writes:

⁵² L., p. 457.

And thus, since our internal sensations [...] are merely phenomena which follow upon external events or better, are really appearances or like well-ordered dreams, it follows that these perceptions internal to the soul itself come to it through its own original constitution, that is to say, through its representative nature [...] this nature having been given it from its creation and constituting its individual character. It is this that makes each substance represent the entire universe accurately in its own way and according to a definite point of view. And the perceptions or expression of external things reach the soul at the proper time by virtue of its own laws, as in a world apart, and as if there existed nothing but God and itself.⁵⁴

Leibniz's emphasis on natural power as connected with his new account of miracles and criticism of occasionalism is perhaps even more explicit in his Clarification of the Difficulties which Mr. Bayle has found in the New System.⁵⁵ Against Bayle's claim that occasionalism does not require a miracle because it merely requires a few general Divine acts of will rather than a constant intervention in the natural order (a familiar criticism from the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence), Leibniz explicitly connects his criticism of occasionalism with his emphasis on natural power and his new account of miracles. Leibniz's response to Bayle is not really new. It is simply a repetition of his response to Arnauld. With a growing confidence in his criticism and emphasis on natural power Leibniz writes:

in my opinion that [occasionalism's requirement that God act only through general laws] does not suffice to remove the miracles. Even if God should do this continuously, they would not cease being miracles, if we take this term, not in the popular sense of a rare and wonderful thing, but in the philosophical sense of that which exceeds the powers of created beings. It is not enough to say that God has made a general law, for besides the

⁵³ L., p. 457.

⁵⁴ L., p. 457.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ezio Vailati, Leibniz & Clarke: A Study of Their Correspondence (New York: Oxford U.P., 1997) pp. 146-147.

decree there is also necessary a natural means of carrying it out, that is, all that happens must also be explained though the nature which God gives to things. The laws of nature are not so arbitrary and so indifferent as many people imagine.⁵⁶

Leibniz's critique of occasionalism, still in the general form of the latter part of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence (where occasionalism is rejected on the grounds that it denies the existence of power in the natural world), receives extended treatment in his On Nature Itself (1698).⁵⁷ In this text Leibniz begins his criticism of occasionalism by asking whether the Divine will bestows upon created things an 'extrinsic denomination' (an external power) or an 'internal law' (some vestige of power which endures within them) from which their actions and passions follow. The occasionalists (Leibniz explicitly names Malebranche) hold that the Divine will bestows this power only as an 'extrinsic denomination'. In opposition to the occasionalists, Leibniz holds that the Divine will bestows this power as an 'internal law'.⁵⁸ He provides three reasons for the rejection of mere 'extrinsic denomination'. First, if we assume (with the occasionalists) that God's will does not impart some vestige of His power to created things, then, since there must be a connection between cause and effect, we must conclude that God will have to intervene constantly in the created world to renew His will (which is the very position that the occasionalists explicitly deny). His second objection is that the attempt to explain the actions of created beings merely by referring to the will of God, which exists only in the past and leaves no effects, is to abandon any attempt at an explanation.

⁵⁶ L., p. 494.

⁵⁷ Cf. Ezio Vailati, p. 147.

⁵⁸ L., p. 500.

To resort to this kind of an 'explanation' is to abandon philosophy in favor of theology; it "is so far from explaining the matter that it is rather to put aside the role of the philosopher and to cut the Gordian knot with a sword."⁵⁹ His third objection is that "the substance of things itself consists in the force of acting and being acted upon; hence it follows that no enduring thing can be produced if no force that long endures can be impressed upon it by the divine power."⁶⁰ Without this force in created things (which the occasionalists deny), no created substance or identical soul would be permanent and "everything would reduce to a certain evanescent and flowing modifications or phantasms, so to speak, of the one permanent divine substance: God would be the nature and substance of all things – a doctrine of most evil repute, which a writer who was subtle indeed but irreligious [Spinoza], in recent years imposed upon the world, or at least revived."⁶¹ In addition to these difficulties, the occasionalists' position that created beings possess no power of their own lies in direct opposition to our immediate consciousness of mind as possessing immanent action. As Leibniz writes:

Certainly if this doctrine is extended so far as to deny even the *immanent actions* of substances [...] it seems foreign to reason as no other view can be. For who will doubt that the mind thinks and wills, that many thoughts and volitions are produced in us and by us, and that there is something spontaneous about us? To doubt this would be to deny human freedom and to thrust the cause of evil back into God but also to contradict the testimony of our internal experience and consciousness, by which we feel that what these opponents have transferred to God without even the appearance of a reason belongs to ourselves.⁶²

⁵⁹ L., p. 501.

⁶⁰ L., p. 502.

⁶¹ L., p. 502.

⁶² L., pp. 502-503.

In a certain manner, Leibniz's criticisms of occasionalism continue into the New Essays on Human Understanding (1704). Although the New Essays were written in response to John Locke's An Essay concerning Human Understanding, many of Leibniz's criticisms of Locke in this text are remarkably similar to his criticisms of occasionalism in his On Nature Itself.⁶³ Much like his critique of occasionalism in the latter part of the Leibniz-Arnald correspondence, Leibniz's critique of Locke is connected with his new account of miracles and emphasis on natural power.⁶⁴ In the New Essays Leibniz reacts strongly against Locke's suggestion that matter might be able to think if God were to choose to endow matter with the power of thought. Against this suggestion, Leibniz returns to the points that he had made against the occasionalists, now directed at Locke. He writes: "within the order of nature (miracles apart) it is not at God's arbitrary discretion to attach this or that quality haphazardly to substances. He will never give them any which are not natural to them, that is, which cannot arise from their nature as explicable modifications."⁶⁵ As Stuart Brown correctly points out, Leibniz "does add 'miracles apart' in parenthesis. But since there are no miracles within the order of nature this parenthesis does not serve as a qualification. It seems Leibniz really did want to deny that it is open for God to change the properties of substance."⁶⁶ Thus, Leibniz's disagreements with Locke lie largely in his newfound emphasis on natural powers. Some clarification of this criticism, and its connection with Leibniz's critique of occasionalism,

⁶³ Cf. Ezio Vailati pp. 147-153.

⁶⁴ Cf. Stuart Brown pp. 88-89.

⁶⁵ G. W. Leibniz, New Essays on Human Understanding, Trans. and Ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1981) p. 66. Henceforth NE.

can be found in a latter part of the New Essays where Leibniz directly addresses Locke's suggestion regarding God's ability to superadd thought to matter. Leibniz writes:

To speak of sheerly 'giving' or 'granting' powers is to return to the bare faculties of the Scholastics, and to entertain a picture of little subsistent beings which can fly in and out like pigeons with a dovecote [...] To maintain that God acts in any other way, and gives things accidents which are not 'ways of being' or modifications arising from substances is to have recourse to miracles and to what the Scholastics used to call 'obediential power'. It would involve a kind of supernatural elevating of things, as in the claim of some theologians that hell-fire burns separated souls; which leaves open the question of whether it would be the fire which was acting, rather than God acting in place of the fire and producing the same effect.⁶⁷

Locke's suggestion that matter might be able to think if God were to superadd the capacity of thought to matter involves the same difficulties as Malebranche's doctrine of occasionalism.⁶⁸ In the same way that Leibniz's disagreements with Locke are connected to his disagreements with the occasionalists, there is also a strong connection between Leibniz's disagreements with Locke and his philosophical disagreements with Sir Isaac Newton. Leibniz even suggested that Locke accepted Newton's universal gravitation as a means to lend support to his claim that God might be able to superadd thought to matter.⁶⁹ In the New Essays he writes: "for he [Locke] grants attraction to them [bodies], even at great distances and without limitation to any sphere of activity,

⁶⁶ Brown (1991), p. 89.

⁶⁷ NE, p. 379.

⁶⁸ Vailati, p. 152.

⁶⁹ Nicholas Jolley, *Leibniz and Locke: A Study of the New Essays on Human Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1984) pp. 64-65. Jolley quotes from the following undated (1714?) letter which Leibniz wrote to Hugony: "After that [admitting attraction] it will be permissible to feign everything which one wishes: one will be able to give to matter the power of thinking, and undermine the soul's immateriality which is one of the principal foundations of natural theology. Thus one saw that Mr Locke who was not too convinced of this immateriality seized eagerly on the opinion of Mr Newton as soon as it appeared, and whereas he had formerly believed with reason that a body cannot move another immediately except by touching and pushing

merely so as to uphold a view which is equally inexplicable, namely the possibility of matter thinking in the natural course of events."⁷⁰ However, Newton's universal gravitation (which Leibniz reasonably interpreted as an instance of God's action at a distance) is also susceptible to the points that he made against the occasionalists. As Leibniz writes: "So we may take it that matter will not naturally possess the attractive power referred to above, and that it will not of itself move in a curved path, because it is impossible to conceive how this could happen - that is, to explain it mechanistically - whereas what is natural must be such as could become distinctly conceivable by anyone admitted into the secrets of things."⁷¹ Furthermore, just as in the hypothesis of occasional causes, accepting Locke's suggestion or Newton's 'explanation' of gravitation would involve an abandonment of the very attempt to provide explanations. Leibniz makes this point, already familiar to us from his On Nature Itself, in the following text (which also serves to reveal the connection of Leibniz's new account of miracles to his criticism of Locke and Newton):

This distinction between what is natural and explicable and what is miraculous and inexplicable removes all the difficulties. To reject it would be to uphold something worse than occult qualities, and thereby to renounce philosophy and reason, giving refuge to ignorance and laziness by means of an irrational system which maintains not only that there are qualities which we do not understand - of which there are only too many - but further that there are some which could not be comprehended by the greatest intellect if God gave it every possible opportunity, i.e. [qualities] which are either miraculous or without rhyme or reason. And indeed it would be without rhyme or reason for God to perform miracles in the

it, he retracted his opinion on the subject in one of the subsequent editions of his book on the understanding as if Mr Newton showed that matter is capable of higher faculties than one believes."

⁷⁰ NE, p. 61.

⁷¹ NE, p. 66.

ordinary course of events. So this idle hypothesis would destroy not only our philosophy which seeks reasons but also the divine wisdom which provides them.⁷²

Leibniz's criticisms of Newton's philosophy are certainly not confined to the New Essays. His disagreements with Newton receive a very extensive treatment in his correspondence (1715-1716) with Newton's follower, Samuel Clarke. As with the occasionalists and Locke, Leibniz's disagreements with Clarke occur within the context of a disagreement over the nature of miracles. Clarke's position on natural power and his account of the nature of miracles lie in absolute opposition to Leibniz's mature position. In opposition to Leibniz, Clarke holds that the concept of active power in matter leads to atheism. As a follower of Newton, Clarke holds that the natural world is entirely passive and requires God's constant intervention. According to Newton, this natural loss of force⁷³ points to the existence of some external 'active principles' that provide the necessary force to compensate for this loss of motion in the natural world.⁷⁴ Although

⁷² NE, p. 66.

⁷³ In his *Opticks* Newton writes: "Motion is much more apt to be lost than got, and is always upon the Decay. For Bodies which are either absolutely hard, or so soft as to be void of Elasticity, will not rebound from one another. Impenetrability makes them only stop. If two equal Bodies meet directly *in vacuo*, they will by the Laws of Motion stop where they meet, and lose all their Motion, and remain in rest, unless they be elastic, and receive new Motion from their Spring. If they have so much Elasticity as suffices to make them re-bound with a quarter, or half, or three quarters of the Force with which they come together, they will lose three quarters, or half, or a quarter of their motion" (Newton, *Opticks*, qu. 31, p. 398).

⁷⁴ In his *Opticks* Newton argues for these 'active principles' through a comparison between the loss of motion in liquids and the motion of the planets. He writes: "If three equal round Vessels be filled, the one with Water, the other with Oil, the third with molten Pitch, and the Liquors be stirred about alike to give them a vortical Motion; the Pitch by its Tenacity will lose its Motion quickly, the Oil being less tenacious will keep it longer, and the Water being less tenacious will keep it longest, but yet will lose it in a short time. Whence it is easy to understand, that if many contiguous vortices of molten Pitch were each of them as large as those which some suppose to revolve about the Sun and fix'd Stars, yet these and all their Parts would, by their Tenacity and Stiffness, communicate their Motion to one another till they all rested among themselves. Vortices of Oil or Water, or some fluid Matter might continue longer in Motion; but unless the Matter were void of all Tenacity and Affection of Parts, and Communication of Motion, (which is not to be

Newton refused to provide any causal explanation of these 'active principles', Clarke concludes that they originate in spiritual activity and therefore sees them as evidence for the existence of God. Thus (with Newton) Clarke claims that the natural world requires an external source of force to maintain its being, while (apart from Newton) he concludes that this external source lies in Divine activity.⁷⁵ Clarke's position on the nature of miracles follows from these conclusions about the necessity for God's constant intervention in the natural world. Since there is no power inherent in the natural world, all power coming from a supernatural source, Clarke holds that we should not differentiate between miraculous and non-miraculous events on the basis of some intrinsic difficulty (as Leibniz suggests), but on the basis of their unusualness.⁷⁶ Leibniz's criticisms of this position are, not surprisingly, very similar to his criticisms of the occasionalists since, from Leibniz's perspective, Clarke's position on natural power and miracles is very similar to the occasionalists' position. In fact, in an early version of

supposed,) the Motion would constantly decay. Seeing therefore the variety of Motion which we find in the World is always decreasing, there is a necessity of conserving and recruiting it by active Principles" (Newton, *Opticks*, qu. 31, pp. 398-399).

⁷⁵ In his *Discourse* Clarke writes: "the late improvements in Mathematicks and natural Philosophy have discovered that, as things Now are, that Scheme [that God created but does not maintain the natural world] is plainly false and impossible in Fact. For, not to say, that, seeing Matter is utterly incapable of obeying any Laws, the very original Laws of Motion themselves cannot continue to take place, but by something superior to Matter continually exerting in it a certain Force or Power according to such certain and determinate Laws [...] And not only so, but That most universal Principle of Gravitation, the Spring of almost all the great and regular inanimate Motions in the World, answering, (as I hinted in my former Discourse) not at all to the Surfaces of Bodies, by which alone They can act one upon another but entirely to their Solid content; cannot possibly be the result of any Motion originally impressed on Matter, but must of necessity be caused by something which penetrates the very solid Substance of all Bodies, and continually puts forth in them a Force or Power entirely different from that by which Matter acts on Matter. Which is, by the by, an evident demonstration, not only of the World's being *made originally* by a Supreme Intelligent Cause; but moreover that it Depends every Moment on some Superior Being, for the *Preservation* of its Fame; and that all the great Motions in it, are caused by some Immaterial Power, not having originally impressed a *certain Quantity of Motion* upon Matter, but perpetually and actually exerting it self every Moment in every part of the World" (Clarke, *Discourse*, pp. 20-22).

Leibniz's third letter to Clarke, Leibniz drew an explicit comparison between Clarke and the occasionalists.⁷⁷ Thus, against Clarke's position on natural power and the nature of miracles, Leibniz repeats the same points that he had previously made against the occasionalists and Locke. He writes:

Divines will not grant the author's position against me, viz., that there is no difference, with respect to God, between natural and supernatural; and it will be still less approved by most philosophers. There is a vast difference between these two things, but it plainly appears it has not been duly considered. That which is supernatural exceeds the powers of creatures. I shall give an instance which I have often made use of with good success. If God would cause a body to move free in the ether round about a certain fixed center, without any other creature acting upon it, I say it could not be done without a miracle, since it cannot be explained by the nature of bodies. For a free body does naturally recede from a curve in the tangent. And therefore I maintain that the attraction of bodies, properly so called, is a miraculous thing, since it cannot be explained by the nature of bodies.⁷⁸

As Vailati notes: "The reference to gravitation being unexplicable [sic] by reference to the nature of bodies would seem to suggest that in Leibniz's eyes not only had Clarke fallen into Malebranche's error of making natural laws extrinsic to bodies, but he also had fallen into a variant of Locke's error by allowing nonmechanical, that is, nonmodal and unintelligible qualities in bodies."⁷⁹ From Leibniz's perspective Newton's universal gravitation (as action at a distance) is an instance of occasionalist-like causation. Vailati

⁷⁶ Vailati, p. 145.

⁷⁷ As Vailati writes: "for both philosophers [Malebranche and Clarke] the laws governing bodies are extrinsic denominations, and that miracles, to the extent that they are exceptions to these laws, are viewed as mere deviations from God's general volitions [...]" an early version of Leibniz's third letter, in which, after stating that what is supernatural exceeds all the powers of creatures, he continued by starting to draw a comparison between Clarke and some followers of Malebranche: "il ne faut point l'imaginer avec quelques Malbranchistes, que naturel ext. ..." (R 57). Leibniz did not finish the sentence perhaps because he did not want to provide Clarke with indirect support from Malebranche" (Vailati, p. 159).

⁷⁸ L., p. 684.

even goes so far as to suggest that Leibniz might have seen Clarke's philosophy as a development of some of the worst elements in Malebranche's philosophy.⁸⁰

Furthermore, Leibniz argues that Clarke's position on God's replenishment of the natural world undercuts God's omnipotence. Of course Clarke argues that Leibniz's philosophy eliminates the necessity of miracles and the natural world's dependence upon God and that his philosophy therefore constitutes a step that eventually leads to the complete elimination of God.⁸¹

Thus, by the time of his correspondence with Clarke, Leibniz had developed a great deal of confidence in his new account of miracles and his criticism of occasionalism. He was able to repeat this criticism in a number of different contexts, and even able to see, through Clarke's philosophy, where the errors of the occasionalists could lead; and his emphasis on natural power had become so great that his philosophy was open, at least in this polemical context, to a charge of latent naturalism.

⁷⁹ Vailati, pp. 159-160.

⁸⁰ Vailati writes: "Given Clarke's views on the laws of nature, one can see how Leibniz could understand the philosophical genesis of Clarke's position on gravitation as a development of dangerous tendencies present in Malebranche's system. For, if it is God and other spirits who are the true, extrinsic, and continually acting causes of the activity of bodies, then there is nothing in bodies themselves to explain why they should behave in accordance with the laws of mechanism and influence each other only by impulse rather than in accordance with nonmechanical laws. Universal gravitation, which in Malebranche and Lamy was a mere dangerous possibility, in Clarke and Newton had become a reality. In sum, the view that, with respect to the 'Nature of things themselves,' all that can possibly happen to creatures is 'equally and alike easy to be done,' that is, the view that nature is indifferent to the course of nature that Clarke had used to show the possibility of miracles, prepares the way for such monsters as Newtonian gravitation" (Vailati, pp. 160-161).

⁸¹ As Vailati points out, Clarke held that Leibniz separated God from nature too much "in making God an *intelligentia supramundana* and nature a mechanism that never needs rewinding, thus starting down the slippery slope leading to the independence of nature from God [...]. Leibniz thought that Clarke had tied God and nature too closely, thus debasing the divinity. God's constant physical intervention showed him a bad

* * *

Leibniz's philosophical development as described here began with the disagreements of Leibniz and Arnauld over the thirteenth proposition in Leibniz's Discourse on Metaphysics. This proposition is important since Leibniz presents his criticism of Malebranche as following from it; for it follows from this proposition that there cannot be a constant divine intervention in the created world. Since occasionalism requires God's constant intervention via new acts of will, Leibniz concludes that occasionalism is an inadequate hypothesis. In opposition to occasionalism, Leibniz offers his hypothesis of the pre-established harmony.

Although Arnauld came to accept Leibniz's thirteenth proposition he did not also accept Leibniz's critique of occasionalism. Arnauld's defense of occasionalism prompted Leibniz to clarify his difference from the occasionalists through a new account of miracles. In so doing, Leibniz discovered his true difference from the occasionalists.

In the subsequent and final period of his philosophical development, from the New System to his correspondence with Samuel Clarke, the influence of Malebranche and impact of Arnauld upon Leibniz's thought yielded some new arguments against Locke and the Newtonians, in whom Leibniz recognized elements of the occasionalism of Malebranche. Leibniz's new criticism of occasionalism, and all that follows from it, are carried into these statements of his mature position.

engineer, unable to produce a self-moving nature" (Vailati, p. 10).

Chapter III: A Closer Look at Leibniz's Philosophical Development

As we have seen, much of Leibniz's philosophical development can be explained by his difference from Malebranche. This difference occurs over three stages. During the earliest stage, shown in Chapter I, Leibniz implies that he supports Malebranche's project in general, but also ambiguously suggests that Malebranche has left this project incomplete. In the second stage, in the Discourse on Metaphysics and the early Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence, Leibniz clearly states his opposition to Malebranche. As we have seen, Leibniz's criticism is either poorly stated or misconceived at this stage. However, by the final stage, from the late Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence to the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence, Leibniz, through Arnauld's prompting, discovers his true difference from Malebranche through his new account of miracles and emphasis on natural powers. Now that we have some understanding of this development we can begin to ask questions about what it might mean. Unfortunately, since most of this development occurs within the context of a theological debate, such a question is not generally raised. In the study of the history of philosophy it often seems to be overlooked or possibly dismissed as a mere theological dispute that cannot have anything to offer to serious philosophy. Although it is true that much of this development does occur within the context of a theological debate, there is, as we shall see, much more of philosophical interest here than a simple dispute over God's dignity and power.

In this study the history of Leibniz's philosophical development begins with, and is virtually defined by, his disagreements with Malebranche.⁸² A curious feature of Malebranche's philosophy is its connection with the eighteenth century philosopher David Hume. Hume is of course famous for his critique of our concept of causation. But the criticisms that Malebranche levies against the Scholastic concept of causation in Chapter I set up the possibility for this Humean critique. Charles McCracken expresses this rarely noted influence of Malebranche upon Hume, something that Hume himself grants.⁸³ McCracken writes:

in defending the doctrine that God is the only true cause, Malebranche had felt called upon both to give reasons for rejecting our ordinary supposition that there is some natural necessity connecting events that are always conjoined, and to provide some explanation of how we come so strongly to believe that there is such a necessary connection, if none exists. In so doing, Malebranche provided both a critique of natural causality as 'necessary connection' and a psychological account of the way in which the constant conjunction of events leads us to believe in such a natural necessity.⁸⁴

Malebranche, in his rejection of the possibility that either bodies or finite minds could move bodies, provided Hume with an argument for denying that we have any idea of

⁸² Of course, this account is only one of several possible ways to understand the history of Leibniz's philosophical development. For example, while Stuart Brown presents a similar account in his 1991 article "Malebranche's Occasionalism and Leibniz's Pre-established Harmony," he presents a different (yet compatible) account now focused on Leibniz's developing concept of substance in his 1984 book *Leibniz*.

⁸³ Hume, in a letter to his friend Michael Ramsay, lists Malebranche as a major influence. As Hume writes: "read once over la Recherche de la Verite of Pere Malebranche, the Principles of Human Knowledge by Dr Berkeley, some of the more metaphysical Articles of Bailes Dictionary; such as those [on] Zeno, & Spinoza. Des-Cartes Meditations would also be useful but don't know if you will find it easily among your Acquaintances. These Books will make you easily comprehend the metaphysical Parts of my Reasoning and as to the rest, they have so little Dependence on all former systems of Philosophy, that your natural Good Sense will afford you Light enough to judge of their Force & Solidity" (Hume, as quoted in McCracken, p. 254). McCracken notes that the complete letter is reprinted by R. H. Popkin in "So, Hume Did Read Berkeley," *Journal of Philosophy* (1964), vol. 61, pp. 774-5. To a careful reader of both Malebranche and Hume the connections between these two philosophers are clear.

power or force. As McCracken points out, although Malebranche's arguments rest on an appeal to the pure intellect while Hume's rests on an appeal to sense experience, the point is the same for both philosophers.⁸⁵ McCracken also suggests that Hume's emphasis on causation as a necessary connection owes much to Malebranche.⁸⁶ In fact Malebranche was such a great influence upon Hume that McCracken even goes so far as to suggest that Hume might have "not only kept the *Search* in mind, as he wrote on causality, but that he even had it open for consultation while writing."⁸⁷ However, this does not mean that all of Hume's work was done for him by Malebranche. As McCracken puts it:

That Hume was a thinker of great originality and power is obvious. What may be less obvious is the precise character of his originality. Much of the *Treatise* is in fact borrowed; yet, for all that, it remains a work of exceptional originality. The reason for this is not hard to discover: Hume had a gift for seeing in the ideas of others possibilities that were not always apparent to their originators. Again and again, he took over ideas and arguments from his sources and passed from them more far-reaching consequences than had their initial proponents—consequences, indeed, that the authors of those ideas would often have disavowed.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ McCracken, p. 256.

⁸⁵ As McCracken writes: "our idea of body (whether that idea comes from sense or intellect) consists of an extended, solid, movable thing, and none of those properties amounts to a 'power' in a body [...]. We may say, then, I think, that from Malebranche Hume seems to have learned several arguments that were important in the defense of his ideas about power: namely, that we get no idea of power from or notions of body, or mind, or the union of body and mind, and that the variety of philosophical opinions about power is evidence that we lack a clear idea of it" (McCracken, pp. 258-261).

⁸⁶ McCracken, p. 262.

⁸⁷ McCracken, p. 258. McCracken makes this suggestion after comparing some passages from Hume to a passage from Malebranche. For example, McCracken suggests we compare Hume's "There are some, who maintain, that bodies operate by their substantial form; others, by their accidents or qualities; several, by their mater and form; some by their form and accidents; others by certain virtues and faculties distinct from all this" (Hume, as quoted in McCracken p. 257) to Malebranche's "There are philosophers who maintain that second causes act by...their substantial form. Many by Accident or Qualities, some by Matter and Form; others by Form and Accidents, other still by certain virtues, or faculties distinct from all this" (Malebranche, as quoted in McCracken, p. 257).

⁸⁸ McCracken, p. 255.

What McCracken says here is certainly true. Although there clearly was a strong influence of Malebranche upon Hume, Hume, the “Skeptical Naturalist”, certainly did draw out consequences with which Malebranche, the “Christian Platonist”, would disagree.⁸⁹

Where does Leibniz fit into this Malebranche-Hume connection? Hume does not list Leibniz as an influence on his work. Still there is a sense in which Leibniz’s philosophy may be seen as being even closer to Hume than the philosophy of Malebranche. As we have seen, Leibniz’s critique of Malebranche in the early part of his correspondence with Arnauld is something of a false start for Leibniz. In a sense this false start brings Leibniz (quite unwittingly) remarkably close to a Humean position. This critique involves the accusation that Malebranche’s God is required constantly to intervene, via new acts of will, in the created world. In place of Malebranche’s occasionalism Leibniz offers his notion of a pre-established harmony. The pre-established harmony as it is presented there simply reduces God’s intervention in the world (and hence all real causality) to God’s initial creative act. After this singular instance of real causality, the pre-established harmony seems to leave us with nothing but apparent causality and non-causal regularities.

⁸⁹ As Richard Watson writes: “Ironically, against all his intentions, by stressing that mechanical models do not contain secondary causation – that bodies do not interact causally – Malebranche also lays the ground for instrumentalism and the highly successful New Science, void of occult force, powers, and God” (Watson, “Malebranche, Models, and Causation,” p. 91). This New Science is a consequence of Malebranche’s philosophy, with which he would not approve, but which is supported by, and has probably been strongly influenced by, Hume’s use of the philosophy of Malebranche.

For very good reasons (some of which we will address shortly) Leibniz is rarely presented as being close to Hume. However, the quasi-Humean nature of the Leibnizian pre-established harmony, as it is presented in the early part of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence, might seem less surprising when we stop to compare Leibniz's critique of occasionalism at this stage with Hume's critique. Not only does Leibniz's pre-established harmony possess some Humean echoes, but Leibniz's criticism of occasionalism here is identical with Hume's. As McCracken points out:

Like Leibniz, he [Hume] objected that Occasionalism implies that God must continually act in the world, as if by constant miracle; but surely 'it argues more wisdom to contrive at first the fabric of the world with such perfect foresight that, of itself, and by its proper operation, it may serve all the purposes of providence, than if the great Creator were obliged every moment to adjust its parts, and animate by his breath all the wheels of that stupendous machine'.⁹⁰

At this stage Leibniz's criticism of occasionalism is consistent with the Humean position; and his pre-established harmony contains some elements of Hume's critique of the ordinary concept of causation. Of course, Leibniz's mature position is clearly not Humean. However, it is not until Leibniz discovers his true difference from the occasionalists, through his new account of miracles and new emphasis on power in the created world, that his pre-established harmony is clearly purged of this quasi-Humean world view.

Leibniz's emphasis on power in the created world, in the final stage of his philosophical development, clearly places him far from Malebranche and Hume. How are we to characterize Leibniz's mature view? Given his use of Aristotelian terminology

in the presentation of his mature position, we might be tempted to suggest that this position is a simple return to an Aristotelian account of causation. However, throughout his entire philosophical career, even as early as in his initial disagreement with Malebranche (recall that he approved of Malebranche's critique of the Scholastic concept of causation), Leibniz expresses some concerns about the Aristotelian tradition, especially the Scholastic Aristotelian tradition. He is in truth so removed from the Scholastic Aristotelian realism that if we take a closer look at Leibniz's mature position, we can detect a movement toward the Kantian account of causation within Leibniz's thought.

Immanuel Kant is said to have revolutionized philosophy. As the story goes, Kant was prompted to his 'Copernican revolution' by the skeptical philosophy of David Hume. According to Kant, Hume awoke him from his 'dogmatic slumber'; although he thought that Hume was on the right track in his attempt to explain how our knowledge is acquired, he also thought that Hume had left this project incomplete. Hume's epistemology was unable to provide any explanation of what Kant called synthetic a priori knowledge. Although we make synthetic a priori judgments, the answer to the question of how we are capable of making these judgments is not given in Hume's account. Kant's solution to the problem of synthetic a priori judgments was to posit a new relationship between the mind and its objects. This is what he calls his 'Copernican revolution'. Since synthetic a priori judgments could not be explained on the assumption that the mind conforms to its objects, Kant was led to hypothesize that objects conform to

⁹⁰ McCracken, p. 268.

the mind. On this account, the mind brings something to the objects it experiences. What the mind brings to perception and experience Kant divides into 'forms of intuition' and 'categories of thought' respectively. Space and time are forms of intuition; the mind inevitably perceives things as being in space and time since it imposes this structure on sense data. Cause-effect, on the other hand, is one of the categories of thought; the mind inevitably imposes this relational structure on perceptions in its activity of making judgments of experience.

If we look to Leibniz's mature position and inquire about the nature of causal power in the natural world, we can see some elements of this Kantian position appear in Leibniz's thought. One answer to our question about the nature of causal power in the natural world is readily accessible. Leibniz's insistence on the independence of each monad and his identification of perception as an expression of what is perceived by each monad places causal power within each monad, since it identifies each monad as the cause of its own perceptual states. This much alone moves Leibniz beyond Malebranche and Hume and nearer to Kant since it involves a complete internalization of causation within the monad in much the same way as causation is internalized in the subject (but as a 'category of thought') for Kant. However, despite Leibniz's insistence on the independence of each monad, there seems to be another concept of causation within Leibniz's thought whereby monads can be conceived of as being active or passive with respect to one another. In the Monadology, for example, Leibniz states that a monad can be thought of as acting outwardly on another monad insofar as this active monad contains 'perfection', or distinct perceptions which explain a priori what is happening in the

passive monad.⁹¹ Initially, this apparent mutual dependence of monads seems to lie in direct opposition to Leibniz's primary philosophical position of the status of the monad as an independent being. We are left to wonder how these supposedly fundamentally independent beings can possibly be thought of as acting on one another. The quick and easy answer to this question is the one offered by Leibniz: "But in simple substances there is only an *ideal* [apparent] influence of one monad upon another."⁹² However, this answer merely raises the further question of how fundamentally independent entities can have *any* kind of relation (ideal or real) to one another. In this way, Leibniz's account of apparent causality (i.e., intermonadic, as opposed to intramonadic, action) reduces to the same fundamental question as the question of how space and time (which are, for Leibniz, relations of position and succession) arise from these spiritual and hence unextended and fundamentally non-spatial, non-temporal monads. Donald Rutherford suggests an answer to this question. Despite the fact that Leibniz's metaphysics is grounded in these monads, his metaphysics, through his account of perception as expression (where soul-like monads perceive the universe of other monads as a world of spatiotemporally related bodies), is able to deliver "an analogue of spatiotemporal ordering among monads."⁹³ Leibniz achieves this analogue by drawing on correlations among the spatiotemporal phenomena that form the content of the perceptions of different monads; Leibniz's position seems to be that relations of coexistence and

⁹¹ L. 647-648.

⁹² L. 648.

⁹³ Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995) p. 192.

succession among monads can be defined in a way that is “parasitic on the spatiotemporal order of the phenomenon perceived by these monads.”⁹⁴ Given the fact that monads perceive the universe of other monads as a world of spatiotemporally related bodies, we can “exploit the spatiotemporal order inherent in the perceptions of monads to define an order of coexistence and succession among those monads themselves.”⁹⁵ In this way, monads may be thought of in terms of a phenomenal order of succession and coexistence. This, of course, means that space and time are relational. As Leibniz explains to Samuel Clarke: “this [space] can only be an ideal thing, containing a certain order, where the mind conceives the application of relation.”⁹⁶ This position, insofar as it places space and time within the monad as forms through which the universe must be perceived, and insofar as it is therefore “an analysis of the forms constitutive of perception and of their limitations,”⁹⁷ puts Leibniz’s account of space and time close to Kant’s critical position (where space and time are ‘forms of intuition’).

Of course, space and time are not the only relational entities in Leibniz’s ontology. In his notes for a letter to Des Bosses, Leibniz provides us with a list of three of these relational entities: “duration, or the order of successive things, and position, or the order of coexisting things, and interaction, or mutual action for as long as we conceive the ideal mutual dependence of monads to last.”⁹⁸ As this letter implies, and as Rutherford explicitly states, Leibniz’s account of causal relations among monads is “of a

⁹⁴ Rutherford, p. 192.

⁹⁵ Rutherford, p. 192.

⁹⁶ L. 704.

⁹⁷ L. 720.

piece" with his account of space and time. This should not be surprising, since space, time, and causation belong to the same class of entities (i.e., relational or ideal entities). Following this line of reasoning, we infer Leibniz's position to be that causal intermonadic relations can be defined in a way that is very similar to the spatiotemporal monadic relations. This ideal interdependence of monads is to be defined in terms of the perceptions of these monads: "In both cases, we are to see these intermonadic relations supervening on the intrinsic properties of individual monads: whether one monad 'acts' on another is determined entirely by correlations among their respective perceptions."⁹⁹ In this way, space and time, and intermonadic causation are relational entities the existence of which is 'parasitic' on the perceptions expressed by these monads. Thus, these relations (space, time, and causation) are not real entities, they are something more like the conditions for the possibility of experience; they are not in the world in the ordinary sense, but "are rather 'modes of conceiving', or what a mind imposes on the world in apprehending the agreement and connection of singular things."¹⁰⁰ This view puts Leibniz's concept of causation far from the occasionalist account, since although causation is a mere category, it still exists (in opposition to the occasionalists) in the created. However, it also puts Leibniz's concept of causation even closer to Kant's, since causation exists not as a property of objects or our representations, but as a mode of conception in which these objects (our representations) must be represented. In this way,

⁹⁸ G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, Trans. and Ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989) p. 199.

⁹⁹ Rutherford, p. 193.

¹⁰⁰ Donald Rutherford "Metaphysics: The late period," *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge:

Leibniz's concept of causation anticipates Kant's identification of causation as a 'category of thought'. Thus, at least some of Kant's great 'Copernican revolution' was contained in the seventeenth century 'dogmatic' philosophy that he inherited from Leibniz through Wolff.

Although much of Leibniz's dispute with Malebranche might seem to be remote and of merely theological importance, there is a great deal of serious and even revolutionary philosophy underlying this debate. The attempt of Leibniz to differentiate himself from Malebranche, prefigured and has probably actually influenced, the direction of the great eighteenth century debate over the nature of causation. The importance of the Malebranche-Leibniz dispute to the history of philosophy becomes evident when we attempt to characterize the difference between Malebranche and Leibniz on the topic of causation. Examined in this way, we can see that much of the movement from Hume to Kant had its predecessors in the seventeenth century debate between Malebranche and Leibniz. We may still have some doubts about just how much of this movement from Hume to Kant has been anticipated in the movement from Malebranche to Leibniz. However, at the very least, it is clear that Malebranche and Leibniz played a central role in creating the philosophical context for the eighteenth century debate over the nature of causation.

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