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“Natural Predicates”: Properties and Dispositions in Leibniz’s Later Writings

1. Two concepts of “nature”.

The word “nature” has different meanings in Leibniz’s work. One meaning is *Nature* (written with a capital “n” in this paper) as the global system of created things. Another meaning is *nature* in the sense of the metaphysical constituent of individual substances¹. This latter case may be further subdivided. In most of Leibniz’s writings, the *nature* of an individual simply means the complete concept of a given individual, or in other words, the concept through which God sees all the facts that relate to that individual. In other writings, primarily in his later period, Leibniz distinguishes between the preceding “transcendent” notion of *nature* and another “more ordinary” notion of it (ref. 3). This “more ordinary” notion was inspired by the legal custom of calling the default consequences of contracts “natural” (2-3). Similarly, Leibniz calls properties “natural” in this more ordinary sense when they are frequently instantiated in their subject, but they are instantiated if and only where there is no “impediment” to that instantiation (ref. 4-5). Leibniz sometimes classifies these properties as an intermediate degree of predicates called “natural” predicates in order to distinguish them from both essential predicates and existential predicates (ref. 7).

It should be said that the metaphysical *status* of these “natural” predicates is not entirely clear. They seem to include both well-determined propensities, e.g. an object in motion tends to continue in a straight line, and very general truths concerning a given subject, e.g., living beings usually die. Since these latter “natural predicates” cannot be instantiated without particular circumstances (for instance: “to die due to a cannonball”: ref. 3), the circumstances seem to be more causally involved in these latter cases than the idea of a mere “lack of impediment” would suggest. A plausible explanation of this difference could be that Leibniz admits both natural predicates which express an “active” role of their subjects and natural predicates which express a “passive” role of their subjects with respect to the circumstances. Leibniz, however, does not use this terminology. Moreover, when a property is totally dependent upon circumstances - e.g., the solid or liquid state of water is entirely dependent on temperature – he does not consider this property to be a natural property (ref. 1)². In other words, Leibniz does not intend to provide a general classification of factual situations in which individual subjects can be, but rather to indicate prototypical cases of the likelihood of potential facts, which allow for the identification of the *dispositional properties* of the individual substances involved. There is no need to explain why light tends to move in a straight line, the fact that A dies on this or that date must be explained, we would need a supernatural explanation were A never to die.

¹ There are even other meanings of the word “nature”. For instance, the Aristotelian definition “principle of motion and of rest” recalled in *De ipsa natura*, 1698 (GP IV, 504 and ff.).

² Sleight goes a bit too far when he writes “Roughly speaking...a property *f* is natural to a given substance *a* just in the case it would be miraculous (that is contrary to its nature) were a member of the species to which *x* belongs to lack *f*”, but he is absolutely right when he remarks that Leibniz’s “natural” properties do not include “every contingent property of a substance” (Robert Sleight Jr., *Leibniz and Arnauld. A Commentary on Their Correspondence*, Yale UP, 1990, pp. 78-79).

The distinction between the three kinds of predicates seems to be deeply interlaced with some of Leibniz's typical doctrines, like that of the *spontaneity* of created substances and that of *striving possibles* as a basis for God's choice of the best of possible worlds. However, I have been unable to find any discussion of the doctrine of the three kinds of predicates earlier than the *Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain*, Chapter IV. 9 (ref. 1). So, first of all, we have to establish when it emerges and in which philosophical debates it plays an important role.

2. The premises.

The basic definition of a "natural predicate" is that B is a natural predicate of the subject A, if (i) B is a property whose instantiation may be derived from A's essential attributes, i.e. the essential attributes of A are the sufficient conditions (in the case of active power) or at least the necessary conditions (in the case of passive power) for the instantiation of B; (ii) even if A exists, it is possible that B does not exist, if the external environment is unfavorable to B's instantiation.

Such an approach already appears in some of Leibniz's earlier writings, for instance the long list of definitions entitled *On Affections* (1679). Here the concept of *power* (*potentia*) is defined as follows: A has the power to do B if B can be inferred from A considered as an individual (*per se spectatum*)³. The modality *per se* (which we find again in the writings on natural predicates: see ref. 2, 5) indicates that the power-to-do-something must be assigned regardless of the constraints imposed by the need for mutual compossibility between individual substances. As in the later passages on natural predicates, Leibniz implicitly recalls a definition of contingency in terms of *possibility to prevent* some fact (*impedibilitas*) which was rather widespread within the scholastic tradition: even in the case where the cause A exists and necessarily tends to produce the effect B, if it is possible that the effect B is prevented by external circumstances, B's occurring is contingent⁴.

However, the definitions traced in 1679 are not intended to build a doctrine of "natural predicates". Basically, what Leibniz wishes to show here is that *only* the constraints imposed by compossibility prevent the realization of everything that is logically possible, therefore introducing "striving possibles", a doctrine already outlined in this and other contemporary writings⁵. The "possibles", not the individuals and their properties, are the true actors of this first doctrine of powers. Evidently at this stage there is a lack of a philosophical problem making it interesting to ask what kinds of dispositional properties the individual substances may have as such.

The need to establish a doctrine of dispositional properties only arose when Leibniz started to ask to himself which kind of distinction one may draw between Nature and Miracle. This issue is announced as early as the *Discourse of Metaphysics*, § 16. Here Leibniz stresses that an individual's "nature" (i.e., the complete concept of this individual) also contains God's supernatural aids to that individual's actions⁶. But, with a view to avoiding the paradoxical consequence that there is nothing absolutely supernatural, Leibniz later corrects his terminology, calling "natural" that which

³ A VI 4 B, 1431: "Potentia est status ex quo quid sequi potest per se spectato".

⁴ This was the point of view both of Thomists and Averroists such as Siger of Brabant. See Anneliese Maier, *Studien zur Naturphilosophie der Spätscholastik. I: Die Vorläufer Galileis im 14. Jahrhundert*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura 1949 (*Notwendigkeit, Kontingenz und Zufall*: pp. 219 ff.).

⁵ See A IV 4B, 1432 ("Admirabilis transitus a potentia ad actum"). See, too, the contemporary *Dialogue entre Theophile et Polidore* (A VI 4 B, 2231-2).

⁶ "si nous comprenons dans nostre nature tout ce qu'elle exprime, rien ne luy est surnaturel" (*Discours de métaphysique*, 1686, § 15: A VI 4B, 1554).

depends on the “less general laws” given by God (i.e. on the ordinary laws of nature compared with the whole divine plan)⁷. Consequently, an individual’s “nature” or “power” now indicates that which expresses the individual’s “limits”, while the individual’s complete concept (here: “essence”) also expresses God’s infinite power⁸.

Here, for the first time, we encounter the distinction between two ways of using the word “(individual) nature” which is also found in the passages on natural predicates. However, the way in which this distinction is drawn shows that we are still far from the views expressed in the later passages on “natural predicates”. In the *Discourse*, Leibniz sees all the powers of individuals as grounded on the contingent laws which God gave Nature. This is true of course: natural forces could not subsist without some “systematic” general laws ruling them. But, it remains unclear as to whether these powers are grounded *exclusively* on God’s laws or not.

It is at the time of his disputes with the Occasionalists that Leibniz begins to investigate this latter aspect of the question, which is of course a partial formulation of the fundamental question: “Do the powers of creatures *exist* or does everything depend directly on God?”. Leibniz arrives at the conclusion that the presence of a constant connection between the states of an individual A and some other state of affairs B *is not enough* to empower A to do B. For example, if God arbitrarily decided that bodies move according to a curved line, the result would not be another kind of natural order, but rather a *perpetual miracle*, i.e. a sequence of events which, even following a law, may not be explained by the natures of the individuals involved⁹.

It is by introducing the concept of *perpetual miracle* that Leibniz comes to the conclusion that creatures have *natural*, i.e. *prenomic*, dispositional properties. In order to find some sort of metaphysical glue which could bind the general laws of Nature together with the individual substances and their inner forces, he assumes that: (i) each individual substance has some dispositional properties which derive directly from the essential attributes of that substance, and (ii) divine decrees make these dispositions effective through intra-individual “developmental laws” in harmony with Nature’s “systematic laws”. Leibniz’s Metaphysics of the 1690s – mainly his doctrine of the Active Force with its further distinction between Active Force (or Entelechy) and Primary Matter – presupposes both these assumptions, even if the second one is stated more explicitly. But one can detect the importance of the first assumption through Leibniz’s criticism of Scholasticism and its doctrine of “faculties”, which are described as “bare powers” which provide no help in determining the probability of a given fact taking place¹⁰. Moreover, if the Active Force involves and embodies the divine decrees, this dependence on divine decrees is far less important in the case of Primary Matter, which embodies the “limitations” inherent in the created monads and these limitations are certainly not a result of God’s Will. Furthermore, in the field of moral theology, Leibniz assumes from 1688-1689 that, for each created individual, a set of “primary

⁷ “ce qu’on appelle naturel depend des Maximes moins generales, que peuvent comprendre les Creatures” (A VI 4B, 1555).

⁸ “...on pourroit appeller nostre essence, ce qui comprend tout ce que nous exprimons, et comme elle exprime nostre union avec Dieu même, elle n’a point des limites, et rien ne la passe. Mais ce qui est limité en nous, pourra estre appelé nostre nature ou nostre puissance....” (A VI 4B, 1555).

⁹ “Si Dieu decretoit (par exemple) que tous les corps auroient une tendance en ligne circulaire, et que les rayons des cercles seroient proportionnels aux grandeurs des corps, il faudroit dire qu’il y eût un moyen d’exécuter cela par des loix plus simples, ou bien il faudra avouer que Dieu l’exécutera miraculeusement....” (*Eclaircissement sur Bayle*: GP IV, p. 520). See even passage 6.

¹⁰ See mainly *De primae philosophiae emendatione et de notione substantiae*, 1694 (GP IV, 468-71).

dispositions” must exist which can explain their different uses of freedom and their different reactions to the gifts of Grace¹¹.

3. *The aims of the doctrine of natural predicates.*

At this point, we can conclude that (1) the aim of the doctrine of natural predicates was to integrate the concept of “power” (*potentia*) into Leibniz’s metaphysical system. One might suggest that Leibniz was stimulated to express his own views more clearly by reading the chapter devoted to “powers” by Locke in his *An Essay on Human Understanding* (Book I, chap. 21). In the corresponding chapter of his *Nouveaux Essais*, Leibniz criticizes the relational approach to powers chosen by Locke – seeing it as a consequence of the error of conceiving motion as a property which can be transmitted from one body to another – but does not provide an alternative view, passing quickly to another topic in Locke’s chapter, that of free will. Therefore, the discussion on “natural” predicates in *Nouveaux Essais*, IV, c. 9 (ref. 1) seems to be a sort of “delayed reaction”, with Leibniz suddenly realizing how a non-relational doctrine of powers could be formulated. However, (2) the doctrine of the three degrees of predicates immediately became a valuable tool in Leibniz’s controversy with the Occasionalists, both because it enabled him to reformulate more clearly his views on the risk of introducing “perpetual miracles” (ref. 6), and because it helped him defend his concept of spontaneity from the charge of fatalism (ref. 3-4). Finally (3) the doctrine of natural predicates enabled Leibniz to emphasize the active power of created substances without risking inconsistency with the dogma of God’s Concurrence with each creature’s action, since the doctrine of natural predicates assumes both that the factual states of creatures always arise from their basic dispositional properties and that such properties engender only a propensity or – as Leibniz calls it – an *exigency* which God could even reject¹². A good example of this is the criticism of the Cartesian view of continuous creation in *Theodicy*, III § 383 (ref. 5). Although Descartes is right in establishing that no created substance can persevere in its existence without God’s concurrence, it is also true that individual substances *naturally* tend to persist in their existence (and that their annihilation would be a miracle).

It is necessary at this point to make some remarks on the relation between *dispositions*, as they are discussed in the passages on natural predicates, and *tendencies* (*conatus*, *nisus*), as they are discussed in Leibniz’s writings on Dynamics. There is a clear distinction between these two concepts. The first relates to things taken *sub ratione generalitatis* (water, light, trees, human beings...). The second one identifies concrete states of affairs concerning a given individual of our world, causally related to other states of affairs. A mass that moves in a circle *already* tends to go in a straight line. However, Leibniz often treats dispositions and tendencies as if they were two aspects of a relatively continuous set of degrees of what we might call the “natural probability” of a

¹¹ “...sunt enim quaedam in mente dispositiones primitivae quae non sunt ab externo. Itaque dicendum est Mentis ipsas per se, ex natura sua primitiva dissimiles esse inter se, contra quam vulgo putatur (....) Radix libertatis est in dispositionibus primitivis. Instabis: queri te posse, cur Deus tibi non plus virium dedit. Respondeo: si hoc fecisset, tu non esses, nam non te, sed aliam creaturam produxisset” (A, VI 4B, 1639 = Grua, 327).

¹² See *Theodicy*, III, § 388 (GP VI, 346). On the sources of Leibniz’s concept of exigency, see mainly Tilman Ramelow, *Gott, Freiheit, Weltwahl. Die Metaphysik der Willensfreiheit zwischen Antonio Perez S. J. (1599-1649) und G. W. Leibniz (1646 –1716)*, Leiden – New York – Köln, Brill, 1997; Sven K. Knebel, *Wille, Würfel und Wahrscheinlichkeit. Das System des moralischen Notwendigkeit in der Jesuitenscholastik 1550-1700*, Hamburg, Meiner

future fact. From the point of view of his metaphysics, the manifestations of the Active Force are something “in between the power and the act”¹³. In short, Leibniz seems to see tendencies as dispositions which are not prevented from manifesting themselves, but that can still be prevented from *fully* achieving the virtual content which is inherent in them¹⁴. Such a view of tendencies (or “appetites” when we talk of single monads) is so widespread in Leibniz’s work that it is hard to decide whether he considers tendencies as real *internal states* of an individual substance or not. It is no coincidence that, in his *Monadology*, perception is defined as a “transitory state” (“état passager”: § 14), but appetite only as a “transition” (“passage d’une perception à une autre”: § 15). This seems to suggest that appetites have – so to speak – an *adverbial* nature with regard to perceptions: the “transitory state” of an individual substance A at the time *t1* could be described as “A perceives the situation B wishfully-toward-C”. The “wishfully-toward-C” modality is real enough to introduce an “exigency” into the mechanism of continuous creation of our world, giving God a reason to create C (or something else causally dependent on the “wishfully-toward-C”) at *t2*. At the same time, the “wishfully-toward-C” modality has no way of engendering C without God’s concurrence. And of course the “wishfully-toward-C” modality depends on A’s primitive dispositions and therefore on A’s metaphysical “limits” and, thus, it will introduce some degree of “imperfection” to the world. But God could not avoid this consequence without going against his wise choice of preventing too many miracles.

4. How are dispositions contained in the complete concepts?

The core question inherent in Leibniz’s writings on natural predicates and probably the reason for the embryonic state in which that same doctrine remains is of course that of the compatibility between the “ordinary” and the “transcendent” concepts of individual natures. How may entities as vague as dispositional properties find a place in Leibniz’s metaphysics, if this metaphysics is grounded on such a logically structured doctrine as that of the complete concepts?

As we have seen, the doctrine of natural predicates generally refers to creatures taken *sub ratione generalitatis* (bodies, trees, light, water ...). So far, it does not seem particularly problematic with regard to the doctrine of complete concepts. The metaphysics of complete concepts does not prevent us from grouping different substances with common properties in order to infer what usually depends on these properties in our, or even in every, *well-ordered* world (i.e. in such a world whose existence does not involve a “perpetual miracle”). A particular problem exists, however, if we assume – as Leibniz does – that every created individual (or at least every mind, every self-conscious monad) has its own “primitive dispositions” which are quite different from those of the other minds of our world. In this case, it would seem quite correct to state that the individual A was predisposed (= had a strong natural probability) to do B, but the divine decrees prevented him/her from doing B; or that the context C favoured or discouraged A from achieving the results that his/her dispositions made him/her able to achieve. Do such statements make sense? Apparently not, since we cannot find truth-makers for such claims without introducing other possible worlds, in which nevertheless – according to Leibniz’s theory of World-Bound Individuals

2000. On its use, see also Sukjae Lee, *Leibniz on Divine Concurrence*, in “The Philosophical Review”, 113/2 (2004), pp. 203-246.

¹³ Letter to Des Bosses, February 6th 1706 (GP II, p. 295).

¹⁴ “Il est vrai que l’appétit ne saurait toujours parvenir entièrement à la perception où il tend, mais il en obtient toujours quelque chose, et parvient à des perceptions nouvelles” (*Monadology*, § 15).

– our A did not exist. Yet, such statements seem to be fully authorized by Leibniz's doctrine of primitive dispositions.

There is a case in which Leibniz addresses this issue specifically and it is that of the Polish twins, one of whom is kidnapped by the Tartars, and the other stays (happily) at home (*Theodicy*, I, § 101 et seq.). The twins share the same "primitive dispositions" and are therefore a sort of metaphysical "clones". Now, what Leibniz concludes is that the destinies of the Polish twins are not determined chiefly through their common dispositional properties, but first of all through external circumstances. He points out that the circumstances in which God chose to place a given individual condition his/her concrete appetites, thus criticizing the theological view that an individual is chosen by God on the basis of his/her internal propensity to accept Grace (*Gratia ex praevisa merita*) and returning therefore to a theology closer to the spirit of Augustine and Luther.

One might ask why assume the existence of dispositions, if they were destined to play so unimportant a role in the explanation of existential predicates. This would seem to be a remarkable contradiction in Leibniz's approach. In my opinion, inconsistency can be avoided only by taking seriously that brief passage in *Theodicy* in which Leibniz suggests that– despite their differences – every human being's natural dispositions make his/her damnation more *naturally probable* than his/her salvation (*Theodicy*, I, § 105). This seems to mean that salvation is always *naturally improbable* if we consider the individual natures in themselves, even in the cases in which Divine Grace works through natural means (opportunities, education...) and not through "extraordinary aids". In other words, in the context of moral life, *acquired* dispositions come to play a more important causal role than *natural* dispositions, which – nevertheless – have some causal role too.

However, in my opinion, the case of the Polish twins is important mainly because Leibniz plainly admits a *comparability* between their situations. From his point of view, it makes sense to state that a particular person does not reach the best of his/her potential in a given situation in which he/she is placed (see again *Theodicy*, I, § 105). But, on the other hand, the comparability of two individual destinies – even if grounded on the basis of such a *robust* similarity as that determined by shared "natural dispositions" – does not mean that we are talking about a *same* individual. Even two metaphysical clones are not the same individual, but two individuals who share a *same pre-individual* set of properties¹⁵. This becomes rather obvious starting from what we suggested about dispositions and appetites. If appetites are inseparable from perceptions, the two clones, even sharing all basic dispositions, may not share even a single internal state. And if we consider how much our self-awareness and our sense of ourselves are rooted in the specific configuration of our perceptual episodes, it becomes clear why Leibniz always states that we cannot wish a different destiny for ourselves without wishing at the same time (paradoxically) not to be ourselves. In other words, if we may imagine other individuals who realize our own potential better than we do, we cannot imagine "what it is like" to be such individuals. This argument seems valid

¹⁵ This view can be found even in some former remarks on inter-world identity: "Sed excusabile tamen ut tunc nomine Petri intelligantur quae illis insunt, ex quibus non sequitur negatio, simul itemque ex toto universo subtrahenda omnia ex quibus non sequitur, et tunc aliquando fieri potest ut ex reliquis positis in universo sequatur decisio per se (...) Si nullum sit vinculum naturale seu consequentia ex reliquis positis, non potest sciri quid sit futurum, nisi ex Dei decreto secundum id quod optimum." (Grua, p. 358).

even without the logical substratum provided by the doctrine of complete concepts and therefore I will conclude with it.

[References]

(1)*Theophile*:Fort bien, et c'est dans ce sens que les Philosophes aussi, distinguant si souvent entre ce qui est de l'*Essence* et ce qui est de l'*Existence*, rapportent à l'*Existence* tout ce qui est accidentel ou contingent. Bien souvent, on ne sçait pas même si les propositions universelles, que nous ne sçavons que par experience, ne sont pas peutestre accidentelles aussi, parce que nostre experience est bornée; comme dans les pays où l'eau n'est point glacée, cette proposition qu'on y formera, que l'eau est tousjours dans un estat fluide, n'est pas essentielle, et on le connoist en venant dans des pays plus froids. Cependant on peut prendre l'accidentel d'une maniere plus retrecie, en sorte qu'il y a comme un milieu entre luy et l'essentiel; et ce milieu est le *naturel*, c'est à dire ce qui n'appartient pas à la chose necessairement, mais qui cependant luy convient de soy, si rien ne l'empêche. Ainsi, quelqu'un pourroit soutenir qu'à la verité il n'est pas essentiel à l'eau, mais qu'il luy est naturel au moins d'estre fluide. On le pourroit soutenir, dis-je, mais ce n'est pas pourtant une chose demonstrée, et peutestre que les habitans de la Lune, s'il y en avoit, auroient sujet de ne se pas croire moins fondés de dire qu'il est naturel à l'eau d'estre glacée. Cependant il y a d'autres cas où le naturel est moins douteux, par exemple, un rayon de lumiere va tousjours droit dans le même milieu, à moins que par accident il ne rencontre quelque surface qui le reflechit (*Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain*, IV, § 9; GP V, 414-5)

(2) *Essentia* est principium eorum quae rei competunt per se. *Existentia* est principium eorum quae rei competunt per accidens. Atque hoc sensu solet distingui inter essentialiam rerum atque existentiam; sive inter rei ideam et statum in quo reperitur. In ipsis tamen per se competentibus est discrimen quoddam, sunt enim quae non quidem necessario, sed ita tamen competunt, si nihil obstat. Atque haec neque sunt essentialia, neque omnino sunt accidentalia, itaque ab ICTis [IurisConsultis] solent vocari naturalia, itaque distingui possent *Essentia* esse principium praedicatorum necessariorum; *Naturam* per se competentium; *Existentiam* principium accidentalium [*At the marge*: Conceptus completus est principium omnium] (LH IV 7 C, f. 82).

(3) On distingue par tout entre ce qui est *essentiel* et ce qui est *naturel*, jusque dans les livres des Jurisconsultes qui font difference entre ce qui est essentiel et ce qui est naturel à un contract. Les propriétés sont essentielles et éternelles, mais les modifications peuvent estre naturelles quoyqu'elles soyent changeantes. Il y a même des degrés entre les modifications naturelles. Le plus naturel est ce qui est entierement conforme à la perfection originaire de la nature. Mais quand elle est corrompue, les fautes luy peuvent devenir naturelles. Il ne faut point confondre aussi ce que nous appellons naturel dans un sens ordinaire avec ce qui peut estre appelé naturel dans un sens plus metaphysique. Par exemple dans le sens ordinaire, il nous est naturel de mourir, mais il ne nous est point naturel de mourir d'un coup de canon; on appelle cela accidentel et violent et on a raison; aussi ne pretends-je point changer ce langage. Ainsi quand je dis que tout ce qui arrive à une substance peut estre jugé dans un certain sens luy estre naturel, ou estre une suite de sa nature individuelle, j'entends la nature complete qui comprend tout ce qui appartient à cet individu. Je l'entends donc dans un certain sens transcendant, suivant lequel la nature complete de chaque individu enveloppe tout ce qui luy arrive et tous les autres individus à cause de leur rapport entre eux, ce qui est vray, cet enveloppement estant conforme à la rigueur des expressions

metaphysiques, quoiqu'il ne soit point considéré dans l'usage populaire. Mais je ne leve point les distinctions ordinaires pour cela, et je ne prends les mots dans ce sens extraordinaire que parce que je ne trouve point de termes plus propres pour m'exprimer (*Addition à l'Explication du système nouveau*, 1709?: GP IV, 582)

(4) Or (dit-on) une suite naturelle est une suite nécessaire. Je réponds que je n'accorde point cela, et que je m'étonne qu'on avance de telles positions, pour me pouvoir imputer des erreurs. Ce qui est naturel, est convenable à la nature de la chose, mais ce qui est nécessaire est essentiel et ne sauroit être changé. Les feuilles viennent naturellement aux arbres et ne laissent pas de tomber. Il est naturel que les méchants commettent des crimes, mais il n'est point nécessaire qu'ils les commettent. (*Réponse aux objections contre le système...*, 1709: GP IV, 592)

(5) Les Cartesiens, à l'exemple de leur Maître, se servent pour le prouver d'un principe qui n'est pas assés concluant. Ils disent que les momens du temps n'ayant aucune liaison nécessaire l'un avec l'autre, il ne s'ensuit pas de ce que je suis à ce moment, que je subsisteray au moment qui suivra, si la même cause, qui me donne l'estre pour ce moment, ne me le donne aussi pour l'instant suivant [...] On peut repondre, qu'à la verité, il ne s'ensuit point *nécessairement* de ce que je suis, que je seray; mais cela suit pourtant *naturellement* c'est à dire de soy, *per se*, si rien ne l'empêche. C'est la difference qu'on peut faire entre l'essentiel et le naturel; c'est comme naturellement le même mouvement dure, si quelque nouvelle cause ne l'empêche, ou le change, parce que la raison qui le fait cesser dans cet instant, si elle n'est pas nouvelle, l'auroit déjà fait cesser plustost. (*Theodicy*.1710, III § 383: GP VI, 342).

(6) L'on voit que Monsieur Bayle croit que tout ce qui se fait par des loix generales, se fait sans miracle. Mais j'ay assés montré, que si la loy n'est point fondée en raisons, et ne sert pas à expliquer l'évenement par la nature des choses, elle ne peut être executée que par miracle. Comme, par exemple, si Dieu avoit ordonné que les corps dussent se mouvoir en ligne circulaire, il auroit eu besoin de miracles perpetuels, ou du ministere des Anges, pour executer cet ordre; car il est contraire à la nature du mouvement, où le corps quitte naturellement la ligne circulaire, pour continuer dans la droite tangente, si rien ne le retient. Il ne suffit donc pas que Dieu ordonne simplement qu'une blessure excite un sentiment agreable, il faut trouver des moyens naturels pour cela. Le vray moyen par lequel Dieu fait que l'ame a des sentimens de ce qui se passe dans le corps, vient de la nature de l'ame, qui est representative des corps et faite en sorte par avance, que les representations qui naitront en elle les unes des autres par une suite naturelle de pensées, repondent au changement des corps (*Theodicy*, 1710, III § 355: GP VI, 326).

(7) *Philarete*:on peut distinguer trois degrés dans les predicats, l'*essentiel*, le *naturel*, et ce qui est simplement *accidental*... (*Entretien de Philarete et d'Ariste*, 1713: GP VI, 584).