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LEIBNIZ'S REVELATION-INSPIRED METAPHYSICS -  
AN EXERCISE IN RECONCILING FAITH AND REASON

A Dissertation Presented

by

BRIAN D. SKELLY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University  
of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 1991

Department of Philosophy

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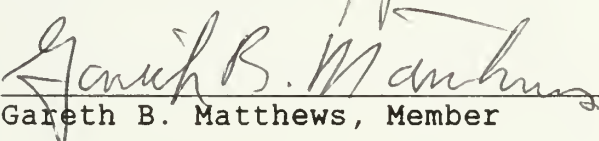
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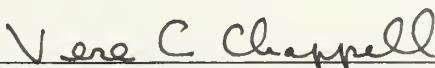
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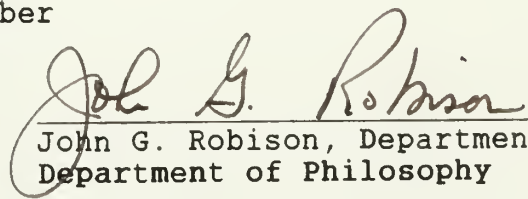
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For Sau-Ping and Teresa

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Robert Sleigh Jr. for providing as professor and Committee Chair encouragement and direction in pursuing this field of inquiry. I am much indebted to Drs. Gareth Matthews and Vere Chappell as professors, professional role-models, and constructive critics; to Professor Vincent Cleary for instilling in me an appreciation for Latin and giving me a much needed boost in morale; and to all my professors, especially those at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and at the Gregorian University in Rome.

My thanks to Dr. Reinhard Finster at the Hannover Archives for sending me materials and showing an interest; and to Paul Eisenkopf, the influence of whose research on this work merits more than a footnote.

Finally, I am immeasurably indebted to my wife, mother, and entire family, who allowed me the luxury of pursuing a life of contemplation.

ABSTRACT

LEIBNIZ'S REVELATION-INSPIRED METAPHYSICS -  
AN EXERCISE IN RECONCILING FAITH AND REASON

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A puzzle about some of the basic commitments of Leibniz's metaphysics is that they fail to come anywhere near approaching the self-evidence one should expect of metaphysical principles. Notwithstanding that Leibniz's adherence to Christian theology has not generally been granted as having had a decisive impact on his metaphysics, the latter, in fact, was largely the result of a life-long project to give a comprehensive rational defense of Christianity.

In particular, a close study of four theological commitments and six metaphysical commitments in the context of Leibniz's thought reveals that the former are in a sense more basic than, are motivationally prior to, the latter. Namely: that God the perfect being exists, that Real Presence is true, that the Lutheran, Catholic, and perhaps even Calvinist accounts of the Eucharist are compatible, and that



Original Sin is true. Each had a resolute impact on the formation of Leibniz's metaphysical commitments: that the actual world is the best possible world, that teleological explanation is indispensable for scientific understanding, that the substance of body is not its extension but its active principle, that natures are complete concepts, that there are no material atoms, and that actual substances were created all at once.

It is not surprising that Leibniz's best-possible-world theory and his commitment to the universal applicability of teleology have their roots in his commitment to the existence of God the perfect being. But it is also the case that his anti-materialist stance on substances was formed in defense of Real Presence and in response to a reconciliatory envisionment of the Eucharist that could resolve denominational disputes; that his commitment to natures as complete concepts and his anti-atomism derive largely from a commitment to God's omniscience; and that his commitment to the all-at-once creation of substances stems from his attempts to understand Original Sin.

In short, Leibniz's metaphysics is Revelation-inspired. Yet although there are some good reasons in favor of calling it a "Christian metaphysics", as he had hoped, there are some serious drawbacks to its being considered such.

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## PREFACE

There is a long-standing controversy about the relationship between faith and reason - faith being the commitment and submission to the existence and content of some authoritatively transmitted body of truths about divine or supernatural things and our proper relation to them carried on in the form of religious practice; reason being the method of deducing, inducing, or criticizing beliefs based on an evaluation of evidence directly accessible to us, and the resultant body of belief or knowledge deriving from that method. Two conflicting views on that relationship are not rarely aired. The first is that faith cannot be knowledge, i.e. cannot be theoretically justified, and the second is that it can.

Those who hold the first view may be divided into "believers" and "non-believers": those who have faith of some sort and those who don't. The latter have a natural motivation not to believe: it just simply is irrational to believe something incapable of evidential support. On the other hand, the former are in a bit of a bind; they must to maintain faith insist that "you just gotta' believe"; that to subject faith to rational scrutiny is simply unfaithful. (The term 'fideism' is a derogatory label for just this view or attitude.) Both believers and non-believers of this ilk insist that faith and reason are by nature mutually antagonistic. Ironically, their agreement on this point



cuts off all further dialogue. Any "reconciliation" between them would have to be based on forgetting their differences, which is arguably a futile endeavor.

The alternate view, in sum that faith and reason don't have to be mutually antagonistic, again is open to believers and non-believers alike. But in this case, believers and non-believers have room for dialogue, as do believers of different faiths. For believers of this ilk naturally suppose that any honest rational inquiry into their faith could only support it, since no truth can be definitively refuted; whereas non-believers of this kind would naturally want to investigate the various faiths with an open mind, not wanting to be left ignorant of whatever religious truth we may have convincing evidence to believe. On the flip-side, a believer who is resolutely of this ilk, when faced throughout time with persistent and increasingly preponderant evidence contrary to his faith with a corresponding lack of supporting evidence, would be led to withdraw his commitment to that faith. Both believers and non-believers of this kind would consider as a candidate for evidence any item whatsoever of human experience. Any restriction on admissibility of evidence would have to be a product of, not precedent to, rational deliberation. People who hold this alternate view thus have a way open to reconciliation not based on some futile exercise of forgetting, but rather on a mutual pursuit of truth.

St. Thomas Aquinas is the philosopher probably the most often cited as a proponent of the view that reason and faith are compatible. Since the Renaissance, however, few of the most well-noted philosophers have openly advocated or developed this position. Leibniz is one who did, and this, perhaps more than anything else, characterizes him as unique among modern philosophers.

In our time in which we are witnessing an ever-growing contentiousness between peoples of different faiths, between people of the same faith, and between believers and non-believers - all of which is leading to a disastrous breakdown of a sense of community worldwide in an ever-shrinking world - we could do well to turn to those such as Leibniz who, motivated by a passionate desire for reconciliation, seem to have been on the verge of discovering how people of vastly differing views and commitments can come together in non-contentious, truth-oriented dialogue, living with their differences with an eye to ultimately resolving them in a truthful manner.

What follows is an examination of Leibniz's metaphysics characterizing it, following sure indications from Leibniz himself, as an exercise in the reconciliation of faith - particularly Leibniz's own Christian faith - and reason. Although I do not assess it as an entirely successful enterprise, I think there is enough in it to illuminate us and inspire us to think along similar lines regarding the

prospects of faith and reason being mutually supportive rather than mutually antagonistic.

INTRODUCTION  
THE KEY TO LEIBNIZ'S THINKING

Explanation of Title

In scanning the writings of Leibniz, it is hard not to notice how much time he spent wrestling with issues of faith, particularly regarding Christian doctrine and the Christian Church. I think this fact alone leaves it incumbent on someone interested in understanding Leibniz as a philosopher to investigate what relation there may be between his philosophy and his religious interests. This was the motivation for the present undertaking.

All would agree, I think, that Leibniz the philosopher was striving to attain a comprehensively systematic understanding of reality. This certainly does not set him apart from other famous philosophers of the modern era, such as Descartes and Spinoza. But it does give us an initial reason to suspect that there might be some strong connection between his more secular-sounding (or secularly received!) philosophy and his religious writings, most of which themselves are very philosophical in character. If there is such a connection, this would indeed set him apart from other well-known modern philosophers, who continued the Renaissance tradition of maintaining a separation between religious inquiry and life on the one hand and philosophico-scientific inquiry and life on the other.

In fact, one who has some exposure to Leibnizean philosophy does not have to read far into his religious writings to see that there is a connection between the two, and a strong one. It is so strong, in fact, that one should hesitate to use the term 'connection', as it implies a relation between two things; whereas it seems that on the one hand what has popularly been identified as "Leibniz's philosophy" and on the other the most significant portion of his religious writings - those philosophical in character - make up one body of thought. This is a strong statement to make regarding so systematic or "axiomatic" a philosopher as Leibniz, for if accepted it forces us to search for an order of precedence between the commitments of his secularly received philosophy and the commitments peculiar to his religious writings, i.e. his religious commitments. More pointedly, we are forced to query whether his most basic "secular" philosophical commitments are more basic to his system of thought than his most basic religious or faith commitments.

#### **Leibniz's Philosophy Revelation-Inspired**

A surface analysis reveals four possible outcomes: either Leibniz's secular philosophical commitments have precedence over his religious commitments, or his religious commitments have precedence, or there is blanket co-primacy between them, or some secular philosophical commitments have precedence and some religious commitments have precedence. But the matrix of possibilities expands perhaps beyond

manageability when it is observed that there are different senses in which a commitment can have precedence, such that it has primacy in some sense and not in another. For instance, a commitment can have a sort of motivational primacy and yet not enjoy formal primacy. It can be the "reason of becoming" of a system of thought, and yet not be a basic premise of that system of thought.

Bypassing further discussion of the various kinds of precedence, I shall argue that from what Leibniz expressed in writing it is clear that his faith commitments have motivational but not formal precedence in his system of thought. That is to say they do not, as in positive theology, serve as basic premises; but they do serve as goals of the reasoning process, guiding his thought at times in directions it might not otherwise have gone. Thus conceived his philosophy becomes perhaps a different entity from how it is popularly received. Popularly we tend to conceive the philosophical thought of modern and contemporary philosophers as originating solely from the enlightenment and motivation of natural reason. Any influx of religious commitments tends to be looked on as turning the thought into something other than philosophical. Accordingly, we tend to maintain the distinction between straight or "positive" theology and "philosophical" or "natural" theology as that between revelation-inspired thinking about things regarding the divinity and thinking about divine things "*ex sola ratione*". In defiance of this I propose that Leibniz's

philosophy, especially his metaphysics, was revelation-inspired, yet still deserves to be categorized as philosophical theology. In proposing this, I am maintaining that the distinction between philosophical and straight theology is a formal one and not a motivational one: philosophical theology merely excludes the possibility of using the body of what has been received as revelation as a source for premises.

Without damage to this distinction and without biasing his tradesmanship, a philosopher may and perhaps at times should openly confess that his work is revelation-inspired, if indeed it is. It remains incumbent upon him to draw the premises of his philosophical thought from natural reason with a sufficiently critical eye to avert the evil of allowing his inspiration to bias his reasoning. Presumably if one has a strong theoretical commitment to something one believes it to be true, and if it is believed true one should be confident that it would stand up to the most severe scrutiny, and one should be willing to subject it to just that. The danger of bias arguably looms only where one has a strong practical motivation to maintain a commitment that one lacks confidence in theoretically. Of course if religious faith is correctly characterized fideistically in the manner of Pascal, Kierkegaard, *et al.* as a practical and non-theoretical commitment, then certainly any philosopher should seek to keep his religious commitments separate from his trade as an inspiration or otherwise - for the sake of

his faith as well as his philosophy. But if faith is instead a theoretical commitment benefitting from as much support from reason as is available, as Leibniz was convinced, then the argument against allowing religious inspiration to motivate one's philosophizing is harder to see. This point will be taken up again, especially in Chapter 3, p. 194 ff.

Revelation-Inspired - but Christian?

Thus far I've mentioned an influence of "revelation" on Leibniz's thought without referring to its specific content. In fact, the revelation we are speaking of is Christian revelation. Now just what 'Christian revelation' refers to is a matter of no little controversy. Orthodox Roman Catholics consider the most recent *ex cathedra* papal declaration on faith to be definitive of revelation, while many other Christian sects hold to an *ex sola scriptura* delimitation. Even in the latter case, the question remains whether the scripture itself or rather the meaning of scripture, or even perhaps the facts that scripture recounts, is Revelation. Even if it is universally agreed on (it is not) exactly which writings constitute Sacred Scripture, there never seems to be a lack of room even under the same denominational roof for disagreement on the exact meaning of scripture or the exact facts it recounts.

Clearly, then, a non-controversial ascertainment of Christian revelation is not current at this point in history, much less in Leibniz's time. Nor can I say exactly what Leibniz took Christian revelation to be; and I think it fair



to say that by his own admission he would offer that neither did he. But I hope to sufficiently bring home the point that this lack of surety and reasoned consensus on the exact content of revelation is what led him to so passionately attempt to establish a Christian metaphysics, the result of which attempt was his own famous metaphysics.

To be sure, there were several points of Christian revelation about which Leibniz appeared quite certain, and these were to be his motivational guides in working out his metaphysics: the Eucharist, Original Sin, the Perfection of God, the divinely intended and inevitably forthcoming unity and harmony of the Christian church, etc. Insofar firstly as these religious commitments are Christian - the Eucharist most peculiarly so, since only a Christian could believe in it - and secondly as Leibniz did in fact use them as inspirational guides for his metaphysical thought, which I argue he did, one is tempted to call his metaphysics Christian. But before justifiedly making that determination, one would have to examine how his metaphysics squares with the rest of Christian doctrine, especially with its most universally agreed upon tenets. A philosophy inspired by Christian revelation is not necessarily Christian.

### **Leibniz through the Eyes of His Interpreters**

In spite of what I consider to be convincing evidence that he was indeed a a faith-inspired philosopher, Leibniz has not typically been interpreted according to this key. It

is not an uncommon trend in interpreting philosophical thought to concentrate on obtaining a formally unified picture of that thought, a systemic unity, with but perhaps a passing interest in the underlying motivations or inspiration of the thought. Considering in addition that Leibniz's thought lends itself so exquisitely well to formal analysis, it is not surprising that the balance of attention on Leibniz up to now has not been in attendance to the influence of the tenets of the Christian faith on his philosophy.

This is not to say that his faith inspiration has not been noted by others. Paul Eisenkopf, at the beginning of his work *Leibniz und die Einigung der Christenheit* (1975) expresses the view that the basic themes of Leibniz's thought have their origin in close proximity to his concerns for Christian reunion (p. 23). François Gaquère, editor of *Le Dialogue Irénique Bossuet-Leibniz* (1966), offered that "the study of Catholic dogma, of Transubstantiation and the Lutheran dogma of Real Presence brought him to a conception of substance consisting in force" (p. 28). This sentiment, that his commitments to the Eucharist influenced the formation of Leibniz's notion of substance, is shared by Paul Janet in concurrence with Guhrauer (Montgomery, p. x). Even John Herman Randall's view, reported in Wiener (p. xxxix) that one can "derive the whole of Leibniz's metaphysics from his life-long polemic against the Cartesians" can be taken as a support for the present view, when it is seen that its inability to accommodate the Eucharist was Leibniz's main

reason for opposing Descartes's philosophy. Pierre Burgelin's essay, "*Théologie naturelle et théologie révélée chez Leibniz*" (1969) does not go as far as express the view that there was an influence of revealed theology on Leibniz's thought, but suggests that there was an easy openness of the latter toward the former.

A more common view emphasizing the importance of God to Leibniz's philosophy is that Leibniz's metaphysics is based on principles of natural, non-revealed theology. In the Introduction to his *Le Dieu de Leibniz* (1985), Jacques Jalabert makes it clear that this is his view. Perhaps not far from this is the view expressed by John Hostler (1975, p. 16) that an "ethical purpose" is at the basis of Leibniz's metaphysical system. Such views in themselves are not incompatible with the assertion that Leibniz was a deist at heart, an un-believer in revelation as a source of theological knowledge at least some of which is unattainable by the human use of reason alone. As such they are not necessarily supportive of the view of his thought as revelation-inspired. Along these lines Leibniz, according to Austin Farrer virtually was a deist or tending toward it (pp. 9-10). In a similar manner does Leonard Loemker give a deist depiction of Leibniz:

"in pressing the adequacy of reason, [Leibniz] left for faith only the role of personal assent and conviction, the established body of truth being beyond all possibility of doubt. Faith needed only follow where reason led. Thus the paradox of his theological goal; wanting to establish Christian faith, he actually helped support the extreme

rational [deistic!] optimism of the age which followed." (Loemker, v. 1, pp. 86-7.)

Indeed it is tempting to treat him as a deist; he hails from a time and place when it was the case both that deism was fast on the rise among philosophers and that concealing one's true feelings about God and religion may well have been a prudential obligation. At least one 19th century scholar expressed this very suspicion (August Böeckh, 1843) that Leibniz masked his true beliefs; so did Russell at the turn of the century, citing "the necessity for giving satisfaction to his princely employers" (Russell, p. 2) as a motivation for keeping his own views under wraps. Russell claimed Leibniz had a good or "esoteric" philosophy he kept to himself and a bad or "exoteric" philosophy which he published (See also Mates, p. 16).

Often associated with the dissimulation theory is the suggestion that Leibniz was not really Christian at heart; it virtually follows from the suggestion that he is a deist. Mates notes that at Hannover he had a reputation of a nonbeliever (ibid.), although he himself concedes that there is "no room for doubt that Leibniz was a sincere believer" (ibid.). In fact, Leibniz's writings contain some emotional expressions of Christian piety which are difficult to explain away. Here is an example from "*Von der wahren Theologia mystica*" (1695; G. E. Guhrauer, v. 1, p. 413):

"Let everyone test himself, whether he has faith and life; if he finds in himself some joy or pleasure greater than that of the love of God and glorifying in his will, then he doesn't know Christ

enough, and he does not yet feel the stirring of the Holy Spirit."

There are many Christians who do not have the inspiration to say something this strong, much less think of it.

I think it fair to say that with the various kinds of writings, both public and private, that we have access to now, the suspicion that the "real" Leibniz has yet to be revealed is anachronistic. In hindsight it is perhaps more accurate to say that Leibniz wrote in differing degrees of rigour, and that scholars should be careful to note the intended audience of any writing in order to know how to take it. Still, I have come across no evidence suggesting that Leibniz radically dissimulated his views.

Also not rare is the belief that Leibniz's philosophy results from the attempt to reconcile things other than reason and faith or the various Christian denominations. Wiener, for instance, argues that an "important clue" to understanding Leibniz's thought was his attempt to reconcile dual commitments to certain tenets of traditional philosophy and "the new concepts and methods of the rapidly growing sciences" (Wiener, p. xvii). Against this it should be remembered that Leibniz was enough of a non-"modernist" to reject the almost universally popular Newtonian physics and the almost as popular Cartesian metaphysics which went so well with it; not to mention the runner-up-to-Cartesianism material atomist metaphysics of Gassendi, which Leibniz also rejected.

One remaining interpretation of Leibniz's thought that is shared by some noteworthy philosophers is the logicist angle primarily spearheaded by Bertrand Russell but which, in Russell's own words, "received overwhelming confirmation from the work of Louis Couturat" (Russell, "Preface to the Second Edition", 1937, p. v). Russell was referring to Couturat's *La Logique de Leibniz*, which came out a year later than his own work, in 1901. The view expressed by these authors is simply that "Leibniz's metaphysic was derived by him from the subject-predicate logic" (Russell, p. v). Also characteristic of this slant on Leibniz is that mathematics and calculus played a formative role in his philosophy. The idea is that Leibniz was primarily a logician and mathematician, and used these fields as springboards into metaphysics. In particular, Russell held that Leibniz's philosophy is based on five supposedly logical, or at least epistemologically basic, premises. Interestingly, God's existence is not one of them, whereas the fifth is that perception yields knowledge about the world. These two facts obscure one chief similarity Leibniz had with his usual foe, Descartes: that he held the existence of God is required to make human knowledge possible; that knowledge of God is prior to knowledge of the world. It is rather clear why Russell did this: he saw Leibniz as establishing God's existence primarily by the principle of sufficient reason, which in turn depends on the veracity of our primary evidence, sense perception. I shall argue that the sufficient-reason proof is not Leibniz's

principle vehicle for arguing God's existence, and that the misconception that it thwarts a truthful understanding of Leibniz.

An added twist to the logicist view of Leibniz was given in Paul Schrecker's contention that the "inner unity" of Leibniz's philosophy is "the method of the characteristic universal language" (Schrecker and Schrecker, pp. ix-x), Leibniz's mysterious "deep-logic" of reality. The basic idea is that Leibniz as a logician had developed the basic workings of an *a priori* yet content-full system deductive at least in principle of reality; a system formally prior to the rest of his thought, and therefore the key to understanding his whole philosophy. Now, there can be no doubt that Leibniz had such a system on his mind as a hope, and from time to time trumpeted its advent. But it seems he never produced on his promises, and this remains a source of disappointment on the part of Leibniz scholars. But even supposing he had produced a cogent characteristic universal language, the conviction motivating and defended by the present work is that it would yet not be "the key" to understanding Leibniz. That which is formally prior is not necessarily - and, one might hazard, not usually! - prior motivationally or commitment-wise. In Leibniz's case, I'm convinced and will argue that the "bottom line" for him were revelation-informed theological commitments.

The problem of searching for a "beginning" to Leibniz has typically been conceived in a formalist manner. Thus

conceived, it is understandable that Benson Mates (p. 4) would conclude that Leibniz's philosophy has no beginning: for it seems that wherever one starts in Leibniz, one can go on from there to conceive the whole of his philosophy. However, even if Professor Mates's position is correct, its significance is quite limited. For when we are searching out a beginning of a system of thought, we are searching for underlying commitments, which may not appear as basic formal elements of the system if they appear in it at all. Thought does not flow from formally basic premises unless guided by basic motivations, and these latter are at least as and perhaps more significantly to be considered as the beginnings of thought; for they guide even the choosing of formally basic premises. Aristotle appeared to have acknowledged this point in the Posterior Analytics by claiming science to be the search for middle terms. Now from a formal perspective the premises of a syllogism are prior to its conclusion; yet the conclusion is what generates the completion of the syllogism by motivating the discovery of the middle term, the term shared by both premises. Only this discovery allows the premises to be had. This goes against the popular (formalist) conception that syllogistic reasoning is carried out by putting together matching premises to churn out conclusions not previously considered.

I would suggest further that a purely formalist undertaking to understand a philosopher is incomplete; understanding the underlying motivations for holding a view



is often necessary for their being given a fair shake. Both Russell and Mates expressed serious difficulties in seeing the plausibility of Leibniz's thought. Neither could shake the impression that it was no more than an interesting fairy tale (Mates, p. 4). I sense this expresses the sentiment of many readers of Leibniz. Perhaps a study of his underlying theological motivations would help shake this impression, or at least demystify the origins of his basic premises. I am convinced that by steering clear of Leibniz's theological writings one is doomed to the fairy-tale impression reported by Mates and Russell.

#### Layout of Present Work

I shall argue that Leibniz used revelation-informed theological commitments as a guide to choosing in Aristotelian fashion the (formally) basic premises of his metaphysics; that these theological commitments remained formally on the outside of his metaphysics, although he expressed them clearly and did not altogether hide their relation to his metaphysics; and that therefore they have precedence in his thought as the bottom-line commitments generative of it.

The strategy for arguing this will be as follows. First (Chapter 1) I aim to establish Leibniz's commitment to four key revelation-informed propositions, expaining in sufficient detail their significance. Secondly (Chapter 2), I will do the same with respect to six key premises of Leibniz's

metaphysics. Thirdly (Chapter 3), I will argue first the primacy in general in Leibniz's thought of revelation-informed theological commitments over metaphysical commitments; and next will proceed to elucidate in sufficient detail the generation of the six previously discussed (in Chapter 2) propositions of his metaphysics from the four previously discussed (in Chapter 1) theological commitments. Fourthly (Chapter 4) I will evaluate Leibniz's project as a whole, which was to develop a metaphysics of Christian inspiration, supportive of Christian doctrine.

## CHAPTER 1

### FOUR REVELATION-INSPIRED THEOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS

This chapter consists in an attempt to show that Leibniz had four key revelation-inspired theological commitments, and to sufficiently elucidate the significance of these commitments. The four do not represent by any means a synopsis of his religious commitments. Rather, they have been chosen for discussion for two reasons: first, in that they receive considerable treatment in Leibniz's writings, and second, in that they seem to have had a peculiar formative effect on Leibniz's metaphysics - an effect I shall attempt later in this work to thoroughly document and establish.

The four propositions to be discussed in this chapter are as follows:

- Proposition 1 - God, the perfect being, exists.
- Proposition 2 - The Eucharistic doctrine of Real Presence is true.
- Proposition 3 - The Lutheran, Catholic, and perhaps even Calvinist accounts of the Eucharist are compatible in their essential elements.
- Proposition 4. The doctrine of Original Sin is true.

#### Proposition 1 - God, the Perfect Being, Exists

The present discussion of Leibniz's commitment to the proposition that God, the perfect being, exists will consist in two parts; the first presenting some of his most forthright expressions of commitment and discussing their significance; the second treating Leibniz's consideration of reasons or arguments in favor of the proposition.

To some it might not seem worthwhile to spend too much time establishing a point that is so obvious that it does not need defending. That Leibniz was committed to God's existence and that this commitment permeated his philosophy are simply not controversial claims. Still, the task of presenting and discussing evidence for Leibniz's belief in God will not turn out to be banal if it leads to insights into the significance or precise meaning of the conviction which in turn provide a key to understanding both its revelation-informedness (non-deism) and the derivation of much of his metaphysics from it. The latter two issues are discussed in Chapter 3. For now, my use of the term 'theism' is intended only in opposition to atheism and agnosticism, not to deism.

#### Evidence of a Commitment

The most convincing evidence of Leibniz's theism comes from his major works: the Theodicy and its companion Causa Dei Asserta (both 1710), the Discourse (1686), and the Monadology (1714). In the latter God's existence is drawn as a conclusion from metaphysical premises:

"38. ... [T]he ultimate reason for things must be in a necessary substance... and this is what we call God." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 708.)

But the other three are rather based on a commitment to God's existence than attempts to establish it. The first two are attempts to defend the existence of a perfect being against the appearance of much imperfection and wickedness in the actual world. The Discourse is a metaphysical treatise

whose first premise is the existence of God. So in these works a commitment to God appears in the form of express premise, tacit premise, and express conclusion.

This pattern of a triple-role theistic commitment confirms itself in a scan of Leibniz's writings. Consider two other instances of its occurrence as an express premise:

"A truth is necessary when its opposite implies contradiction.... It is a necessary truth that God exists." (Letter to Mr. Coste, 1707. Erdmann, v. I, p. 447.)

and

"The world is governed by a most wise and powerful Monarch, whom we call God." ("*Definitiones Ethicae*", no date. Erdmann, v. II, p. 670.)

In the first case the conviction expressed is that the proposition that God exists is a logical truth. In the second, its use is as a basic premise of ethics. Even as an express premise its function and range within Leibniz's thought is varied. Whereas sometimes, as in the second case, it could be argued that the premise of God's existence is only basic relative to the subject being treated, at other times, such as in the first case, it seems to enjoy a position of logical primacy in his thought.

It is more usual in Leibniz's writings for the existence of God to serve as a tacit premise than as an express premise. Unfortunately, the very nature of being a tacit premise lends difficulty to retrieving convenient examples of such usage. The following, though, is a rather common ploy of Leibniz, to use theism as a hidden standard by which to evaluate various assertions. It occurs within the

short work, *Considerations sur la Doctrine d'un Esprit Universel* (1702), in which Leibniz eventually comes around to reject the theory of pantheism being considered:

"The doctrine of a universal spirit is good in itself, for all those who teach it admit in effect the existence of the divinity..." (Erdmann, v. I, p. 179).

In contrast to its role as a premise in his thought, Leibniz's commitment to theism as the conclusion of metaphysical premises gets a lot of attention, and perhaps more than it deserves. For just as its use as a premise doesn't entail its absolute primacy in his thought, its being subordinated to premises of natural reason doesn't entail its non-primacy. That which is basic from one perspective may not be from another; in particular, it could be that Leibniz's most famous proof of God's existence, the proof from sufficient reason - discussed in the second part of this section and again in Chapter 3 - is not a true indication of Leibniz's priority of reasons. It is not rare for a philosopher of Leibniz's stature to argue a point from different perspectives, not all of which represent his own order of thinking.

In short, one is led to wonder whether in the correct account of Leibniz's metaphysical thought theism is ultimately a premise of some sort or a conclusion, or indeed, whether it could consistently and without entailing circularity be both.

## Significance of Leibniz's Theistic Commitment

There is no better place to start in trying to ascertain the significance or meaning of Leibniz's theistic commitment than the opening words of his Discourse:

"The most accepted and meaningful notion of God that we have is quite well expressed in these terms: that God is an absolutely perfect being. But the consequences of this do not get sufficiently considered. To do so is a matter of noting that there are in nature many fully distinct perfections, that God possesses them all together, and that each one pertains to him in the highest degree. One must know as well what a perfection is; concerning which one thing we can be sufficiently sure is that those forms or natures which are not susceptible to a highest degree are not perfections - as for example the nature of number or of figure." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 816; see also Montgomery, p. 3.)

Leibniz goes on to argue, using this criterion, that there is no such thing as a perfection of quantity or extension, whereas perfection of knowledge and power - omniscience and omnipotence - are possible. Thus we get around having to ascribe physical qualities to God; for every physical quality is of extension, and extension is not a perfectible quality. Thus also, we presumably justify the traditional conception of God as all-knowing, all-good, all-powerful, and necessarily existent.

Interestingly enough, Leibniz does not go on to try to enumerate all the perfections of God in this work, apparently having felt he'd established his point sufficiently. This is an apparent continuation of the medieval habit of assuming that a being shown to have one or two perfections has all perfections. Perhaps this is just the

lazy reasoning which results from lack of serious opposition. Yet both Aquinas and Leibniz had reputations for thoroughness; more likely it is the result of a hidden premise that the perfections entail one another. As we shall see, one of Leibniz's proofs - as I will argue, his principal one - for God's existence is really a proof of the existence of necessary being; as if it were obvious that necessary being should have all perfections. This is similar to Aquinas's method of arguing God's existence: show that there is a first mover, a first cause, a necessary being, a standard for each quality, or a purpose for every thing, and you've shown God exists.

It is hard to say whether the perfections really do entail one another; certainly it seems possible to imagine a being who is all-knowing but not all-good. Some people conceive an omniscient evil power to be operant in the world. It is just as hard to say whether Leibniz thought the perfections entail one another. He calls the various perfections "completely distinct", which initially would lead one to suspect that Leibniz did not consider them to be mutually entailing. On the other hand he claims God to possess the perfections "all together" (*toutes ensembles*), which would suggest some connection between them. Perhaps a look to other spots in Leibniz's writings will yield some clue on these puzzling subjects.

Leibniz attempted to identify the perfections of God by their simplicity, by their limited presence in human souls,



and by their essential unlimitedness. He covers the first point in his brief 1696 essay on Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), entitled "Réflexions sur l'Essai de l'Entendement Humain de Mr. Locke" (New Essays on Human Understanding). After arguing in the true Enlightenment tradition that ideas are to be analyzed into their simpler components until primitive ideas are arrived at, he comments:

"But the primitive ideas are those whose possibility is indemonstrable, and which in effect are none other than the attributes of God."  
(Erdmann, v. I, p. 137.)

Thus the attributes of God, which are all perfections, are the irreducible primary components of all other attributes.

Later, in the preface to his Theodicy, he asserts that:

"[t]he perfections of God are those of our souls, but He possesses them without limits." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 469.)

Although at first this seems to have a demystifying effect, since arguably there is nothing that each of us has better access to than his own soul, still it is no easy task to list the attributes of the human soul; we are in much the same boat as before.

Maybe the best revelation of Leibniz's view of the divine perfections comes from the Monadology. Having just concluded, as cited above, that God exists, he continues:

"40. One can also deem that this supreme substance which is unique, universal, and necessary, not having anything outside of it which is in itself independent, and being a simple consequence of possible being, must be incapable of limits and contain as much reality as is possible.

"41. Whence it follows that God is absolutely perfect, perfection being none other than the magnitude of positive reality in the strict sense, derived by setting aside the limits or confines in the things that have them. And where there are no limitations, that is to say in God, perfection is absolutely infinite." (Erdmann, v.II, p. 708.)

Here is expressed that the divine perfections are entailed by His being infinite, with strong suggestions that His being necessary entails being infinite, and that His having any perfection "without limitation" entails being infinite. It should be noted that Leibniz used the term 'perfection' in a sense weak enough to allow that we have perfections too, but only in a limited way. That is why he speaks of God having perfections in an unlimited way, which would be redundant according to ordinary usage.

In short, I think Leibniz took the possession of any perfection without limit to entail infiniteness, and infiniteness to entail all perfections. I suspect this was perceived by him, and I think correctly so, to be in accord with Scholastic tradition.

The two entailments sound plausible, at any rate. Arguably nothing finite can possess any quality in an unlimited manner, such that anything that did would have to be non-finite. Just as arguably to fail to have a quality to any degree entails some limitation or finiteness, such that lacking limitation i.e. being infinite entails not failing to have any quality to any degree, i.e. having all perfections.

Lest it be retorted that thus God must be infinitely red-haired, we should recall that for Leibniz red-hairedness

as a physical quality would be an imperfectible quality, and thus not imputable to God. But this response causes to arise a new problem: how can God be responsible for creating things to have qualities He does not possess?

If we retrack our steps, we see that Leibniz claimed all positive reality is contained in God. That means that all of the positive reality of being red-haired must be contained within God. But what is there in being red-haired that God lacks in virtue of which it is absurd to say God is red-haired? The only option we have would be negative reality. Negative reality is just the limitation of positive reality. So we may say that red-hairedness, like other physical qualities, is a composite of positive and negative reality, the positive coming from God. But where does the negative come from? Leibniz tells us in the following portion of the Monadology:

"42. It also follows that creatures have their perfections from the influence of God, but they have their imperfections from their own natures, incapable of being without limits. For it is in this respect that they are distinguished from God. (Erdmann, v. II, p. 708.)

Negative reality is inherent in finite being by nature; God is only responsible for the positive reality in things; as we shall see, He brings the maximum amount of compossible reality into existence. Whatever limitations there are were logically unavoidable given the execution of His marvelous creative task.

Like so much metaphysical speculation, this way of thinking somehow fails to clarify what it is supposed to clarify, namely how God can create the physical universe when He lacks in His own essence one of the latter's main ingredients: limitation. Before creation, there is just God; He creates the universe by contributing its positive reality. But unless this positive reality is delimited by the natures or forms of finite being, creation cannot result. Yet God is not claimed to be responsible for creating the limitations of finite being. So where do they come from? The answer is that they were always in being, as ideas or possibilities. Creation is just enlivened possibility. Possibility is the Leibnizean prime matter. This is witnessed to by the following passage, which is in response to the contention that essences are not real before creation:

"[T]hose essences [of finite things]... do exist, so to speak, in some region of ideas, namely in God himself, who is the source of all essences and of the existence of all that exists outside himself." (On the Origination of the Universe, 1697. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 89.)

This explains how God could have access to negative reality in creating: negative reality has its reality in the form of ideas, which God, being omniscient, naturally possesses in His mind. Ideas allow the cognitive possession of content not possessed in one's essence.

A remarkable by-product of this reasoning is that all of the positive reality of the physical universe must be

spiritual, as God is spiritual, while physicality is reduced to idea. Here are the roots of Leibnizean idealism.

### Consideration of Proofs for God's Existence

Leibniz claimed that "almost all the ways that have been used to prove the existence of God are good and could be of use if perfected." (New Essays, Book IV, Ch. 10, § 7; p. 438; Erdmann, v. I, p. 375.) In this he is distinguished from many of his famous Enlightenment colleagues, who offered their proofs as an antidote to bad proofs. (Locke is one example: Erdmann, v. I, p. 374.) One might expect, then, for Leibniz to have defended in the course of his lifetime not one but several proofs for God's existence. In accordance with Jalabert (p. 438), I count four main proofs in Leibniz: three *a posteriori* proofs - from movement, from pre-established harmony, and from contingency or sufficient reason - and one *a priori* proof, which is a version of the ontological proof. Jalabert mentions also a fifth proof from eternal truths, but thought it to be incidental (Jalabert, pp. 119-22). Whether incidental or not, Leibniz's presentation and defense of it provide key insights into his metaphysical thought, which is why I include discussion of it in the present section.

**Proof from Motion** - The proof from movement on the surface appears to be a rehashing of the Thomistic proof known by the same name. According to Leibniz:

"[t]he maxim that there is no motion that doesn't have its origin in another motion according to the laws of mechanics leads us again to the first mover, because matter, being in itself indifferent to any motion or rest, and yet always possessing

all its motion i.e. force and direction, cannot have been set in motion except by the author of motion himself." (Gerhardt, v. VI, p. 542)

As the argument goes, according to the laws of physics of Leibniz's time, the same amount of motion or force is always conserved in the universe, and the scientific assumption of the uniformity of nature requires us to say thus it has always been, or at least since the outset of the universe. Since physics did not allow a natural increase in motion or force, there was no natural explanation to be had for the causation of motion or force; but reason requires an explanation, thus we must conclude that there is a supernatural cause for motion, which ultimately requires us to admit God's existence.

It must be kept in mind that Leibniz's view of mechanics or physics does not entail the existence of transeunt causes in the world - the direct influence of one substance on another. Rather, it is because the "author of matter" has preestablished a harmony among things that they obey the laws of physics. Thus this proof is in effect subordinate to the proof from preestablished harmony.

A problem with Leibniz's motion argument shared by the original Thomistic argument is that it seems not to countenance the possibility of a beginningless world. Aquinas acknowledged this shortcoming, conceding that "that the world did not always exist is held by faith alone and cannot be proved demonstratively" (Summa of Theology, I, 46, 2; see Bourke, p. 284). Although Leibniz addresses the

problem in his argument from sufficient reason, he does not do so here; thus we can say that this argument is doubly subordinate: not only to the proof from preestablished harmony, but to the proof from sufficient reason.

Incidentally, Leibniz rejected a proof by Locke on the same grounds. Locke had argued that if anything exists something has always existed; but I exist, therefore something has always existed, which entails that God exists. Leibniz noted that the proper conclusion would be the disjunction: either God exists, or a beginningless chain of beings exists. Both satisfy the assertion that something has always existed (New Essays, Bk. IV, Ch. 10, §§ 1-6, pp. 435-6).

All these considerations lead to the conclusion that the motion argument was not intended by Leibniz to be decisive on its own merits.

**Proof from Preestablished Harmony - Leibniz once presented his argument from preestablished harmony to Clarke, one of his more illustrious correspondents, as follows:**

"Each simple substance in virtue of its own nature is, so to say, a concentration and living mirror of the whole universe according to its point of view. This again is one of the most beautiful and incontestable proofs of the existence of God, since there is nothing but God, that is to say, the universal cause, who could fashion this harmony of things." (fifth - and last - letter, § 87, 1716; Erdmann, v. II, p. 773. See also Leibniz's letter to Arnauld, 1687, in Gerhardt, v. II, p. 115.)

An appreciation of this argument is not possible without a sufficient familiarity with the peculiarities of Leibnizean metaphysics. As such, one might justly fault it as a case of reasoning *per obscurius*.

Leibniz believed to have successfully argued that there are no transeunt or intersubstantial causes in the world. The one real transeunt cause for him was God, whereas the only causes in the world were intrasubstantial: preceding states of a substance cause latter states of the same. Now if Leibniz was correct, then it surely is remarkable that all the events in the universe hold together so regularly as to almost if not indeed perfectly suggest the existence of intramundane transeunt cause-effect relationships. Such a harmony would seem practically to require the existence of a being capable of arranging it.

Although to the contemporary eye this argument seems to be an argument of high probability for the existence of God, the alternate of sheer luck having negligible probability, yet Leibniz considered it to be one of metaphysical necessity (New Essays, IV, 10, §10, p. 440). Why he thought so is an interesting question. Perhaps it is because Leibniz had a general disregard for the option of random chance as an explanation, so much so as to allow an argument of eminent probability to be considered of metaphysical necessity. Contemporary philosophers tend to take the option of random chance to be at least non-absurd, but Leibniz seems to have considered it an absurdity. Sheer chance clearly does not



provide sufficient reason, whereas Leibniz was convinced that an adequate explanation had to do so, and that everything has an adequate explanation. Chance is an explanation which does not explain; put thus, it surely does sound like an absurdity, not to mention an inconsistency.

There tends to be a lingering suspicion of circularity regarding this argument; whether it is circular or not depends on how Leibniz argues for non-transcendency in metaphysics. Clearly, if his reasoning there depends on theological premises, then the present argument is implicitly circular, since it in turn depends on the assumption of non-transcendency. The gist of the present work entails the argument from preestablished harmony does in fact entail circularity. I take this not as an indication of poor reasoning on Leibniz's part, but rather as evidence that it was not for him a basic or foundational argument.

**Proof from Contingency or Sufficient Reason** - The last of the *a posteriori* arguments in my order of presentation is perhaps his most famous and, according to Leonard Loemker, the "most enduring" proof (p. 88), the argument from contingency. Based on a commitment to his famed principle of sufficient reason, Leibniz expressed it in an early essay ("*De Existentia*", 1676. Grua, p. 267) as follows:

"For the existence of a thing it is necessary for the aggregate of all its requisites to be present. A requisite is that without which the thing cannot exist; the aggregate of all requisites is the full cause of the thing (when the aggregate of all requisites is present). Nothing exists

without reason, because nothing exists without the aggregate of all requisites. The reason for the existence of bodies is not contained in them, as is simple to demonstrate. For even if you regress *in infinitum*, you will be multiplying bodies as well, and you will not get to the reason why they exist rather than not. The aggregate of all requisites of any given body is outside the body. Moreover the aggregate of requisites of one body and the aggregate of all requisites of another is in the same thing. That one thing whatever it is is the ultimate reason of things. For that which is true likewise of all bodies whatsoever is that they don't exist necessarily, that is, the reason for their existing is not contained in them.

"Necessary being has to be one only. Necessary being contains in itself all of the requisites of things."

As just alluded, this argument has everything to do with the principle of sufficient reason, expressed above as:

"Nothing exists without reason, because nothing exists without the aggregate of all requisites."

The argument expressed above can be presented as follows:

1. A thing existing entails that all of its "requisites" are "present", (i.e. all its necessary conditions obtain in existence.)
  2. No contingent thing "contains" all its own requisites, i.e. it does not possess within itself the full reason for or cause of its own existence - for it is not impossible for it not to exist.
  - C3. The whole series of contingent things even if infinite does not contain all of its requisites.
  - C4. Some of the requisites of contingent being as a whole obtain in existence outside of contingent being.
  5. To obtain in existence, a requisite must be contained within an existing thing or substance.
  6. If necessary being exists, it is one.
- 
- C. The one necessary being, that is, God, exists.

Premise 1 holds as a logical truth. If something exists, it follows that all of what is required for its existence obtains.

2 seems to hold by definition of 'contingent being': that which can both fail to exist or exist. It cannot be deduced from the nature or essence alone of something that can both fail to exist or exist that it exists; otherwise its nonexistence which by stipulation is possible would contradict its nature, meaning that its nature is impossible, i.e. that it can't exist, which again contradicts what has been stipulated.

C3 seems to hold as a logical consequence of 2. If each item of a series or set is contingent, then it seems the series or set must itself be contingent, since its existence is a function of the existence of each of its components or elements. Even if by the employing of some "bootstrapping" method of explanation whereby each element of the set or series is explained by a combination of other elements in the set -remember, the set may be infinite - it remains to explain the set or series itself. (See Leibniz's On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe, 1697. Schrecker and Schrecker, esp. pp. 84-5.)

C4 is a fairly straightforward consequence of 1 and 3.

Premise 5 is based on the principle that all existence boils down to substances. If this is true, then all true facts about existence are ultimately reducible to facts about substances: every fact about existence entails the existence of some substance. A special application of this is that any fact about non-contingent being entails a non-contingent, i.e. necessary, substance.

Premise 6 is needed to arrive validly to God's existence, He being the unique, necessarily existent substance. The defense of 6 would have to be that the assumption of more than one necessary being entails contradiction, perhaps in the following manner. The existence of two necessary beings entails that the being of each is limited from that of the other, hence each is finite. For if they were mutually comprising and infinite they would be the same substance (reminiscent of the Trinity). Now arguably that which is finite cannot be necessary; since its being does not exhaust all possibility, some possibility remains compatible with its non-existence. That sounds tantamount to saying that its non-existence is possible, i.e. that it is contingent. Therefore it would seem that there can be at most one necessarily existent substance, and infinite at that.

The conclusion, C, would follow from C4, 5, and 6. If some of the requisites of contingent being obtain outside the sphere of contingent being, and such entails the existence of a substance, that substance would have to be non-contingent, i.e. necessary. Moreover that substance, it seems, would have to be unique, and, as it turns out, infinite.

The crux of this proof is Premise 3. It transfers an intramundane use of the principle of sufficient reason to a transcendental usage: now it is the reason for the whole world we are searching for, not just the reason for each thing in the world. Along these lines, Leibniz presents another version of the contingency proof in the Theodicy

(Part I, § 7. Erdmann, v. II, p. 506; see also Farrer, p. 127.) Since everything in the world has a sufficient reason:

"it is important, therefore, to search for the reason of the existence of the world , which is the entire assembly of contingent things; and we must look for it in that substance which carries the reason for its own existence within itself, and which consequently is necessary and eternal."

The traditional attack on the sufficient reason proof, perhaps more associated with Bertrand Russell than with anyone else, is that the principle of sufficient reason is an intramundane principle only; there is no convincing evidence that it should apply to the world as a whole, which quite simply just may not have an explanation. This of course creates an impasse of competing intuitions, and the argument appears to draw a stalemate - an unacceptable outcome in philosophy.

If this is Leibniz's most basic proof of God's existence, someone like Russell would tend to consider his philosophical theology to be a failure. But I hope to make it clear that this in fact was not Leibniz's most basic proof: his ontological argument was. Moreover, in Chapter 3 I shall argue that according to the true priority of Leibniz's thinking, the principle of sufficient reason turns out to be more of a consequence rather than evidence of God's existence. As mentioned above with respect to other of his arguments, this does not necessarily entail circularity, since he was wont to argue from different starting points according to the mindset of his perceived audience.

In short, none of his *a posteriori* proofs are basic, nor are they intended to be. Of them, the contingency or sufficient reason proof is the most basic, the other two - those from motion and from preestablished harmony - depending on it for justification.

The Ontological Proof - In concurrence with Jalabert, who claims that there is no doubt that Leibniz preferred the *a priori* way of proving God's existence (Jalabert, p. 69), I think Leibniz made it sufficiently clear that the ontological argument - which is his most basic *a priori* proof - was for him the fundamental argument for the existence of God. Regarding the task of proving God's existence, Jalabert quotes him as saying that "the better way of knowing things is by their causes, but it is not the easiest" (p. 69; see also Gerhardt, v. VI, p. 577). In the same citation he relates that to know something "by its causes" is to know it *a priori*. This hearkens back, but with irony (perhaps unintended), to Aquinas's Aristotle-inspired distinction between two kinds of demonstration (in the Summa of Theology, qu. 2, art. 2): demonstration "through the cause" or *propter quid*, and demonstration "through the effect" or *quia*; the former is demonstration which is "prior absolutely" (*quoad se*), whereas the latter is demonstration "prior to us" (*quoad nos*). St. Thomas made this distinction as a preamble to ruling out demonstrations *propter quid* of God's existence, which are now known simply as *a priori* proofs. In the mind of the Angelic Doctor, the only good proofs are those we now

call a *posteriori*, the reason being that the premises required for an *a priori* proof are philosophically inaccessible to us. The irony I alluded to earlier is that Leibniz employs the same distinction in order to argue that Aquinas was mistaken (New Essays, Bk. IV, Ch. 10, § 7; pp. 437-8), and that to the contrary, the *a priori* proof of God is essentially superior, albeit more difficult for us to grasp. (In fairness to Aquinas, I think Leibniz misconstrues his objection as being that the ontological argument is fallacious; Aquinas I think intended that the argument did not do the work it is supposed to, namely to establish a less clear proposition from more clear premises. He acknowledged that God's existence is self-evident in itself, but not to us (Summa of Theology, q. 1, a. 1). At any rate, this subtle misunderstanding does not affect Leibniz's point, since it remains a fact that Aquinas frowned on the ontological argument whereas Leibniz made use of it.)

Although in essence he opposed it, Leibniz remained sensitive to the Thomistic critique - in fact he seems to have taken it as a valid criticism of previous versions of the ontological argument. This sensitivity led him to develop a version and treatment of the ontological argument that avoided the flaws of earlier attempts. Understanding not just the argument but Leibniz's ingenious treatment or manner of defense of it is key to understanding how he does in fact avoid the Thomistic objection.

Leibniz intends his version to be a simple expression of the essence of the ontological argument. He sees this as:

If God is possible, He exists.  
God is possible.  
Therefore He exists.  
(See e.g., New Essays, pp. 437-8.)

The idea is that since God is allegedly the being whose existence is contained in its essence, if such an essence is possible, and possibility or logical consistency is the criterion of realness for essences, then the essence of God is real. If the essence of God is real then God's existence is real, since it is contained in His real essence. Now real existence amounts to existence. Therefore God has existence; God exists.

At first glance the argument looks like a fallacious attempt to present God's existence as a tautology. But it is really more than that, as I hope to show.

Since Leibniz's discussion of his ontological proof is so much in conjunction with his consideration of and reaction to earlier versions of it - especially those authored by Anselm and Descartes, but also Bonaventure's - it is necessary to discuss these earlier proofs to set the stage for understanding Leibniz's.

Anselm's proof, from Chapter II of his Proslogion, can be expressed as follows:

1. God is the being than whom none greater can be thought.
2. We can conceive of God as defined; therefore He exists at least as an object of our thought.
3. If (!) God exists only as an object of our thought, then (!! ) He is not the greatest



- conceivable being; for objects of thought are not as great as actually existing things.
4. !! is not the case, since it contradicts what is stipulated in 1.
  5. ! is not the case; for it is refuted by the negation of !! according to *modus tollens*.
- 
- C. God exists actually. (Follows from 2 and 3: that He exists at least, but not merely, as an object of thought entails that He exists actually as well.)

The argument turns on the application of a presumedly conceded definition of God to yield His existence. Now in itself a definition does not entail existence. A definition only permits us to conclude that whatever satisfies the *definiendum* satisfies the *definiens* and vice-versa. In existential proofs, therefore, we must establish the existence of something satisfying either the *definiendum* or the *definiens* in order to conclude that something exists that satisfies the other. The long-standing objection to Anselm's argument is that it fails to do this, as noted by Aquinas (Summa of Theology, q. 2, a. 2, response to second objection): "It cannot be argued that [God] actually exists unless it be admitted that there actually exists something than which nothing greater can be thought". Still, Anselm does not appear to have been entirely ignorant of this rule regarding the use of definitions: his strategy is first to establish the existence of God as object of thought, then apply the definition to yield God's actual existence. The question is whether existence-as-object-of-thought is existence; Anselm thought so; Aquinas apparently thought not.

Throughout the medieval era of philosophy, a distinction had gradually been emerging between objective and subjective being. Objective being was being as object of thought, subjective being was being as a subject independently of being thought. When Anselm developed his proof, therefore, the metaphysical machinery was there to support him.

But the presence of the machinery didn't make Anselm's proof go over smoothly even in his own time. I suspect no one was quite sure how helpful the distinction could be. There was and I think rightly so a strong suspicion that the objective being or "existence" of an object was not a kind of existence for it at all, and that only the subjective being of a worldly object could correspond to existence for it.

An alternate way of attacking this distinction was to consider them such mutually unrelated modes of being that existence or being of a thing in the objective mode could simply never be taken as evidence supportive of the thing's existence in the subjective mode, thus thwarting Anselm.

However controversial or deceiving we may now take this distinction to be, it was the very one Descartes depended so heavily on in the proof he is most famous for - the one Leibniz calls Descartes's "other" proof: the proof from the innate idea of God in our minds. Whether Leibniz recognized this connection between Anselm and Descartes is unclear, given most of his interest was in Descartes more simple ontological argument, with respect to which he did see an Anselm connection.

Leibniz considered the Cartesian version to be "borrowed" from Anselm (New Essays, Bk. IV, Ch. 10, § 7; p. 437). For this reason his comments on one should count for the other, though he drops Descartes's name far more often, since his version was still recent.

To avoid a possible source of confusion it should be noted that the Cartesian argument most usually in question for Leibniz was not the one which has received the most attention generally, i.e. the one that Descartes himself considered to be his principle argument - which appears in his Third Meditation and is to the effect that I have a clear and distinct idea of God in my mind that can only have been caused by God. Ironically Leibniz calls this "M. Descartes's other argument" (New Essays, *ibid.*, p. 438). Rather, the argument Leibniz is most occupied with appears in the Fifth Meditation and is referred to by Descartes as "a new proof", expressed by him as follows:

"Certainly, I discover within me an idea of God, that is of a supremely perfect being.... And I understand clearly and distinctly that it pertains to his nature that he always exists.... Thus, even if everything I have meditated upon during these last few days were not true [thus, by inference, even if the proof in the Third Meditation were not sound] I ought to be at least as certain of the existence of God as I have hitherto been about the truths of mathematics."

Shortly thereafter he continues:

"From the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God; for this reason he truly exists". (Cress, p. 42.)

A classic criticism of Descartes has been that his reasoning to establish God's existence is circular (see Jalabert, p. 80 and Aune, p. 26). This criticism, generally in reference to the argument in the Third Meditation, can be extended to the argument in the Fifth Meditation. In the first case scholars have noted that Descartes attempts to prove God's existence in order to refute the evil genius hypothesis and thus establish the veracity of our intuitions and memories. Unfortunately the proof itself tacitly presupposes the veracity of both and thus is implicitly circular. Now in the Fifth Meditation he presents an argument which he suggests is autonomous from the first, and ranks its degree of certainty at least as high as that in the truths of mathematics. Yet in Descartes's own reasoning our justification for believing mathematical truths is contingent upon the success of the first proof; so it is hard to see how the same would not be true of our justification for believing the second proof. Until we have refuted the evil-genius hypothesis, it would seem that we simply cannot establish that our idea of God is fallacious to start with.

It is interesting to note that if the second proof is indeed autonomous from the first, then Descartes's philosophy could be defended against the accusation of vicious circularity. The second could be seen as the pure statement of the first, which had been imperfectly presented earlier. After all, the Meditations are presented according to a discovery format.

On the other hand, the very fact that, after having apparently thought to have given a definitive proof of God's existence, Descartes would return to offer another proof as autonomous from the first, might be taken as an indication that Descartes did not have complete confidence in the first, and perhaps had a suspicion that it was flawed in the way scholars later pointed out. Yet the second argument lacks the air of epistemological rigour in which the first had been draped.

In spite of these several curiosities, Leibniz held the second in more esteem than he did the first. I think it rather obvious that he did so because the second is closer to what he took to be the pure ontological argument, and is put in a manner very similar to how Anselm had originally put it.

As mentioned above, for Leibniz the essence of the ontological proof is that God's existence follows from His possibility. For the proof to go through it would have to be established that God, the being whose essence includes existence, is possible. Leibniz credits Descartes and Anselm for having noted this way of proof, but faulted them for not recognizing that God's possibility is something that needs to be established; it is not, in Aquinas's terms, something "self-evident to us". In this respect Leibniz accepted Aquinas's critique of the ontological argument, insofar as its proponents had routinely assumed God's possibility as self-evident.

In another respect, of course, Leibniz politely differed with the great Dominican teacher. Leibniz thought that the possibility of God could be established in natural reason - at least in a manner sufficient to justify the use of the ontological argument.

To be sure, Leibniz opposed attempts to depict the proof as complete or comprehensively defensible by natural reason. His correspondence with one J. G. Eckhardt in 1677 consisted in Leibniz's qualified rejection of a series of presentations by his correspondent of the ontological argument. The main sticking points were whether existence can be shown to be a perfection, such that a perfect being could be inferred to have it, and whether the idea of God can be proven to be simple, such that it could be inferred not to contain contradictory components which alone would exclude it from being possible (see especially in Gerhardt, v. 1, pp. 214-24). Leibniz was not prepared to admit that one could concede these things. On the other hand he did express hope that one day "able people would establish the proof in the rigour of mathematical evidence" and believed to have contributed toward that end (New Essays, Bk. IV, Ch. 10, §7, p. 438).

In short, Leibniz felt that as yet, no rigorous version of the ontological argument was given nor imminently forthcoming. This might lead one to conclude that Leibniz thought that at present there was no use for it in philosophy; this inference, however, would be mistaken, and

here is where Leibniz's ingenuity comes into play. The fact is that, quite apart from the prospects of the proof being rigorously established, Leibniz considered the ontological argument to already yield a "demonstrative moral conclusion" that "we ought to judge that God exists", for "it is justified to assume the possibility of any being, and above all of God, until someone proves the contrary" (Ibid.). For Leibniz, the burden of proof regarding possibility was on the skeptic, and this allowed into metaphysics the presumption of the possibility of anything until it is proven not possible. Since God's possibility entails His existence, our justification in assuming His possibility extends to assuming His existence. (See Leibniz to Jacquelot, 11-20-1702. Gerhardt, v. III, pp. 434-4.)

At first blush, such a move seems quite liberal for a man who defended the principle of metaphysical economy we now call "Ockham's Razor": that "beings are not to be multiplied without necessity" (*Dissertatio de Stilo Philosophico Marii Nizoli* 1670; XVIII, pp. 113-4. Erdmann, v. I, p. 64). Shouldn't the responsibly economical metaphysician withhold assent to any affirmation of possibility until it has been positively established? Leibniz answered that he should not, and his reasoning is aptly characterized by Jalabert as follows (p. 81):

"Possibility is established by the complete analysis of notions; if, broken down into its simple elements, the notion does not permit the occurrence in it of any contradiction, one concludes that it is possible. Thus, possibility is established in a negative way, by the

ascertainment of a non-contradiction.... That is possible which has not been able to be demonstrated impossible. It is impossibility which, in fact, is demonstrable. It is therefore for the partisan of impossibility to come up with a proof of it, if he is able. In his failure consists the probability, in a word, the presumption, that the thing is possible."

Two qualifications are immediately in order. First, the issue here is limited to *a priori* proofs. Clearly, a direct *a posteriori* proof for the possibility of something would be that it exists, if that can be established. Secondly, that the burden of proof is on the proponent of impossibility does not entail that the proponent of possibility is absolved of critical responsibility. It means rather that the only way to defend or oppose the possibility of something is by looking for demonstrations of its impossibility: the persistent failure to come up with one given all honest effort is the only evidence of a thing's possibility. Sometimes it is evident from the start that there is or is not such a proof; other times it is not.

After the dust settles, there are two arguments for the existence of God that are candidates for being foundational with respect to Leibniz's metaphysics: the contingency or sufficient-reason proof, and the ontological proof. I have already given a reason against considering the contingency argument as such: its transcendental application is questionable. I have also alluded, and later bear out in Chapter 3, that it would lead to the depiction of Leibniz's metaphysics as viciously circular, in that the principle of sufficient reason itself appears to be in rigour a



consequence of God's existence in Leibniz's thought. Such a depiction should only be accepted in the face of sure evidence or at least in the absence of a better explanation. Sure evidence is definitely lacking, whereas I think a better explanation is that the ontological argument alone was the foundation for Leibniz's metaphysical assertion of God's existence.

Lest it be thought that this move leads to an excessively de-rigourized depiction of Leibniz's metaphysics, I refer to the evidence presented in the first section of Chapter 3: "Evidence of Priority of Intent in General" - that Leibniz thought himself to be giving only a provisional sketch of a metaphysics that could be made sufficiently rigorous by others in the course of time. Consider also the doggedness of Leibniz's defense of the as yet embarrassingly non-rigorous ontological argument in opposition to Aquinas, whom he and many others important to Leibniz highly respected; it seems unlikely that he would have gone out on such a limb with little at stake, which would have been the case if the contingency argument were his basic one.

**Proof from Eternal Truths** - Leibniz occasionally sported another proof for the existence of God, one which leads to the revelation of a very important feature of Leibnizean metaphysics, suggested also by his ontological proof, which I call **metaphysical essentialism**: that essence precedes existence in the order of being. The proof is that from eternal truths, expressed in the following:

"If there were no eternal substance, there would be no eternal truths" ("*Specimen inventorum de admirandis Naturae Generalis arcanis*", no date. Gerhardt, v. VII, p. 311).

The argument, fully expressed, would go on to affirm that there are eternal truths, therefore there is an eternal substance. Something similar is expressed in the Monadology, §44:

"Now, it is quite necessary that if there is a reality in Essences or possibilities, or even in the eternal truths, this reality be founded in something existent and actual, and consequently in the existence of the necessary Being, whose essence contains its existence, or for whom it suffices to be possible in order to be actual."  
(Erdmann, v. II, p. 708.)

What Leibniz seems to be getting at is that possibility itself has a certain evident reality of itself which separates it from mere figment or whim, and this reality demands something substantial on which to base itself. The first part of this is expressed in a remarkable passage of a 1676 letter (to Foucher; see Gerhardt, v. I, p. 370):

"[a possibility] is not a vain imagination which we fashion, for all we do is recognize it, despite ourselves and in a consistent manner. So of all the things that actually are, possibility or impossibility of being is first."

One startling thing about this passage is that it puts possibility before existence in the order of being. Another startling thing is that it appears to infer such from the fact that we recognize and not fashion possibility.

The idea is that since possibilities are real and not fashioned, they are real independently of existence, since only fashionable (creatable) realities are dependent on

existence for their reality. If this is so, the reality of possibles is established before even considering existence.

But from what is said in the first two passages, real possibility entails something existent. A real possibility is something that can be brought into existence, and for something to be able to be brought into existence there is required an existent able to bring it into existence.

The last two paragraphs might seem to contradict, but they don't. The first says possibilities are real independently of existence, i.e. they are not made real by any existent. The second says the fact that possibilities are real entails an existent. In short, possibility entails or contains existence, and is not produced by existence. This may not be tantamount to saying essence precedes existence in the order of being, but one can see how it could be interpreted as suggesting that. Using possibility as our starting point we can deduce existence, whereas existence always presupposes a possibility. If we try to begin with existence, we are puzzled as to how existence exists. But beginning with possibility and seeing that existence is contained in possibility, keeping in mind that logic is the study of possibility, we have a "logical" proof of existence. This is metaphysical essentialism.

Metaphysical essentialism has universal metaphysical application; the possibility of anything precedes its existence "in the order of being"; that is to say, in the order of "logic" in the sense just described. Most notably,

however, it applies to God: God's possibility or essence accounts for, contains, His existence. The explanation for God's existence is His essence and not vice-versa; the explanation for His essence is possibility itself, and the buck stops there. Possibility entails existence not as something outside itself but as something within.

This account of God's existence in terms of His essence, called "positive aseitism" by Jalabert (see Chapter VIII), is opposed to the Thomistic "negative aseitism", that God's existence is primary and needing no account, whereas His possibility - and all possibility - is accounted for by His existence, which is existence, *simpliciter*.

In short, the proof from eternal truths or real possibilities sees an existence contained in possibility that can only be God, that is can only be present in the form of an essence that contains existence, or a self-actuating essence. The proof requires that possibility be accepted as primitive in order that existence may be derived from it. We shall see Leibniz make much of this essentialism in his account of creation.

## **Proposition 2 - The Eucharistic Doctrine of Real Presence Is True**

### **Background**

One of the central doctrines of Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity is that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are really - not just symbolically, nor just "virtually" - present in the elements of bread and

wine after they are formally consecrated in the rite of the Eucharist, also called "Communion" or "the Lord's Supper". Leibniz was clearly a subscriber to this doctrine, and, I shall argue in Chapter 3, this commitment had a major formative impact on his metaphysics.

Early in his intellectual career, Leibniz showed an interest in defending the possibility of Transubstantiation, the Roman Catholic account (not exclusively) of Real Presence, notably in apparent opposition to the account of the Lutherans. (See especially "*De Transsubstantiatione*", 1668. SSB, series VI, v. 1, pp. 508-13. Translation in Loemker, pp. 178-85.) According to Transubstantiation, the bread and wine are substantially terminated in the Eucharistic consecration and the substantial ality of the elements becomes solely the body and blood of Christ, despite the remaining "species" or appearance of bread and wine. Instead of Transubstantiation, Lutherans subscribe to what they call the "Sacramental Union": after consecration the bread and wine substantially remain alongside the substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ. Outside Lutheran circles this view is better known as "Consubstantiation" (a term not so much despised by Lutherans as taken to refer to yet another theory of Real Presence, historically of little consequence, that the bread and wine together with the body and blood of Christ form a third, hybrid substance (The Lutheran Cyclopedia, pp. 198, 345, 691).

Initially, it might seem ironic that Leibniz would have chosen to defend Transubstantiation, since he formally characterized himself as on the Lutheran side. But in fact, as will be discussed more in Chapter 3, Leibniz confessed both to being a subscriber to the Augsburg Confession (SSB, *ibid.*, p. 516), i.e. a "Lutheran", though Leibniz eschewed the term in favor of referring to the followers of Luther as "Evangelical" (Eisenkopf, pp. 38-9. His evidence is Leibniz's remarks on a letter between of his correspondents, Pellisson and Marie de Brinon, Dec, 1690. SSB, I, 6, p. 149) and a Catholic at heart (letter to de Brinon, Jul. 16, 1691. SSB, I, 6, p. 235.). Although he correctly understood that to be a Catholic does not in rigour entail being a member of "the Roman church", yet he had enough of a sense of affinity to the latter to confess to a correspondent that, had he been born a Roman Catholic but grown to have the same convictions he actually had come to have, he would in good conscience remain Roman Catholic (letter to Landgraf Ernst von Kassel, Jan. 1684. SSB, I, 4, p. 321). Against the appearance that Leibniz had Roman Catholic sympathies, it might be contended that Leibniz made such confessions to Roman Catholic correspondents and perhaps was exaggerating if not dissimulating. Moreover, it might be noted that a careful reading of his writings on Transubstantiation reveals a commitment only to its metaphysical possibility, not to its actuality. Summing up his work in "*De Transsubstantiatione*", he writes:

"we have undertaken to show the possibility of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body [and blood] of Christ...."

The above does not entail a commitment to the doctrine, and it would be unwise in the case of such a meticulous philosopher as Leibniz to disregard this observation as trifling. Simply put we cannot take the work as a sure indication that Leibniz subscribed to the Catholic view. In fact we shall soon see (Proposition 3) that Leibniz's own account of how the Real Presence is effectuated virtually defies being classified either as exclusively Catholic or exclusively Lutheran. To that extent both Lutherans and Catholics who operate on the assumption that the respective teachings of Consubstantiation and Transubstantiation are in essence mutually exclusive would have to consider Leibniz an outsider.

The question of dissimulation has been addressed in the Introduction (pp. 9-10) and is addressed again in Chapter 3 (pp. 174-7). Apart from that suspicion, which, I am convinced, turns out unwarranted, I think it can safely be conceded that Leibniz's **denominational** loyalties were indeed ultimately Lutheran. Nonetheless it is perhaps more important to note, and I hope the present work will make clear, that his deeper **doctrinal** loyalties were **irenic**: his conception of Christian and religious doctrine was driven by a conviction that many apparent doctrinal differences are in fact reconcilable. Nowhere else is this more evident than with respect to the Eucharist. From very early on he argued

that there was essential agreement between Lutherans and Catholics regarding the Eucharist, and later on he even considered reconciling with the Calvinist view. All of this can be taken as an introduction to the discussion of Proposition 3 of the present Chapter.

Yet it is important as an introduction to the discussion of Proposition 2 as well. For before gaining a meaningful philosophical approach to the irenic question, the Real Presence, which is the common bond between the Lutherans and Catholic view of the Eucharist, needed to be defended. In this case Leibniz's defense does reveal an unmistakable commitment to what he is defending.

#### Evidence of Commitment

In an early letter to Antoine Arnauld (1671; see Appendix A, p. 342) Leibniz makes a statement which in effect commits him to Real Presence:

"Discussing these things soon, as it happened, we slipped into discussing your works on the Eucharist, in which the truth of the mystery, and, may I say, its reality, is asserted, in opposition to the symbolists. And we rejoiced in the Church's having finally obtained victory...."

In the same letter he goes on to disparagingly allude to five arguments for the impossibility of the Eucharist, which can be construed more specifically as arguments for the impossibility of Real Presence. These would be that Real Presence is impossible because:

- i. substantial change entails qualitative change;
- ii. for an individual to change into a certain substance entails that the latter retain some of the matter of the former;
- iii. trans-individual change is impossible;



- iv. the change of something into an already existing substance is impossible; and
- v. the change of many different things each on its own into the same substance is impossible.

In the first case, Real Presence entails that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ with no change in appearance; i.e. sensible qualities. This seems to suggest that substantial change happens without qualitative change. In the second case, according to Real Presence the bread and wine change into the body and blood of Jesus Christ without the latter retaining any of the matter of the former, thus violating the stated principle. In the third case, Real Presence entails that the bread which is an extended individual, changes into the body of Christ, which is another extended individual; this seems to imply change from one individual to another, violating the principle that change is something that an individual undergoes and endures. In the fourth case, Real Presence entails the change of the bread into something already existing, namely the body of Christ, thus violating the stated principle. Finally, in the fifth case, Real Presence entails that every duly consecrated piece of bread is changed into one and the same substance, the body of Christ, which violates the stated principle.

The manner in which Leibniz so uncharitably refers to these arguments, not even dignifying them with direct rebuttals albeit acknowledging their difficulty, is a strong indication that he subscribes to what the arguments attempt to show impossible (Appendix A, p. 342):

"they are putting forth arguments of impossibility which solely on account of whose failing acuity of meanings they think themselves able to sustain against all the centuries of consensus among Christian peoples, and which they claim ought to held everywhere as common sense rather than as absurdities."

Of course, Leibniz is depicting these opponents of Real Presence to be claiming that the crucial premises of each argument is universally received, not each argument as a whole, so that anyone who subscribes to Real Presence unknowingly contradicts his own principles.

In the same letter Leibniz claims these arguments of impossibility to be flawed based on their dependence on two materialist tenets, the first being that if a body is present in many "places" or extensions, its extension is the union of all the places in which it is present, and the second being the Cartesian tenet that the essence of body consists in extension (Appendix A, p. 342). But he gives no indication for how the arguments are derived from these tenets, nor why he thinks the tenets to be false. Yet later in the letter he suggests that his desire to "explain the possibility of the mysteries of the Eucharist" in some way led him to the insight that the essence of body consists not in extension, but in motion (Ibid. p. 346). Does this new insight about the essence of body result from a faith conviction in the Eucharist, or does his conviction in the possibility of the Eucharist result from the new insight, gained independently of the inspiration of faith commitments? To answer such a

question we need to take a look at Leibniz's explication of the doctrine of Real Presence.

### Significance of Commitment

Leibniz asserts his understanding of Real Presence as the proposition that:

"the one and same Body of Christ (which suffered for us on the Cross) is really present in its substance, wherever the host of the Eucharist is present" ("*De Demonstratione Possibilitatis Mysteriorum Eucharistiae*", 1671. SSB, VI, 1, pp. 515-16).

Many years later, he wrote to Des Bosses that:

"[m]ultipresence of the same body doesn't take place by replication or penetration of dimensions [by one body into another], but is to be explained by a kind of presence having no relation to dimensions. And in fact, if God made it to be such that something acted upon a distant thing immediately, by that very act its multipresence would come about without any penetration or replication. According to us [Lutherans, as made clear by context] it is not said that the body of Christ is included in the bread, but taken with it; so no connection to dimensions is necessary" (1710. Gerhardt, v. II, p. 399).

Now it is no mystery why a materialist would wince at these two passages. The first claims that one body - Christ's - shares the same extension with other bodies - the hosts or bread-elements - and yet there is no identity between the two nor is one part of the other. This sounds impossible to someone who accepts extension as the essence of body. The second passage argues that Christ's body is present in the elements not by penetration or replication. This explains the first passage in a way that avoids the conclusion that the first tenet presses for, namely that the hosts have to be

part of Christ's body. Yet whatever explaining it does is in terms that for a materialist are just as inconceivable. If one body is wholly present in another how could it be otherwise than by penetration? If it is wholly in many places, how can this not entail replication and how can replication of the same body, the same extension, be conceived as possible? The answer is that in a materialist framework it can't - not without the excessive torture of concepts.

The upshot is that Leibniz had a non-materialist conception of bodies which allowed him to overcome the materialist arguments and envision the Eucharist as possible. The first argument depends upon the supposition that qualities are only those apparent physically, whereas a non-materialist notion allows us to admit that Real Presence brings new qualities to the substantially changed host that are not apparent. The second argument limits the notion of change to material change, whereas a non-materialist notion of bodies admits the possibility of purely formal change: e.g. change of the principle or "form" governing the bodies' extension. The third argument assumes that the individual extension undergoing change is considered by itself a body. In a non-materialist framework there is room for saying that the principle that for every change there must be an individual or a thing which undergoes it is not violated on the grounds that the "individual" may be an extension which is not considered by itself a body; that "individual" may be

conceived as passing from one substantial state to another. The fourth and fifth arguments are conceivably rebutted if we admit that being wholly the body of x just means being an extension governed as an autonomous entity - i.e. not just as a "body-part" - by the substance or "soul" of x. This allows for the possibility of the appropriation of several extensions by the same soul, hence allowing what the fifth argument would rule out, multipresence of a substance without multiplying the substance itself. It also allows what the fourth argument would rule out: the changing of a thing into an already existing substance; for it is now conceivable for a substance to take on and shed differing extensions here and there.

#### **Defense of Real Presence - Refutation of Materialism**

The question remains why Leibniz was opposed to a materialist conception of body. I think his basic motivation, yet one he had to be careful about revealing, was that such materialism would render the Eucharist impossible. He had to be careful about revealing this, since to opponents it would appear as question-begging; they would demand that if his non-materialism is his defense of Real Presence and the Eucharist, that the latter not be his defense of the former. And in fact it wasn't; it was his motivation, not his defense. As we shall see, his defense, which he only gradually developed - whereas his motivation was clear from the start - was that materialism regarding bodies, whether Cartesianism or atomism, failed to yield distinctly knowable

substances, and this failure would impinge upon the greatness of God. (E.g. "*Specimen Demonstrationum Catholicarum seu Apologia Fidei ex Ratione*", 1683-6?, in Grua, p. 29: "No body can be understood as a unity... unless it is contained by some substantial form, which is somewhat analogous to a soul....") I hope these points will become more clear in the following chapters.

**Proposition 3 - The Lutheran, Catholic, and Perhaps Even  
Calvinist Accounts of the Eucharist Are Essentially  
Compatible**

**Evidence of Commitment**

In "*De Demonstratione Possibilitatis Mysteriorum Eucharistiae*" (SSB, VI, 1, p. 516), Leibniz writes:

"I, who am an adherent of the Augsburg Confession, in trying to demonstrate the possibility of Real Presence, began the same project beyond my own expectation with a defense of Transubstantiation, and remarkably I found that Transubstantiation and Real Presence contain one another in the final analysis; and therefore the dispute in the Church is just on account of the fact that one side doesn't understand the other.

"I assert therefore that Transubstantiation properly understood, as conceived by the [Roman Catholic] Council of Trent and as explained by me largely from the principles of Doctor Thomas [Aquinas], is in no way opposed to the Augsburg Confession, but to the contrary follows from it."

He expresses the same point in his letter to Arnauld of the same year (1671) almost verbatim (Appendix A, p. 350).

More than twenty years later (January, 1692. SSB I, 7, p. 249) he confided in a letter to Paul Pellisson-Fontanier the following, which suggests that the Calvinist doctrine of Virtual Presence may be reconcilable with Real presence:

"It is true in the meantime that substance *in concreto* is something other than force; it is the subject taken with this force. In such a manner is the subject itself present, and its presence is real, because it comes forth immediately from the essence [of the subject] according as God determines its application to space. A virtual presence, as opposed to a real presence, must be one without this immediate application of the essence i.e. primitive force, and is not realized except by actions at a distance or by mediated actions. But there is no distance to speak of in this case [i.e. between the essence of Christ and the host]. Those who follow Calvin admit of a real distance and the virtue of which they speak [in speaking of Virtual Presence] seems to me to be a spiritual one which has relevance only to faith. This sense [of virtue] has nothing to do with the force about which we are speaking. I would even say that it is not only in the Eucharist but everywhere that bodies are only present by this application of primitive force to space."

These remarkable passages reflect at once a marvelous dexterity of thought and an almost overwhelming motivation to reconcile the differences between the several hostile Christian factions that had formed during the Reformation. The three major factions Leibniz occupied himself with the most were the Roman Catholics, the Evangelical Christians (Lutherans), and the Reformed Christians (Calvin and company). In the passages just cited he alludes to and partially explains one of his most remarkable feats: the outlining of a quite plausible theoretical reconciliation between Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation (both of which entail Real Presence), and Virtual Presence.

#### Significance of Commitment

Leibniz saw that a good defense of the Eucharist includes the envisionment or demonstration of the possibility

of the Eucharist, which in turn, requires an understanding of what it is to be a body. He also saw, as mentioned above, that a materialist conception of body blocks the envisionment of the possibility of the Eucharist and is arguably incompatible with it. Descartes ran into severe problems along these lines, being a Catholic with a materialist conception of body; he was forced to resort to odd notions like "apparent species" in his defense, ("On True Method in Philosophy and Theology", c. 1686. Wiener, p. 63), as opposed to real, but not apparent species, I suppose. He ultimately excused himself, according to Leibniz, on the grounds that he was "pursuing philosophy, not theology" (ibid.). Leibniz did not see this as a fitting excuse; it seemed to him to suggest that there are two sets of truths which are permitted to contradict one another. At the very least it suggests that it is up to theologians to square doctrine with philosophy and not vice-versa, to which Leibniz, as we'll see, was also opposed.

In short, it seems that a non-materialist conception of body is required for defending the Eucharist. The notion Leibniz developed was that of an immaterial "primitive force" or organizing principle acting directly upon a physical extension. In this case the identity of the body is supplied by the primitive force, not the extension; the latter is just the primitive force's instrument of being physically present.

As Leibniz notes, this is in accord with Thomistic (and Aristotelian) metaphysics. Leibniz in fact saw "primitive



force" as the Aristotelian "entelechy", the scholastic "form" returned to its active status originally granted to it by Aristotle: an organizing, immaterial principle of activity, of motion (ibid., Wiener, p. 64; and "What is Nature?", in Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 106).

What results, not uncharacteristic of Leibniz, is an irony: the reconciliation Leibniz envisions between the three views of the Eucharist traditionally thought to differ is actually carried out by a notion already present in tradition: the (immaterial) substantial form!

#### Envisionment or Defense of Possibility

Here is how his reconciling envisionment works. The body of Christ is really present in the host insofar as the substantial form of Christ acts immediately upon the host, in a manner largely similar to how, so say the non-materialists, my soul, an immaterial principle itself, acts upon a physical extension, resulting in my bodily presence. If my soul is suddenly separated from this relation with the same physical extension, what is left is an accidental aggregate of cells, which may well go on living for a time - perhaps indefinitely, if they are sustained artificially by medical procedures. Now according to the same way of thinking, we ought to admit that each of those cells considered by itself is a body in the same manner as I with my soul related to the physical extension in the above manner was a body. But whereas before the complete substantial account for the extension was that it was a (living) human body, in

particular mine, now its complete substantial account is that it is an aggregate of smaller bodies, namely the cells. Before these same cells did not "count" in a substantial account, since they had been in the state of being appropriated by a single, organizing principle, my soul: indeed their very coming into being and being sustained, etc. had been ordered by my soul. So it is inappropriate to say that my living body is an aggregate of microscopic bodies "plus" my body. Having said that, it is just as inappropriate to deny that those microscopic bodies i.e. cells exist in my body.

Now suppose for some heavenly purpose God chooses to allow my soul to reappropriate the very same extension from which He had just separated it. Then the substantial status of the physical extension would go from being an aggregate of bodies to being one body, period. This is analogous to what allegedly happens in the Eucharist. The bread is an aggregate of smaller bodies, each having an organizing principle. In consecration the substantial form or soul of Christ appropriates it and it becomes His body, period. Yet the smaller bodies which had comprised the bread have not been annihilated; they simply don't enter into the substantial account of the consecrated host.

In this manner we see how Consubstantiation and Transubstantiation are reconcilable. We satisfy the latter by insisting that the complete substantial account of the consecrated host is the body of Christ, period. We satisfy

the former by acknowledging that the bodies comprising the bread are still present within the host; no material annihilation has taken place. Yet in a way we can speak of annihilation in a formal sense, since the bread is substantially no longer there; it is there, but not substantially; in manner not entirely unlike how, when we consume bread and digest it and its matter is appropriated into our body, it is still in a sense in our body, but not substantially: substantially it is now only our body.

It also becomes evident how Real Presence entails Transubstantiation, thus committing Lutherans to the latter. If this is the manner in which a body is really present: by a soul's appropriation of a physical extension: then it is clear that the soul is the identity of the body, such that all previous identifications of the extension no longer apply. It is as if one central government takes over several smaller nations within its own nationhood: the previous smaller nations no longer exist as nations.

So far the analogies I've used have ignored the issue of appropriation of discontinuous extensions by the same soul. As an immaterial principle, it is not metaphysically limited in space by its nature, so it is hard to see an argument for why multiple appropriations should not be possible. Nonetheless, consider a living, active sperm cell. It is, in essence, discontinuous with the rest of the body's extension, yet even ejected from our body in coitus, continues to perform its function as a body part, which is to attempt to

effectuate reproduction. As such it is still easily envisioned as subjugated to the body's organizing principle, at least as long as the body exists. If the body expires and the sperm is conserved in life, then it could be seen as a body on its own merits, just as with the other body parts. Contiguity is not an issue according to an immaterialist conception of body.

As for the reconciliation of Virtual with Real Presence, the task is only tentatively accomplished, as Leibniz's hedging suggests. If subscribers to Virtual Presence are firmly committed to saying that the real body of Christ exists somewhere in space and that the soul of Christ only acts upon the consecrated host through Christ's real body from a distance, then there is no reconciliation to be had. But if Christ is said to act upon the host from a distance only in a metaphorical sense, then the door is open for agreement. For according to Leibniz, a body is really present in virtue of an immaterial principle - which because of its immateriality is indistant to all physical extension, in principle disposed to act immediately on any physical extension - acting immediately upon a physical extension. The soul of Christ is immaterial, therefore it is disposed to act immediately upon any physical extension; although we say that He is in heaven and heaven is "somewhere else", a "different place". This, Leibniz aptly notes, may be metaphorical faith-talk. If it is so for adherents of Virtual Presence, and if they don't insist that the soul of

Christ acts upon the consecrated host only indirectly, through Christ's own heavenly body, the, the difference between Virtual and Real Presence is only semantic.

Proposition 4 - The Doctrine of Original Sin Is True.

Evidence of Commitment

We have already seen that Leibniz from early on confessed to be a subscriber to the Augsburg Confession, hence, Lutheran; and continued to identify with that stance, as indicated, for example, by his identifying the Lutherans as "us", as he did in the above passage (p. 56) from a 1710 letter to Des Bosses. As the second article of the Confession professes adherence to the traditional dogma of Original Sin, I think we may safely surmise that Leibniz subscribed to the doctrine.

In his 1710 work entitled A Vindication of God's Justice Reconciled with His other Perfections (Schrecker and Schrecker, pp. 114-147) - the more rigorous companion to his popular Theodicy of the same year - Leibniz expounds at length on Original Sin. His first statement on the doctrine comes at § 75:

"As to the *corruption of man*.... [i]t has its origin in the fall of our first parents and in the hereditary transmission of the contagion."

We pick him back up at § 79:

"The true root of the fall... lies in the aboriginal and weakness of the creatures, which is the reason why sin has its place in the best possible series of events."

Again, at § 81:

"We must now deal with the hereditary transmission of the contagion, engendered by the fall of our first parents and passing from them into the souls of their posterity. There does not seem to be any more suitable explanation for this than to state that the souls of his posterity were already infected in him.... [B]y virtue of the primeval divine benediction some organized rudiments of all living beings... and even their souls, in a certain way, were already existent in the first specimen of every genus to evolve in the course of time. But the souls and the principles of life which are in the seeds destined to be human bodies are supposed to run through a special process. They remain at the stage of sensitive nature, just as do the other seminal animalcules which have not that destination, until the time when an ultimate conception singles them out from the other animalcules. At the same time the organized body receives the shape of the human body and his soul is elevated to the degree of rationality."

Finally, at §§ 83-84:

"Thus we may overcome the philosophical difficulties engendered by the origin of forms and souls.... and at the same time we overcome the theological difficulties concerning the corruption of souls."

I think the above passages to be representative of Leibniz's convictions. The work in which they appear has a mature, straightforward and rigorous quality, such that we have no real reason to suspect a smokescreen.

### **Significance of Commitment**

Accepting them as such, we can identify three major aspects of Leibniz's thinking on Original Sin. The first is that it was inevitable: that due to the inherent finiteness of creation, imperfection is entailed therein. Even the best possible creation, which is "moral" in that it contains creatures possessed of moral faculties, is imperfectly moral,

since the exercise of moral faculties by finite creatures is bound to be finite or limited, i.e. sinful. In short, the best possible world entails sin.

A second aspect of Leibniz's view of Original Sin is that its transmission to all humans is explained by the fact that we were all, in a subtle but literal sense present in Adam when he sinned. (It is interesting but typical of the time that no mention of Eve is made. It is not hard to see how her inclusion would put Leibniz's explanation in jeopardy.)

A third aspect is that his deliberation on Original Sin is intertwined with the treatment of the philosophical problem of the origin of souls, in such a manner that it is difficult to say which precedes which. If anything, it seems that a commitment to Original Sin is used as the key to developing the philosophical position, namely that all substances are created at once.

#### Defense

**Metaphysical Evil** - The first aspect is reminiscent of what Thomas Aquinas thought:

"defects of this kind... are not penalties, but natural defects necessarily consequent upon matter." (Summa Against the Gentiles, IV, Ch. 52, reply to second objection. Tr. from Bourke, p. 345.)

However, Aquinas does not thereby draw the conclusion that original sin was inevitable:

"As long as man's reason was subject to God, not only did the inferior powers serve reason without obstacle, but the body also could not be impeded in subjection to reason by any bodily obstacle -

God and His grace supplying, because nature had too little for perfecting this establishment." (Ibid., reply to third objection. Bourke, 346.)

It is important to compare Leibniz to Aquinas here not so much to highlight their similarity as to highlight their difference. It is rather clear that Leibniz had an unsinkably reconciliatory spirit and stuck to "tradition" - that is, especially, to Aquinas and Aristotle - wherever he felt he could. Moreover, driven by that same spirit, he was well-read in tradition. So the finding of a significant difference is evidence of a strong, compelling commitment, not of whimsical creativity. The difference here is that Leibniz did not allow that God could, by His grace, fill in where nature was lacking to allow humans to remain in their state of primordial bliss. In other words, the "Fall" was metaphysically necessary.

To be sure, Aquinas's position is not without problems. If God was able to fill in where human nature was lacking, why did the Fall occur? The answer Aquinas provides in the same Chapter is that God's grace filled in only to allow humans to act on their rational choice, not to ensure the correct choice. As long as humans made truthful moral judgments, their sinlessness was insured by God's grace, such that no other passion would make them act contrary to judgment, as might happen in an uninsured natural state. The problem with this response is that it raises the issue whether our reason by its own power, even without the



obstacles of other passions and "inferior faculties", was bound to fail. If it was not, why did it?

Leibniz was convinced that even our reason on its own is finite, and thus bound to failures. This admitted, Aquinas's reasoning is no longer of consequence, since it would still yield that original sin was bound to occur. Leibniz's reasoning is difficult to withstand if we accept the traditional premise that evil is privation along with the assertion that to be finite entails suffering privation. This latter assertion cannot uncontroversially be excluded from the status of being traditional, given the above admission by Aquinas that human nature on its own is inherently lacking. A way out would be to assert that the human faculty of reason is not finite in itself; but that leaves us with another problem, namely how a non-finite faculty can fail, especially when insured against all external interference. In the end, neither this "way out" nor the rejection of the assertion that being finite entails privation seem plausible unless there is some way of being non-finite - where finite entails having privatory limits -without being infinite in the traditionally accepted sense. Leibniz chose the negative horn of this dilemma, and this led to his deterministic envisionment of Original Sin. The positive horn, which would be that the human soul/mind/reason is "openly" or "plastically" finite, i.e. in a sense not entailing fixed, privatory limits, is an option he rarely acknowledged. On one occasion he did argue against "plastic natures" on the

grounds that both i. "it is reasonable to say" - in accordance with physical laws Leibniz claimed to have demonstrated regarding the conservation of the quantity of direction and force in the physical world - that souls have no effect on the physical world; and ii. souls, analogously to physical things, "follow their laws" ("Considerations on the Principles of Life, and on Plastic Natures...", published in *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savants*, 1705. Wiener, pp. 191-2). Not only does this reasoning lack rigour, but Leibniz indicates his awareness of such by framing it a persuasive rather than demonstrative format. The ground that the soul "has its own [i.e. deterministic] laws" would be patently circular in a rigorous context, since at issue is not whether souls are governed by laws, but whether those laws are deterministic. Moreover, to argue that physical laws of conservation entail that souls have no effect on the physical world is as weak as is our grasp of the range of physical laws: e.g. do they completely govern our body movements? Some physicists have thought so, but I don't think there has ever been consensus on this point. In short, this publication does little more regarding the present discussion than indicate Leibniz's opposition to open or plastic natures.

**Our Presence in Adam** - The second aspect of Leibniz's view of Original Sin is again, and not surprisingly, reminiscent of a view expressed by Thomas Aquinas. Again, for reasons mentioned it will be the difference and not the similarity that we will key on:

"Other men were present in Adam, however not in act, but only virtually, as in an original principle. Nor are they said to have sinned in him by exercising any act, but insofar as they belong to Adam's nature, which was corrupted by sin." (Summa Against the Gentiles, IV, Ch. 52, reply to seventh objection.)

The difference lies in how we are supposed to have been present in Adam. Leibniz thought that our yet-to-become-rational souls were actually present within the organizing influence of Adam's soul. Every soul on its own governs a physical extension, according to Leibniz, and that physical extension is itself an aggregate of soul-governed physical extensions, or bodies. We were present within that aggregate governed by Adam's soul, i.e. much as cells, little bodies or "animalcules" within Adam's body. Our souls later take on the faculty of reason as an acquired trait, retaining substantial identity through that transition.

Aquinas's view is more difficult to characterize; his subtle difference with Leibniz lies in his refusal to admit our actual, substantial presence in Adam, admitting rather our virtual presence within him, insofar as his original principle (nature) and ours is the same. Adam did something to alter the common nature's status before we, instantiations of the same nature, came to be. Not that the nature itself was affected; natures are eternal and unchanging. Rather, the change is in the grace-insured status of the nature, the insurance plan connected to the nature and applicable to every instantiation. This is how the defective alteration was passed on to us; much in the manner in which it would happen

that if the first batter that a cookie-cutter cuts bends it, future cookies cut by it will receive a defective shape.

Both of these views raise further problems which we should consider. The problem with Aquinas's view is that it is difficult to see how an action by an individual substance can alter the pristine status of the nature it instantiates rather than just the individual substance itself. After Adam, nothing anybody does further alters the status of the nature, but just alters the status of the individual substance. Even the salvation of Christ is not the repriminization of human nature, but of instances of that nature, i.e. of individual humans. That understood, it is quite puzzling how Adam could have been in a position to do what not even Christ does: alter the status of the generic human nature. To be sure, it is not claimed to be Adam, but God who, in response to the first sin - a sin of reason, according to Aquinas - deprived human nature of the graces insuring the harmonious sovereignty of reason in the soul. An answer to why He would do so would probably have to do with the inevitability of the proliferation of sin against reason in human culture once it had been introduced therein, the counterproductiveness of empowering by grace corrupted reason, and the impossibility of directly cleansing corrupt rational faculties without violating the dignity of creation. In order to preserve such dignity, a remedy would have to be sought which could be freely chosen by reason, i.e. by each individual in rational deliberation. Just how these things

would be established seems to me beyond the scope of "reason alone".

The problem with Leibniz's version of original-sin transmission is how being present as "animalcules" in Adam's body manages to infect us with the privation of original sin. Original sin is a moral ailment, not a physical one; moreover we are only present in Adam in a premoral state, a kind of presence which does not seem capable of participation in Adam's moral state, and which thus seems not to merit the reception of a moral privation.

By Leibniz's own admission, none of the other animalcules in Adam's body which are not destined to be human receive any defect because of original sin. How can we bear a defect which pertains to disorder between soul-elements: reason, the passions, the bodily desires, not all of which we possess? On this score Leibniz notes that strictly speaking, original sin causes disorderliness in the passions and sensations alone, which animalcules already possess. Reason is only infected indirectly, by the disorderliness of the other parts. So one could see how original sin could be carried by a not-yet-rational human "spore" in its faculties, taking on its intended moral significance only when the soul takes on rationality.

So ultimately the question is: what is the justice of punishing us for being in Adam in a pre-rational, pre-moral state? It seems inappropriate to depict the transmission of original sin as a physical transmission, as if it were a

bacterial contagion - although Leibniz was not unique in doing so.

Why Leibniz chose physical transmission over the Thomistic formal transmission has to do with the difference between these two philosophers on what natures are: Leibniz considered natures to be individual substances themselves, so the deprived-common-nature option was not open to him. (Leibniz's view of natures is discussed in Chapter 2, Proposition 8.)

**The Origin of Souls** - The third aspect of Leibniz's understanding of Original Sin is its peculiar juxtaposition with a metaphysical proposition he seemed anxious to work into his metaphysics: that creation of substances happened all at once. He had a difficult time coming up with a definitive argument for it philosophically, and its appeal to him seems rationally unjustified - that is, unless it arises from his commitment to Original Sin - and I shall argue that it does.

## CHAPTER 2

### SIX TENETS OF LEIBNIZ'S METAPHYSICS

In this chapter six metaphysical propositions argued for by Leibniz will be presented and discussed, with an eye to later (Chapter 3) indicating their motivational dependence on the theological propositions discussed in the previous chapter. All but one of them (Proposition 10) can be uncontroversially classified as key tenets of his philosophy. The six propositions are as follows:

- Proposition 5 - The actual world is the best possible world.
- Proposition 6 - Teleological reasoning is a virtually indispensable key for science and understanding.
- Proposition 7 - The essence of a body is not its extension, but its principle of activity.
- Proposition 8 - The active principle or nature of an individual substance is its actualized complete concept.  
Corollary to this are both that individual substances are naturally indestructible and that, divine action excepted, there are no transeunt causes.
- Proposition 9 - There are no material atoms.
- Proposition 10 - Substances are created all at once.

#### Proposition 5 - The Actual World Is the Best Possible World

##### Overview

Of the major tenets of Leibnizean philosophy some were less openly defended by him than others, for prudential reasons. In the case of this proposition, Leibniz defended it most openly, as much so as he did any other. Discussion of it appears in most of his major works, including the

Monadology, the Discourse, Vindication, the Theodicy, and On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe .

In general, the claim that the actual world is the best possible arises in one of two contexts: either as a direct consequence of the existence of God, the perfect being; or as the consequence of the competition between possibles for existence - a competition which still ultimately depends on God's existence. Those cases of the occurrence of Proposition 5 in the first context can be subdivided into straightforward cases, i.e. those which are not expressly apologetic - that is, not in the context of expressly defending God's justice in the face of existing evils, and those which are. This distinction should become more clear by the examples provided.

#### Proposition 5 as Direct Consequence of God's Existence

In §§ 53-55 of the Monadology, Leibniz writes:

"Now, as there is an infinity of possible universes in the ideas of God and only one of them can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for the choice of God of one over the others.

"And this reason cannot be found but... in the degrees of perfection to which these worlds attain....

"And this this is the cause of the existence of the Best: that his wisdom makes it known to God, that his goodness makes him choose it, and that his power makes him produce it." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 709.)

Early in the Discourse (§ III) he vehemently states his point:

"I can no more approve of the opinion of some modern thinkers who heartily sustain that that which God has created is not the ultimate perfection, and that he could well have done better. For it seems to me that the consequences



of this sentiment are in all fact contrary to the glory of God." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 819.)

In Vindication, §§ 40-1:

"Up to this point we have spoken of [God's] greatness and goodness separately... now let us proceed to what pertains to the two jointly. The things common to both his greatness and goodness are those which proceed not only from his goodness, but from his greatness (i.e. wisdom and power) as well: greatness makes it such that goodness obtains its own goal....

"Since the [divine] wisdom directs the universal expression of the goodness of God in created things, it follows that divine providence extends itself to the whole series of the universe, and that it is to be asserted that from the infinite number of possible series of things God chose the best; and therefore this latter is the one that actually exists." (Erdmann, v. II, pp. 655-6.)

The argument expressed in these citations is that, given that God exists, His omnibenevolence coupled with his omniscience and omnipotence allows us plainly to deduce that the actual world is the best possible. There is simply no "excuse" for him not to create the best. He is aware of what is best, he is able to produce what is best, and he chooses to produce the best. The existence of the best possible world thus follows *a priori* from the existence of God.

Against the contention that since God acts freely in creating, this entails that his perfection did not compel him to create, or to create anything in particular, or that there is no "best", Leibniz responds that this suggests God's creative act was an indifferent choice, and that this in turn suggests imperfection on God's part:

"[T]his is an error. They believe in this manner to safeguard the liberty of God, as if it weren't the highest liberty to act in perfection according to

sovereign reason. For to believe that God acts on some matter without having any reason for his choice... such is a sentiment which conforms little to his glory. For example, let us suppose that God chose between A and B and that he takes A without having any reason to prefer it to B; I claim that this action of God at least would not be praiseworthy; for all praise must be founded in some reason, which by hypothesis is lacking here. Yet I hold that God does nothing for which he does not merit being glorified." (Erdmann, v. II, pp. 817-8.)

God's perfection entails that He acts according to reason, that He makes no arbitrary choices. God would only have chosen not to create if not creating were best; paradoxically, had there been more than one best choice, God, as perfectly rational, would not have made a choice, and hence, again, not created. More on this in Chapter 3 (p. 212 ff.)

#### Proposition 5 as Apologetic Instrument

Leibniz used Proposition 5 as a way of defending God in the face of worldly evils. Such a use is recorded in §§193-4 of the Theodicy:

"Alfonso maintained that better could have been done, and his opinion was censured by everyone.

"Yet philosophers and theologians dare to support dogmatically such a belief; and I have many times wondered that gifted and pious persons should have been capable of setting bounds to the goodness and perfection of God. For to assert that he knows what is best, that he can do it and that he does it not, is to avow that it is rested with his will only to make the world better than it is; but that is what one calls lacking goodness.... If some adduce experience to prove that God could have done better, they set themselves up as ridiculous critics of his works. To such will be given the answer given to all those who criticize God's course of action, and who from this same assumption, that is, the alleged defects of the world, would infer that there is an evil God, or at least a God neutral between good and evil....

You have known the world only since the day before yesterday... and you carp at the world. Wait until you know more of the world and consider therein especially the parts which present a complete whole... and you will find there a contrivance and a beauty transcending all imagination." (Farrer, p. 248).

The above is a challenge to those who would reject God's existence on the following argument:

If God exists, the actual world would be the best possible.

The actual world is not the best possible.

---

God doesn't exist.

Use of this argument against God tacitly assumes that whether the actual world is the best possible world is more readily ascertainable by consideration of evidence than whether God exists. Leibniz's apologetic discourse above argues the opposite: we do not have sufficient evidence to directly decide whether this world is the best possible, whereas the evidence/reasons available to our rational faculties are decisively in favor of God's existence. Given God's existence, we can then justifiably conclude by this indirect route that this is the best possible world.

The challenge this poses to the no-God argument is to suggest that it is backward-thinking. Arguments are intended to proceed from more directly ascertainable premises to more remote conclusions. The denial of God on account of actual evil is "ridiculous" in the sense that actual evil is in itself no evidence for non-bestness of the actual world: maybe all possible worlds have evil in them; or maybe some have no evil, but a lesser overall balance of good. Humans

are not in the position to evaluate the world on its own merits in comparison to other possible worlds. Worlds are simply too much for us to comprehend them, which is what we'd have to do to make a justified evaluation. On the other hand, our belief in God may be justified without comprehending Him, for reasons discussed in Chapter 1. Therefore it is an improper way of arguing that leads to this kind of denial of God.

As the Theodicy is a work intended for popular consumption, Leibniz stops short therein of driving home the challenge from its proper logical angle. Instead he suggests that those who would deny God's existence in this manner are hasty in their judgment, and should suspend it until they've experienced more of life. But clearly this is tongue-in-cheek: even an old man has not lived enough of life to perceive experientially the "big picture". In fact, such a synoptic view is the unique privilege of the omniscient mind, since the actual world is infinitely detailed.

**Proposition 5 as Resulting from the Competition among Possibles for Existence**

Leibniz employed a more curious way of supporting his best-possible-world theory, one based on the idea that "possibles" or essences competed for existence, each having a claim to exist proportionate to its "quantity" of essence. It comes up in On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe (1697. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 88):

"just as, in the case of weights, that motion results which produces the greatest possible

descent of weight, so also, in the case of the possible, that world emerges through which the maximum of possibles is produced into existence.... And just as possibility is the principle of essence, so perfection or degree of essence (through which the greatest number is made compossible) is the principle of existence."

In a passage entered under the heading "General Notations" in Grua (1683-86?; p. 324) he writes:

"every essence or reality presses for existence.... And every possible involves not only possibility, but also an exertion toward existing in act...."

His clearest expression of this idea comes in an undated, untitled early writing (entered in Gerhardt, v. 7, pp. 289-90. Partial translation in Wiener, p. 91 ff.):

"It can be said that each possible is-for-existing, just because it is founded in the necessary being existing in act, without which there is no way by which any possible could become actual.

"But from this it does not follow that all possibles exist; such would properly follow if all possibles were compossible.

"But since some are incompatible with others, it follows that some possibles don't make it to existence.... "In the meantime from the conflict of all possibles vying for existence this at once results, that that series of things exists by which the most exists, that is the maximum series of all possibles."

The actual world is directly the result of competing possibles, where there is not room for all - since some possibles are incompatible. The impetus for creation is intrinsic within the possibles themselves, which get their reality-charge from being founded in the necessary existent, God. Thus, creation is by automatic remote control, so to speak. But it still depends ultimately on God's existence.

It is an odd bit of reasoning; odd because it grants a certain sort of activity to non-existents. Yet those non-

existents are real, being founded in the divine nature. Ultimately their "activity" may be construed as God's activity upon them as objects, but given that Leibniz stuck so heartily with the active image, one is left to wonder whether it was intended as more than metaphor.

In short, the proposition that the actual world is the best possible is either an immediate or mediate inference from God's existence. It gets used as an apologetic instrument, and is depicted as the outcome of an odd sort of "physic" of struggling interaction between possibles, which, despite the struggling, ends up in the form of a perfectly harmonious system of actual beings.

#### **Proposition 6 - Teleological Reasoning Is a Virtually Indispensable Key for Science and Understanding**

##### **Background**

The pro-teleological position is another Leibniz did not hesitate to argue vehemently for, although he occasionally was subtle about it. He did so in notable contrast to the formalist and materialist trends of his time, which disparaged teleology for its association with that Scholastic/Aristotelian tradition which philosophers and scientists, inspired by the spirit of the age, struggled to transcend. This fact about Leibniz is another stumbling block for those who would depict Leibniz as a philosopher typical of the Enlightenment era. Teleology had been out of style since the Renaissance, when the work of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes and others, coupled with the advent of the new

Galilean science and the Roman Catholic establishment's stubborn resistance to it, collectively dealt it a blow from which, in terms of popularity, it has never recovered. Yet Leibniz remained a most staunch proponent of it.

Teleology is the method of investigating into the nature of things using evidence or knowledge of their purpose, or "final cause", as a key. Regardless of what philosophers and scientists might say about it, it has never really been abandoned, but has suffered a loss in reputation. Biologists cannot avoid being aided in their study of parts of animals by knowledge of their organic purpose or "function": the teeth are for chewing, etc. Archeologists are thrilled to discover an ancient grinding tool, for they take it as a virtually conclusive indication not only the presence of humans during the same time period, but as strong evidence for the practice of agriculture as well. Without knowledge or evidence of purpose, we arguably would not recognize a certain stone object as the tool that it may be.

To be sure, the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods did serve to purge science and philosophy of misuses of teleological reasoning. Aristotle had explained the movements of the celestial bodies as "caused" by their desire to imitate the divinity, assuming that circular motion is "perfect"; this explanation, to us absurd, enjoyed long-lasting currency in astronomy. I suppose one can safely say that teleology is scarcely if at all appropriate to some fields of inquiry.

There are actually several modes of reasoning, not mutually exclusive, that were typically turned to instead of teleology. One can be labelled formal explanation, according to which a scientific explanation for an event or phenomenon is thought to consist in a formal law which covers or explains it. Usually no further inquiry is launched into why this law and not some other holds sway, as might be done in teleological reasoning.

Another way of reasoning is efficient-cause explanation, whereby an explanation for a phenomenon is thought to consist in the identification of the action or actions of a physical substance or substances which produced it. In the normal course of scientific inquiry, efficient-cause explanation leads to formal explanation: discovery of efficient causes for things leads to a search for laws governing those causes. Leibniz often refers to this whole method of inquiry as efficient-cause explanation.

A third way of doing science was mechanistic explanation, which is much like formalism with the added task of understanding all things as machines and breaking them down to their simple parts, discovering the laws governing how the parts work together. This last carries with it some controversial ontological commitments.

The proposition that science is properly limited to one of these three methods is an expression of anti-teleology, and in Leibniz's time was surely associated with either Cartesian dualism or materialism. The modernist conviction



that it is not the business of science to investigate into the full reality of its objects, but just to systemize observations, was not yet a recognized option, although it too is arguably a by-product of anti-teleological skepticism.

I've said all this to give an image of who Leibniz's opposition was: mostly anti-teleological dualists or materialists of either a mechanist or at least formalist bent.

Teleology as employed in a general reflection on things virtually always is connected to a commitment to the existence of God. Granting His existence enables one to make the inference from the fact that something happens to serve a purpose that it was created or came into being in order to fulfill that purpose. If it is really true that something exists to fulfill a certain purpose, then certainly knowledge of its purpose is the key to understanding it. That is the case with human artifacts, and if God as conceived in the Judeo-Christian tradition exists, that is the case with many other things as well: the sun, perhaps the moon, animals, plants, the earth's geology and meteorology, and so forth. Perhaps even the laws of physics, which are not generally considered as metaphysically necessary, have been purposefully chosen.

Leibniz's view was that every actual contingent thing exists for a purpose, and that therefore understanding the purpose of a thing as well as understanding the thing according to its purpose are essential to knowledge about the

world. Although he also believed in the value of formal reason, he thought that even therein teleological reasoning is valuable as an advance scout, identifying positions still remote to formalist or efficient-cause reasoning which the latter should strive to establish. For these reasons he disparaged the anti-teleological dualism and materialism of his time.

### The Appropriateness of Teleological Reasoning to All Contingent Things

As a consequence of his best-possible-world theory of actual existence, Leibniz had to be convinced that in principle, every detail of the world was subject to teleological analysis. In fact he held that nature has "the greatest imaginable abundance, order, and adornment" (New Essays, Bk. IV, Ch. xvii, § 21, p. 490). The point is that every single detail of the actual world is required for it to be the best possible, and therefore every detail is purposefully chosen.

The advocacy of teleology or final-cause explanation is particularly controversial with respect to the sciences. Yet in the Discourse, § 19 Leibniz asserts:

"I hold... that it is precisely therein [in final causes] where the principles of all existents and of the laws of nature must be sought, because God always proposes the best and most perfect.... [T]here is nothing in the universe which... does not accommodate itself to... the [teleological] principles mentioned above. Therefore when we see some good effect or some perfection which happens or which follows from the works of God we are able to say assuredly that God has purposed it, for he does nothing by chance...." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 825.)

Thus he argues for the use of final causes in physics. Whatever the laws of nature are, they were chosen by God from among other possible laws on account of their eminent suitability, their compatibility with the best world. In fact this is true not only the laws of physics, but everything in the universe.

### Leibniz's Critique of Anti-Teleology

In an intriguing dialogue entitled Dialogue Between an Astute Politician and an Ecclesiastic of Recognized Piety (1679, in Foucher de Careil, v. 2, pp. 512-46), Leibniz defends teleology against the Lucretian theory of random evolution or what we would call "natural selection":

"Politician: ... You sustain that it is Providence that forms, for example, all that is found so fortunately united in animals. That would be reasonable, if it were only a matter of a particular cause. When we see a poem, we don't doubt that a man has composed it; but when it is a matter of nature as a whole, one must reason otherwise. Lucretius, after Epicurus, issued some challenges which do great damage to your argument based on the order of things. 'For', he says, 'feet aren't made for walking, but men walk because they have feet.' And if you ask how it results that everything accords so well in the machine of the animal, as if it were made that way on purpose, Lucretius would tell you that by necessity things badly made perish, while things well made are conserved... thus, even if there had been an infinity of badly made things, they would not be able to maintain themselves among the others.

"Ecclesiastic: These people truly are mistaken, for after all we see nothing made half-way. How would poorly made things disappear so quickly, and how would they escape our eyes equipped with the microscope? ... Besides, there are beauties which don't aid the survival of one species over another. For example, the admirable structure of the eyes will not give one species an existence-advantage over another. Why is it that all animals with wings possess as well an intricate mechanical adjustment

for them? ...Nature makes nothing that is not marvelous." (pp. 528-9)

In this fictional exchange Leibniz, through the voice of the ecclesiastic, addresses what today is the main challenger to teleological reasoning in biology: a blind-natural-selection evolutionary process. Leibniz's response to the challenge is not rigorous; had it been so he probably would have retorted that the blind-evolution theory is lacking in sufficient reason. My intention in citing it is to note that he had a concern to propagate the teleological view and defended it.

In *Apologia Fidei ex Ratione* (1683-6? in Grua, p. 28) Leibniz goes so far as to suggest that the abolition of final cause reasoning, which he was well aware was being called for by some, leads either to atheism or to a belief in God as a non-intelligent force. He continued in a similar vein in the *Discourse* (§ XIX):

"I bring no accusation against our new philosophers who pretend to banish final causes from physics, but I am nevertheless obliged to avow that the consequences of such a banishment appear to me dangerous.... discarding final causes entirely as though God proposed no end and no good in his activity" (Montgomery, p. 33).

Again, what appears to be surfacing, alongside a commitment to teleology as key to the truth about things, is the use of it as an apologetic instrument. The banishment of final causes from science takes God out of the picture in fields of inquiry which otherwise could have been used, as they had been in the past, to support His existence.

## The Usefulness of Teleological Reasoning, and Its Support of Formal Efficient-Cause Reasoning

One of the traditional problems with the teleological method is that to make progress in it requires gaining an understanding of God's intentions for things. Maybe this is too much to expect of humans; Leibniz was optimistic:

"As regards the ends which God proposed to himself, I am convinced that we can know them and that it is of the greatest usefulness to investigate them. In general, whenever we realize that a certain thing renders some eminent services we can safely affirm that this among others was the end intended by God when he created that thing, namely, that it should render that service; I have elsewhere shown... that the consideration of final causes may lead to the discovery of some concealed and very important truths in the natural sciences, the discovery of which would not have been equally easy by the consideration of efficient causes."  
("Critical Remarks Concerning Descartes' Principles", 1692. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 30.)

Two points are made here. The first is that teleological scrutiny of God's intentions for created things is not an overwhelmingly difficult or arrogant thing to do. The second is that teleology can scout ahead of efficient-cause reasoning and discover some important things, serving as a guiding clue-giver.

As to the first point, the key to understanding the plausibility of Leibniz's claim is by example. The orange tree yields a fruit pleasantly edible and nutritious to humans; therefore we can be assured that God created it for that purpose - among other purposes for which it may have also been created. Things are by no means limited to single purposes; acknowledging this makes Leibnizean teleology take on a much less presumptuous air. Teleological investigations

that seek to identify the purpose of a thing are bound to be stumped. For not only is it probably not true that a created thing has only one purpose, but if it is true, there doesn't seem to be any sure way of choosing the "real" purpose from among apparent ones, other than to assume a human bias and take it for granted that all creation is exclusively for us. Needless to say, this conclusion is suspect, and a typical reaction to this bad teleology is a reversion to negative theology: we don't know God's mind enough to say such a thing. If, on the other hand, we don't set a limit on how many purposes a thing can have, and we don't attempt to establish a hierarchy of purposes, what results is a non-presumptuous teleology. Studying a recently discovered organ of some one-celled animal, we set out knowing that it serves some distinct purpose, and thus our formal investigation of it is already informed by teleology. Of course, occasionally it doesn't work so well; sometimes an apparent organ turns out to serve no distinct purpose, as is said of the human appendix.

On the second point, Leibniz often reiterated that efficient-cause reasoning would be bogged down without the help of teleology:

"The best plan would be to join the two ways of thinking.... [T]he method of efficient causes, which goes much deeper... is also more difficult when we come to details.... The method of final causes, however, is easier and can be frequently employed to find out important and useful truths which we should have to seek for a long time, if

we were confined to that other physical method...."  
(Discourse, § XXI. Montgomery, p. 38.)

and

"final causes are useful not only in ethics and natural theology for the advancement of virtue and piety, but even in physics itself for discovering and understanding recondite truths."  
(What is Nature? Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 99.)

The suggested policy seems to be that teleology is the principle method of advancing knowledge to new frontiers of "discovery"; whereas formal/efficient-cause reason brings up the rear, testing and attempting to firmly establish the new insights.

At any rate Leibniz's commitment to teleology has an obvious connection to his theological commitments, one that will be explored more in Chapter 3.

**Proposition 7 - The Essence of a Body Is Not Its Extension,  
but Its Principle of Activity**

### Background

In his early intellectual career, this assertion stood almost as the official slogan of Leibniz's philosophy. It stands in direct contradiction to one of the principle tenets of Cartesian philosophy, namely that extension is the essence of body. But it stands just as well against any materialist conception of body, such as the material atomism of Gassendi.

The issue that this proposition addresses might be phrased as a question: what makes a body a body? Or, what gives a body its identity as a body? One candidate often chosen by philosophers was impermeable extension. Bodies are

things that take up space: they are extended; moreover they "monopolize" the space they occupy, such that two bodies cannot share the same space: they are impermeable. Everyday cases of apparent space-sharing of bodies are not genuine. They are analogous to one filling a hole to the brim with gravel and still being able to shovel sand into the same hole: an aggregate of bodies may fill a space imperfectly, thus leaving room for apparent interpenetration by smaller bodies, which are actually just falling into empty crevices. Real bodies occupy a volume of space perfectly; they do not allow any interpenetration of other bodies.

This idea of body has an intuitive appeal. Being extended seems most surely to be a necessary condition to being a body. In addition, we observe that the more dense something is, the more impenetrable it is. Moreover, we are aware, as people of Leibniz's time were becoming aware, that physical objects in our experience are composed of smaller bodies (atoms, and more recently, subatomic particles), and that the more intimately these smaller bodies are bonded, the less penetrable the physical object. Water vapor is by far more penetrable than liquid water, which in turn far more penetrable than a block of ice. The quality of impenetrability of physical objects seems to originate in the smaller bodies, since it seems the degree of penetrability of objects is a simple function of the degree of separatedness of the smaller bodies. A physical object composed of smaller bodies perfectly bonded together, it seems, would have



perfect impenetrability. Moreover, although it may be beyond direct experience, it would follow that each smaller body is by nature perfectly impenetrable.

#### Leibniz's Opposition to the Materialist Conception of Body

Leibniz was opposed to this idea of bodies. The aspect of it which he attacked most was the notion that the essence of body is extension, which he attributed principally to Descartes. The more elaborate view that the essence of body is impermeable extension, which he considered an improvement on the first, he attributed to Gassendi.

Descartes - The gist of his opposition to Descartes's view is that:

"necessarily, vacuous space is different from body, even though it is extended." (Leibniz to Arnauld, 1671; Appendix A, p. 346.)

If extension is the essence of body, then there is no essential difference between bodies and vacuous space: for space has extension, just as bodies do. But we know that there must be an essential difference between bodies and vacuous space.

Gassendi - Leibniz criticizes the more sophisticated view in On True Method in Philosophy and Theology (Erdmann, v. I, p. 111):

"Those who in forming a theory of corporeal nature add to extension a certain resistance or impenetrability... - as Gassendi and other scholars have done - have indeed philosophized a bit more correctly but they have not gotten rid of the difficulties. For the main thing that is needed in analyzing the idea of body is some positive notion, which impenetrability is not, since it has not yet been proven that the penetration of bodies is not

present in nature.... Finally the absolute impenetrability of bodies contradicts the decrees of our faith no less than *polytopia*; for the same body in different places or several bodies in the same place is equally difficult.... Whereas there is no inconsistency to *polytopia*, nor indeed to *metousiasmon*."

Leibniz's reasoning against this view is less conclusive than against the first view. Here he indicates the plausibility of the view he opposes, while criticizing it for not being based on ascertained evidence and for not being in accord with the teachings of faith -clearly a reference to the Eucharist - and with *polytopia* - or the possibility of the same body occupying different places at the same time - which Leibniz argues is, like *metousiasmon* (?) - a consistent notion. The point is that if a theory -in this case, that the essence of bodies is impenetrable extension - results in the analysis of a consistent notion as inconsistent, it must be false. The Gassendian theory contradicts any notion of bodies which allows them to interpenetrate or to be present at once in different extensions; for Gassendi, as for Descartes - both of whom were Catholic, Gassendi a priest - a body is identified by its physical extension, and therefore one body can't have two extensions.

We can further our insight into Leibniz's point of view if we gain an understanding of what these two Greek terms - *polytopia* and *metousiasmon* - mean; Leibniz doesn't define them. Wiener (pp. 64-5) renders them as follows:

*polytopia* - "the same body in several places at the same time"; and

*metousiasmon* - "several bodies in the same place".

But I believe they can more accurately be understood as referring to types of bodily condition and substantial process, respectively, instances of which are contended to be involved in the Eucharist. More specifically I take *polytopia* to be the bodily condition of being in several places at once, a special case of which, Real Multipresence, is contended by some Christians to occur in the Eucharist. I take *metousiasmon*, on the other hand, to refer to the substantial process of a physical extension transforming from one substance to another with no change in physical state, a special case of which, Transubstantiation, is claimed to occur in the Eucharistic consecration. In short, I think Wiener was wrong about *metousiasmon* but basically right about *polytopia*.

My reasoning is that Leibniz saying that the same body in several places and several bodies in the same place sandwiched between references to *polytopia* and *metousiasmon* is accidental. Surely *polytopia* means 'being in several places'- its etymology makes so much clear. But that doesn't mean that the other option - several things in one place - defines *metousiasmon*. I take it that the reason why Leibniz remarked that the same body in different places and different bodies in the same place are equally difficult was as a shorthand way of saying impenetrability denies *polytopia*. This is not obvious. What is obvious is that impenetrability denies several bodies being in the same place; Leibniz probably felt that there was an argument showing that the

denial of the possibility of bodies sharing the same space ultimately entails denial of the possibility that one body can be in many places. Not wanting to get detoured, he merely said that the two possibilities are equally difficult to accommodate, i.e. their accommodation requires similar conditions.

A real hint for what *metousiasmon* is is given in what immediately follows the passage excerpted:

"For what might seem amazing is that the  
Consubstantiation of bodies resolves into  
Transubstantiation" (Erdmann, v. I, p. 111).

In this case, Leibniz surely looks to be associating *polytopia* with Consubstantiation and *metousiasmon* with Transubstantiation. A closer look at the word "metousiasmon" indicates that it is a morpheme-by-morpheme translation of 'transubstantiation': 'meta'='trans', 'ousia'='substance', etc.

I connect *polytopia* to Real Multipresence through Consubstantiation since the former is a view historically associated with the latter and opposed by proponents of Transubstantiation, just as they opposed Consubstantiation. Leibniz uses the term virtually as indicating the Lutheran conception of Real Presence, sharing that role with 'Consubstantiation'. Real Multipresence, which has apparently fallen out of usage since Leibniz's time, evidently is the view that in the Eucharist Christ's body is multiplied in order to be present in many places; hence its association to *polytopia*. Catholics instead insist that all consecrated

hosts together just amount to one body, even though each host, and any fragment of any host, is entirely Christ's body as well. As clear from the last two passages and from discussion of Proposition 3, Chapter 1, Leibniz thought that Consubstantiation, Real Multipresence or *polytopia*, and Transubstantiation or *metousiasmon* are all mutually entailing.

Why did Leibniz use Greek terms here? I suggest he did so in order to be able to refer to the more generic metaphysical notions behind the theological ones, to make it clear that his mention of the theological notions was in a philosophical context.

**General Opposition** - In his critique of Gassendi Leibniz refrained from mentioning his main objection to materialist notions of body: they don't provide an explanation for the unity of bodies. My body is one, yet how can Descartes or Gassendi say that? Descartes insisted that all matter was one substance, while Gassendi that all matter was ultimately composed of impenetrable atoms, and these were the unities, the bodies, of matter. Leibniz puts it as follows:

"no body can be understood as a unity - indeed, it would be nothing other than an aggregate of points, which is impossible - unless it is contained by some substantial form, which is somewhat like a soul." (*Apologia Fidei ex Ratione*, 1683-6(?). Grua, p. 29.)

Elsewhere he insists that:

"the very substance of things consists in their force to act and be acted upon." (*What is Nature?* Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 102.)

In New Essays (Bk. IV, Ch x, § 10, p.440) he indicates that it is:

"a soul... or some analogous active principle, which makes it a true unity".

### The Non-Materialist Option

The unifying active principle of a thing cannot be explained or derived from its extension, which is by itself an aggregate. Conversely, however, the active principle explains the extension:

"this active principle is the substantial and constitutive basis of extended things themselves or of matter" (Leibniz to De Volder, March 24, 1699. Entered under the title "On Substance as Active Force Rather than as Mere Extension" in Wiener, p. 166).

All matter is composed of bodies, yet each body has an immaterial active principle which makes it a body. It follows that the "constitutive basis" of matter is itself immaterial!

A more clear idea of Leibniz's radically immaterialist conception of bodies is expressed in the following:

"all substances can be said to exist in a place only through the operations of their active principle" ("On True Method in Philosophy and Theology", c. 1686. Wiener, pp. 64-5).

Bodies are present only by activity; the extension of the body is only the delimitation of the activity. So in a way the extension is illusory (Discourse, XII).

In short, Leibniz considered the essence of a body to be its soul or active principle, which he associates with the Scholastic "substantial form" (Ibid., p. 65) and the Aristotelian "entelechy" (Monadology § 18), and which he alternately called "principle of motion" (Appendix A,

p. 350) "the principle of motion and rest" (taken from Aristotle: see What is Nature?, 1698. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 97), "active force" (Leibniz to De Volder, March 24, 1699. Wiener, p. 156 ff.), and "monad" (from Augustine and Bruno: Wiener, p. xvi).

Proposition 8 - Existing Substances Are the Actualizations  
of Complete Concepts (The Natures of Substances Are  
Complete Concepts)

This is arguably the most famous of Leibniz's metaphysical propositions in that it provides the basis for what in the end became known as the theory of monads. Interestingly, Proposition 8 is not explicitly stated in the Monadology itself, but two of its most important corollaries are stated there in the prominent positions of 4 and 7. They are, restated:

8a. Substances are indestructible (see Mon. § 4); and

8b. There are no real transeunt causes (see Mon. § 7).

Discussion of 8a and 8b follows the ensuing discussion of 8.

**Evidence of Commitment -**

Evidence supporting Leibniz's commitment to Proposition 8 comes primarily from his Discourse on Metaphysics and related correspondence, principally with Antoine Arnauld and Count Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels.

Under proposition VIII of the Discourse, Leibniz asserts that:

- i. "this is the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being, namely to afford a conception so complete that the concept shall be sufficient for the understanding of it and for

the deduction of all the predicates of which the substance is or may become the subject."  
(Montgomery, p. 13.)

Later on (p. 14) he makes the point clear by example:

- ii. "there was always in the soul of Alexander marks of all that had happened to him and evidences of all that would happen to him and traces even of everything which occurs in the universe".

In the text of § XIII in the same work (p. 19) Leibniz continues to elaborate the point in even stronger terms:

- iii. "As the individual concept of each person includes once and for all everything which can ever happen to him, in it can be seen, a priori the evidences or the reasons for the reality of each event".

Stronger statements follow. In § XXXIII (ibid., p. 56)

Leibniz writes:

- iv. "everything which happens to a soul or to any substance is a consequence of its concept; hence the idea or the essence of the soul brings it about that all of its appearances or perceptions should be born out of its nature".

In his April 12, 1686 letter to Count Ernst, Leibniz again elaborates by example (ibid., p. 80):

- v. "by the individual concept, Adam, I mean of course a perfect representation of a particular Adam who has certain individual characteristics and is thus distinguished from an infinity of possible persons very similar to him yet for all that different from him.... God has preferred him to these others because it has pleased God to choose precisely such an arrangement of the universe.... [N]ow is it not true that these possible Adams (if we may speak of them thus) differ among themselves and that God has chosen only one who is precisely ours? There are so many reasons which prove the impossibility, not to say the absurdity and even the impiety of the contrary view".

Finally, in remarks on a letter from Arnauld disputing with him on this question (ibid., p. 104), Leibniz emphasizes:



vi. "my supposition is not merely that God wished to create an Adam whose concept was vague and incomplete but that God wished to create a particular Adam sufficiently determined as an individual. This complete individual concept, in my opinion, involves the relation to the whole sequence of things".

I don't think Leibniz ever states his point more clearly than he does in this remark (vi) on the letter from Arnauld - written in response to a letter Leibniz had sent him and probably the first he ever addressed to Leibniz - which sparked a famous correspondence (see Sleight). Using Adam as an example representing all substances, it expresses, corroborated by the other citations, the idea that God creates exclusively by actualizing or instantiating complete concepts: concepts that entail every truth about the prospective substances' entire existence. Since the world is made up of substances, it would then follow that when God creates the world, he creates it in every detail - including the heinous crimes and the natural catastrophes, not to mention every "free" choice every human being ever makes.

#### Significance of Commitment

So I think it is clear that Leibniz was committed to the proposition that substances are the actualizations of complete concepts. This helps us to understand what he meant by saying that individuals are the "*infima species*" of being (Discourse, § IX. Montgomery, p. 14). If substances are actualizations of complete concepts, then in the traditional sense of 'nature' no two substances have an identical nature, but each nature may be had by exactly one individual. In the

traditional metaphysical sense a nature is that whose instantiation without further formal specification results in a substance. In light of this definition the Leibnizean claim is that the things traditionally considered natures: humanity, doghood, african-violethood - are not natures in the strict sense, since their instantiation requires further formal specification. Their instantiation without further specification is, in Leibniz's terms not only an "absurdity", but an "impossibility" (v); hence surely they would not result in substances. The insight behind this point is that there is no such thing in the natural world as, say, a generic animal. If something is an animal, it also must instantiate something more specific, say, a lion:

"The notion of animal is not [complete], for it can be asked of it whether it is rational or brute, quadripedal or bipedal; for some animals are rational, others brute. Only if we believed a pure animal can exist, that is, one in which nothing else is to be found except that which is precisely required for the notion of animal, could we conclude that 'animal' names a substance.... But whether a pure animal is possible I gravely doubt. For not only would it lack feet, but sensation as well. For the notion of animal doesn't express what it must sense." (Handschriften, Ch. IV, v. VIII, No. 24, Bl. 86, p. 120.)

Leibniz takes this one step further by saying, e.g., that in order for something to be a lion, it must receive further formal specification which would define it as an individual - say, Clarence the cross-eyed lion. To this, the traditionals would respond that being Clarence the cross-eyed lion is not a formal specification, and that the lowest formal specification - the *infima species* - in this case is

lionhood. For them, individuation is not a function of form, but of matter, while for Leibniz, individuation is a function of form. (This point should be qualified: of the two great scholastic metaphysicians: Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus, only the former claimed that matter is the principle of individuation for material substances. Still, Aquinas's view was more publicized than Scotus's.)

In a logical sense, it is non-controversially true that substances are instantiations or actualizations of complete concepts. Every substance turns out to completely characterize exactly one complete concept. That is not the issue here. The issue is whether substances are created as the satisfactions of complete concepts, i.e. whether natures are complete concepts. Traditional metaphysicians thought natures to be in themselves open and incomplete, and therefore capable of being instantiated by many individuals, whereas Leibniz, thinking this absurd and impossible, argued that natures must be closed and complete, capable of being instantiated by exactly one individual. It is worth asking why he held this position so adamantly.

In his correspondence with Count Ernst Leibniz seems surprised that this view aroused so much controversy. He writes in his April 12, 1686 letter to the Count:

vii. "He [Arnauld] chooses one of my theses [the thirteenth; see iii above] to show that it is dangerous. But either I am incapable for the present of understanding the difficulty or else there is none in it. This has enabled me to recover from my surprise and has made me think that M. Arnaud's [sic] remarks are the results of misconceptions." (Montgomery, p. 76.)

But in fact, the claim is or was controversial in two ways. First, it is controversial because it is central to the controversiality of his famed best-possible-world theory of creation, for it entails that God's creation has no open variables not determined by His choice. Although the question whether all details of creation have been determined by God's choice has always been an unsettled point in Christian theology, to decide so definitively on it, as Leibniz did, was bound to cause a stir. Second, it was controversial because some read it, as Arnauld did, as limiting God's creative freedom; it would require us to forfeit the notion that God first creates and then embellishes his creation by means of various interventions that respond to particular situations and needs of creation. Instead we would have to say that God creates all at once, and everything that ever exists or happens is determined in that single creative act, in such a manner that, in principle, all is deducible from that single act. Thus, after creation, God would have no further freedom to embellish His creation.

Before we go further, it should be pointed out that Leibniz, in holding his position of divine determinism, is not without prominent company among the ranks of Christian theologians. Not only does it seem that Arnauld concurred with him on this point - though not without a wrinkle (letter to Leibniz, May 13, 1686; in Montgomery, p. 95) - but it seems as well that St. Paul, St. Augustine, and arguably even

St. Thomas Aquinas said some things that could be taken to represent the determinist position that God chooses every detail of creation.

In Chapter 3 I will argue that Leibniz's main motivation for holding that substances are the actualizations of complete concepts was that it is as he saw it a consequence of certain theological premises he was firmly committed to, namely the existence of God, the perfect being, and Original Sin. But as this motivation should not formally be taken in philosophy as an argument, it remains to be discussed what supporting argument(s) Leibniz had for Proposition 8.

#### Defense of Proposition 8: Refutation of "Contrary"

The argument Leibniz puts forth in support of Proposition 8 is basically that the "contrary" position is absurd, impious, and impossible. Leibniz expresses this view in citation v (p. 101):

viii. "[I]s it not true... that God has chosen only the one [Adam] who is precisely ours? There are so many reasons which prove the impossibility, not to say the absurdity and even impiety of the contrary view".

Interestingly, he does not go on to elaborate on this strong claim in the same writing. But even so, this statement may turn out to be an important key to his thinking.

The "contrary view" he speaks of must be that the Adam God chose was not "precisely ours" from his creation, but rather, as Leibniz puts it in vi: "an Adam whose concept is vague and incomplete". As Adam here is clearly intended to represent all substances by example, (see citations i, iii,

and iv), the contrary position Leibniz denounces as impossible, absurd and impious would be the view that substances are not created with all their details determined; in other words, that the natures of substances are incomplete concepts. Let us examine some Leibnizean passages in which he gives some indication as to why such a view is wrong-headed.

In his remarks on Arnauld's May 1686 letter (Montgomery, p. 111), Leibniz argues as follows:

- ix. "I am quite convinced in regard to what St. Thomas has taught about intelligences, that it is not possible for two individuals to exist wholly alike, that is, differing *solo numero*. We must, therefore, not conceive of a vague Adam or of a person to whom certain attributes of Adam appertain when we try to determine him, if we would hold that all human events follow from the one presupposition, but we must attribute to him a concept so complete that all which can be attributed to him may be derived from his [concept]."

Later in the same remarks (Ibid., p. 113) he writes:

- x. "It is not possible to find any other reason [for my identity as a substance], excepting that my attributes of the preceding time and state, as well as the attributes of the succeeding time and state are predicates of the same subject.... Now, what is it to say that the predicate is in the subject if not that the concept of the predicate is found in some sort involved in the concept of the subject? Since from the very time I began to exist it could be said of me truly that this or that would happen to me, we must grant that these predicates were principles involved in the subject or in my complete concept, which constitutes the so-called me".

Impossible - I take ix as an indication that Leibniz felt the existence of substances whose natures are incomplete concepts to be impossible because it violates his principle of the identity of indiscernibles. Natures are the things

God instantiates when He creates: His blueprints, so to speak. His creating two things of the same nature would result in two substances with identical concepts, while it is agreed that they are different. What could possibly differentiate them? The Thomists said it is matter which individuates. But a difference between two things must be intelligible, and matter alone is not intelligible. Any difference must be a formal difference, for form alone gives a thing intelligibility. Therefore, I surmise, by Leibniz's lights it is impossible for two things to differ *solo in numero*, because that would be to suggest that they don't differ formally, and thus they differ, but not in any way that is intelligible. Perhaps philosophers of our day would be more disposed to call this an absurdity than an impossibility, if they called it anything at all.

**Absurd** - I read **x** as an expression of why Leibniz thought it absurd that substances not be instantiations of complete concepts: namely, that there is no other way of explaining how substances constitute unities other than that they are the instantiations of complete concepts. As such, there would be no trouble explaining how substances are unities despite the apparent temporal changes they go through. If a substance comprises by nature all that ever happens to it, then in a sense it never changes, since it is not identified as a unity travelling through time, so to speak, but as a unity collectively spanning over time.

Impious - It is unclear in the immediate context of v what exactly Leibniz means when he suggests it is impious to say that the natures of substances may be incomplete concepts. To start with it may be inferred from his use of the term 'impiety' that Leibniz sees such a proposition as conflicting somehow with the notion of God's perfection. To understand this point requires discussion of the conceptual dependence of Leibniz's metaphysics on his theology. Since that is the topic of a later chapter I will save this point for then.

In giving separate treatment to each of the three parts of the assertion that the claim that the natures of substances are incomplete concepts is impossible, absurd, and impious, I am not suggesting that the three parts are in fact conceptually independent. Indeed the upcoming discussion of this matter in the chapter on the dependence of Leibniz's metaphysics on his theology will, I hope, make it clear that all three parts of the assertion are ultimately grounded on perceived conflicts between Leibniz's theological commitments and the claim that natures are incomplete concepts. The strategy behind my treating the three parts of the assertion separately in this section was simply explanatory: to gain a preliminary understanding of the assertion's meaning, based on other Leibnizean passages.

### **Two Important Corollaries of Proposition 8**

**Persistent Themes** - To understand the full significance of Proposition 8 to Leibniz it is important to note, as



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Volume  
II

A Dissertation Presented

by

BRIAN D. SKELLY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University  
of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 1991

Department of Philosophy

mentioned at the top of this section, that two of the most famous of his metaphysical tenets are direct corollaries of it:

- 8a. Substances are indestructible.
- and
- 8b. There are no real transeunt causes.

Both 8a and 8b are commonly occurrent themes in Leibniz's philosophy throughout his life. Not only is each stated near the beginning of the Monadology (1714):

- xi. "4. ... a simple substance cannot perish naturally in any conceivable manner." (8a)
- "7. It is impossible also to explain how a monad can be altered, that is, internally changed, by any other creature.... The monads have no windows through which anything could come in or go out" (8b. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 148);

but both are expressed in the Discourse (1686) as well:

8a in § XXXIV, 8b in § XIV. In § XXXIV Leibniz writes:

- xii. "Supposing that the bodies which constitute a *unum per se*, as human bodies, are substances, and have substantial forms, and supposing that animals have souls, we are obliged to grant that these souls and these substantial forms cannot entirely perish, any more than can the atoms or the ultimate elements of matter, according to the position of other philosophers; for no substance perishes, although it may become very different." (Montgomery, p. 57.)

Earlier, in § XIV, Leibniz states that:

- xiii. "by the intervention of God, the appropriate nature of each substance brings it about that what happens to one corresponds to what happens to all the others, without, however, their acting upon one another directly." (Ibid., p. 23.)

Farther along in the same he reiterates:

- xiv. "[A] particular substance is never acted upon by another particular substance nor is it acted upon by it." (Ibid., p. 25.)

I take it for granted that for Leibniz as for many other philosophers, that which cannot happen in any conceivable manner cannot happen period; and that which is impossible to explain cannot be the case. Given this much, §§ 4 and 7 of the Monadology (in xi) read as straightforward statements of 8a and 8b, respectively. In both cases the context makes it clear that the reason given in support of each is the same: a simple substance or monad has no parts; as such it cannot be externally altered, for alteration from without consists of an adding or subtracting of parts. Similarly, natural destruction consists in disintegration of parts. But that which lacks parts cannot disintegrate.

Such reasoning seems respectable, but given different notions of perishing and changing it might be possible to deny 8a and 8b. At any rate exactly what it is to change or perish is less than obvious. I think in fact Leibniz had a more compelling reason for subscribing to 8a and 8b: their deducibility from Proposition 8. We'll return to this point shortly.

§ XIV of the Discourse gives us both a statement categorically denying transeunt causes (xiv) and a statement explaining what is supposed to stand in its place as an explanation for why things cohere as they do (xiii). The subscriber to transeunt causes claims that what we label "causes" and "effects" cohere in an intimate way because something from the former is literally received by the latter, e.g. force. Leibniz's view is that nothing at all is

transferred from the former to the latter, but rather the activity of each is so tightly orchestrated to that of the other as to suggest a transfer of something. The orchestration had been conceived before anything ever happened, and the happening of things is just the carrying out of the orchestration.

In xii Leibniz reiterates the idea that substances - souls, substantial forms, however they are called - are imperishable because they lack parts, and that which lacks parts cannot perish. (One wonders whether talk of imperishability by Leibniz is merely talk of natural imperishability, as he put it explicitly in Monadology, § 4, or whether perhaps it is more. For Leibniz subscribed to God's being omnipotent, and by the definition of 'omnipotence' anything that is possible - that "doesn't imply contradiction" (Grua, 429) - can be brought about by God. Further, by the definition of 'contingence' the non-existence of any contingent substance is possible. So God can bring about the non-existence of any contingent substance. Since for Leibniz all substances besides God are contingent - cf. Monadology, §§ 41, 47 - God can make anything but Himself fail to exist. But making fail to exist is not necessarily causing to perish. Failure to exist can be the result of not having been created. Perishing entails having once existed. This question is explored in the following paragraphs.) This imperishability would extend even to material atoms if they existed - indeed it was claimed of them by the atomists. For

they are the alleged partless components of matter. Still, to rephrase a point made two paragraphs above it is far from clear that partlessness entails natural imperishability, since it is not obvious that to perish naturally always involves disintegration of some sort. Perhaps there are simple beings coming into and going out of existence according to some intelligible law. In such a case it would be difficult to say how such regularity were not natural.

**Entailment of Two Corollaries From Proposition 8** - This brings the discussion back to whether Leibniz had better reasons than those presented in the Monadology for believing 8a and 8b. As I mentioned, the thesis I'm defending is that he does: their deducibility from Proposition 8: the nature of a substance is its complete concept. We can restate this to bring out its theological underpinnings: the creation of a substance is the actualization of its complete concept. In other words, a substance is created to have exactly that sequence of states (of perception) which it will have throughout its existence. For this to happen without impinging upon substantial unity requires that each state be perfectly connected to the adjoining ones: the first state causes the second, and so on.

It is not difficult to see how this rules out real transeunt causes, thus entailing 8b. Although things go on seeming to affect one another originally - two boxers slugging it out in a title bout, as a brutal example - each of them has already been created to perceive what it will

perceive independently of whether anything else existed. One boxer does not really make the other feel pain in his jaw by means of an upper cut. The apparent recipient of the blow experiences the blow as the direct result of his own preceding state. The story is similar for the other boxer. The only confidence one can have that the other exists comes from his confidence in God's perfection. The only real causality, then, is substance-immanent: worldly causation is limited to one state of a substance causing the next state of the same substance.

As for the imperishability of substances (8a), there are three conceivable ways (short of uncaused perishing, which I'm not sure is conceivable anyway) for annihilation to happen, if it ever does: God does it, another substance does it, or the substance annihilates itself. Proposition 8 rules out annihilation of one created substance by another, via its entailment of 8b. So if a substance perishes, either it is annihilated by God or by itself. If a substance causes itself to perish, then following 8, it would have to be that its created sequence of states led up to a state which directly caused its own annihilation. This thought leads to a predicament. If a state of my existence directly causes my annihilation, that makes it the last state of my existence. But by definition something must have an effect in order to be a cause. In the absence of transeunt causation, I cannot claim that any of my states causes any effect except the next state of my existence. But if I have a last state, then there

is no next state, so my last state, lacking an effect, cannot be a cause. Hence in light of Proposition 8, assuming that a substance can cause its own perishing leads to contradiction. I suggest this is what Leibniz intended by denying the possibility of natural perishability. Something happens naturally when it happens through the direct causation of a created substance. The only way for natural occurrences in Leibniz is ultimately substance-immanent. Substance immanent annihilation cannot be, since to admit it leads to contradiction.

This reasoning is supported, though perhaps cryptically, by the following passages from letters to Leibniz's most well-known correspondent on this matter, Antoine Arnauld:

xv. "The proposition which was the occasion of all this discussion [see earlier in same letter, Montgomery, p.120: "That the individual concept of each person involves once and for all, all that will ever happen to him."] is very important... for from it follows... that a succeeding condition is a consequence... of its preceding state as though only God and itself were in the world. Thus every individual substance... is, as it were, a world apart, independent of everything else excepting God. There is no argument so cogent... in demonstrating the indestructibility of the soul." (Leibniz to Arnauld, July 14, 1686. Montgomery, p. 133.)

and

xvi. "Everything happens to each substance in consequence of the first state God gave to it in creating it, and putting aside extraordinary interventions the ordinary agreement consists only in the conservation of the substance itself conformably to its preceding state and to the changes which it carries within itself." (Leibniz to Arnauld, April 30, 1687. Ibid., p. 183.)

In short, Leibniz asserts in xv that the fact that succeeding states of substances are consequences of directly preceding states of the same is conclusive evidence for the indestructability of the soul - although he doesn't sketch out the connection - while in xvi he asserts that excepting something extraordinary - i.e. a miraculous act of God - the whole sequence of substance-states of any substance follows in a strict consequential manner from the first state created by God and is **always** according to the rule of substance-conservation. These citations thus agree with with what has just been argued in ruling out annihilation via substance-immanent causation.

**Whether God Can Annihilate a Created Substance** - The only remaining candidate for causing a substance to perish is God. Regarding this option I will present and discuss two arguments, both of which rely on the assumption of Proposition 8. Of them, one is integrally supported by a Leibnizean text, and the other, as far as I know, is not. First I will present and discuss the one that is not.

It has already been aued that God can make any substance but himself fail to exist, at least by not creating it. The further question is: can He create something then annihilate it? At this point in the argument His hands would be tied: He couldn't create a substance to be naturally annihilated by the course of its existence. The only option left is annihilation by direct supernatural intervention, interrupting what would have been the natural sequence.



Again, in light of Proposition 8, assuming this to be possible puts us in a predicament. According to 8, when God creates me, He creates my whole existence, determining it all to causally unfold in the course of time. If he then interrupts my unfolding existence, all of which, even the as yet untranscurred part, has been determined by Him in creating me, the result would be not only moral but metaphysical contradiction. Moral contradiction I intend here as God having incompatible intentions: e.g. both of determining my whole existence to come to be and of determining part of it not to be. By metaphysical contradiction I mean two states of affairs being the case where one's being the case entails the other's not being the case.

Now those who appreciate subtleties might be happy to declare that God has the power to commit moral contradiction but the goodness not to. But no subtlety of reasoning could "acquit" God of metaphysical contradiction. Metaphysical contradiction just can't happen, even at God's hands. Here's the metaphysical contradiction I'm talking about: in Leibniz's system annihilation of the kind we are presently speaking entails uncreating. God would have to uncreate what he's already created, such that it would "become true" that he never created something he created, which is contradictory. The reason for the contradiction is that for Leibniz, God creates according to complete concepts: something that is created is thereby wholly determined. Even

though its whole actuality has to unfold in time, God, being atemporal, sees a thing's whole existence and chooses that in creating it, not just its initial state or an initial chunk of sequence. For God to annihilate such a thing "in the middle" would oddly be to have never created part of what He had wholly created! Thus, unless we reject the notion that God creates only according to complete concepts, we are forced to conclude that a created substance cannot be annihilated even by God.

Lacking positive verification that this is an argument Leibniz reflectively subscribed to, it can only be submitted as Leibnizean in a secondary sense on the merit that it is straightforwardly deducible from his views. Of course such a submission is vulnerable to error in that it (perhaps too) charitably assumes consistency on the part of the author being considered. Although in my view this kind of assumption is normally not likely to lead to error in the case of so thorough a thinker as Leibniz, here as it happens we do have to grapple with texts apparently contradicting the argument just presented. In the following five paragraphs these will be discussed.

To start off, xv and xvi hint that God does have the power to causally influence created substances by extraordinary intervention. Might not God exercise this influence to annihilate something? After all, He is omnipotent. Leibniz does not take any care in these passages

to rule out this line of thought. In other places he seems more openly to suggest it:

xvii. "You will say God can reduce a body to a perfect state of repose; I reply, however, that God can also reduce it to nothing, and that this body, deprived of action and passion, need not be considered a substance; at least, it is enough that I say that when God ever reduces a body to perfect repose, something that can happen only by a miracle, he would require a new miracle in order to restore any motion to it." (Leibniz to Arnauld, October 6, 1687. Montgomery, 217-218.)

Two comments are in order regarding xvii. First, there is some question as to whether he is speaking in metaphysical rigour, for two reasons. The first reason is that the comment that apparently ascribes the power of annihilating to God is made in passing, in a discussion about physics, and its "punch" is clearly pulled in the following clause: "at least, it is enough that I say, etc.". It would seem that this is not the proper place and manner of making such a claim in rigour. The second reason is that Leibniz is clearly throughout his whole correspondence with Arnauld sensitive about the fact the Arnauld was, as a Catholic, suspicious of Leibniz's views on matters related to God, on the lookout for heresy, as it were. Even if Leibniz believed that God cannot annihilate his creations, he would not be likely to reveal it to Arnauld, since it would seem to contradict God's omnipotence, and thus be heretical-sounding. Thus even a statement made to Arnauld such as this one could easily be feigned, or at least not rigorous.

The second thought is that Leibniz here is talking about bodies *qua* extensions - bodies from the point of view of physics - not *qua* substances. In rigour, God's only creations are substances. The conception of a body *qua* extension is, as Leibniz puts it in Discourse § XII, "in a way imaginary and does not not constitute the substance of the body" (Montgomery, p. 18). A body as an extension can be annihilated by God, although perhaps His goodness would prevent him from doing so, without eliminating any substance, by simply discontinuing the currency of its image in substances. For as with Berkeley, for Leibniz an extension's *esse* is its *percipi*.

The following citation seems to contradict the notion that God can't annihilate created substances by its employment of the notion of divine concurrence. Every action of a created substance requires God's active involvement somehow:

xviii. "[N]othing happens to the substance except out of its own being and according to its own laws, provided that we add the concurrence of God." (Leibniz to Arnauld, Oct. 6, 1687. Montgomery, p. 233.)

This seems to suggest that God could, despite the substance-immanent causality of created substances, cause the succession of substance-states of any one of them to come to a halt, thus annihilating it, simply by not concurring. God's concurrence is suggested to be part of the causal recipe for any created substance, one that needs to be

"added" to the intrinsic "being" and "laws" of the substance itself in order to result in the next substance-state.

It appears that Leibniz highlights the notion of divine concurrence in order to distinguish possible substances from actual ones, not to suggest the possibility of annihilation of a created substance, which, again, would lead to contradiction. A non-actual substance according to Leibniz is still a complete substance each of whose successive states is the direct consequence of the preceding one. Yet it isn't actual precisely because it wasn't chosen by God. God's active involvement in an actual substance is carried out in His creating it. Since for Leibniz God creates according to complete concepts God's concurrence extends equally to each successive substance-state of a substance upon His creating it. For Him later to revoke this concurrence at some stage of the substance's existence, thus annihilating it, entails at least moral if not metaphysical contradiction. For it would then be the case that God has both concurred and not concurred with a substance. This would mean that God has waffled on His values and contradicted Himself morally, which is incompatible with His omnibenevolence. It might also be impossible on the grounds that God is perfect, and a perfect being can't change, since change is supposed to entail imperfection. At any rate, there is no doubt that Leibniz concurred with this reasoning. In the words of Jacques Jalabert describing Leibniz's view of God: "In Him, there is

nothing virtual, no change, no time" (p. 134). Leibniz had no quarrel with traditional metaphysics here.

#### Another Argument against God's Power to Annihilate -

There is, as mentioned above, another argument to the effect that God can't annihilate what he has created, one which is clearly supported by Leibniz, specifically by Discourse XVI. Like the previous argument, this one depends upon Proposition 8, that substances are created according to complete concepts. Lest it be wondered why, if the preceding argument is so Leibnizean, it was never even hinted at by Leibniz, it may very well be that it is superfluous in light of the following one. The argument, in fact, relies on the argument against annihilation via substance-immanent causality presented earlier, and simply stated, is this: God cannot annihilate by extraordinary intervention because even God's intervention is ultimately part of the natural order, included in the concept of the substance. Since God creates by complete concepts, even miraculous interventions are included in the natural sequence, respecting the rule that succeeding states are consequences of preceding ones. So if God were to annihilate, it would have to be via substance-immanent causality, which has been argued above to be impossible.

The following is the text I am referring to:

- xix. "The extraordinary intervention of God is not excluded in that which our particular essences express, because their expression includes everything. Such intervention, however, goes beyond the power of our natural being or of our

distinct expression, because these are finite, and follow certain subordinate regulations."  
(Discourse, § XVI. Montgomery, p. 27.)

"That which our particular essences express" is, as Leibniz elsewhere reminds us, according to a regular sequence of substance-states wherein each causes the next. In this sequence and indeed in each substance-state everything is expressed, including the reception of divine influences by substances. The conclusion we are compelled to come to is that what one perceives as a divine intervention is really caused by one's previous state. God is vindicated only by the fact that He created the whole sequence, so ultimately the "intervention" is His; He intended for the person to perceive the intervention at that time, and made it happen through the causality of the natural sequence. It is not a deception, for all other substances are harmonized to somehow more vaguely perceive that intervention, and God Himself, being timeless, cannot be truly said to act at one time instead of another. Moreover, it is still supernatural for Leibniz in that it cannot be scientifically grasped. For Leibniz, the only difference between a supernatural cause and a natural one is epistemological: finite minds can scientifically grasp natural but not supernatural causality.

Still it can't be denied that Leibniz's writings are sprinkled with statements which to all appearances ascribe to God the power of annihilating substances. (See: Leibniz to Burnett, Dec. 29, 1707 in Gerhardt v. 3, p.307: "I believe it is certain that the soul cannot be extinguished except by

miracle"; Bodemann's *Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v. III, No. 5a., Bl. 8, p. 69: "Thus it is to be said that souls cannot originate except by creation, that is, by miracle, and nothing impedes their immortality except for that they may be destroyed by annihilation, that is, by miracle, if God willed"; and the following excerpt from "Primary Truths", in Parkinson, p. 92: "A corporeal substance can neither arise nor perish except by creation or annihilation".) In light of the above discussion, does this point to an inconsistency in Leibniz? I wouldn't say so. References to annihilation as a power of God are made without the typical meticulous supportive arguments accorded to propositions Leibniz is sincerely committed to. Moreover, Leibniz almost always was writing to people whom he could not take into complete confidence regarding the more controversial consequences of his philosophy. To deny God the power of annihilating what he created sounded like heresy to the Christian ear. At any rate, to concede that power to God is not much of a loss to Leibniz, for on grounds of His moral perfection Leibniz could argue that God never does annihilate.

Another possibility is that Leibniz conceded to God the power of annihilating on the assumption that what he annihilates is not a complete substance, i.e. is not a substance created according to a complete concept. In this case, again, Leibniz could then recover by saying that God in fact, on account of His goodness, never creates such things, and that with respect to the world He did create He cannot



now annihilate anything in it. If Leibniz granted this possibility, annihilation would be possible by his lights, since God could create a substance undetermined as to its future; annihilation would not contradict some endless future created for it. But that Leibniz conceded God the power to create a substance according to an incomplete concept does not seem more likely than that he granted Him the power of annihilation. There is no evidence that he did the former, whereas there is some that he did the latter. This leads to the relating of what is to me one of the chief puzzles of Leibniz's thought. Why is the best world for him necessarily one completely determined from the outset? He never mentions even as mere candidates for creation anything that is not already completely determined. My suspicion is that there is a prescience-to-predetermination assumption operative here: since God knows exactly how each world will turn out, in creating He cannot fail to create exactly according to such knowledge. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.

#### Proposition 9 - There Are No Material Atoms

##### Deducibility from Propositions 7 and 8

Let it be noted before we go to the texts that this proposition, about which Leibniz throughout his written work remained adamant, is conceivably entailed by Propositions 7 and 8, in the following manner. First Proposition 7:

1. If the substance of a body is not its extension, but its active principle, then the unity of bodies is not to be found in extension.

2. If unity is not to be found in extension, then there are no material atoms. For a material atom is supposed to be, among other things, a unity of extension.
3. The substance of a body is not its extension, but its active principle (Proposition 7).

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C. There are no material atoms.

Now Proposition 8:

1. If the active principle or nature of a substance is its complete concept, then no two substances are alike in nature (see discussion of vi, below). For the complete concept of a thing distinguishes it from every other possible thing.
2. If no two substances are alike in nature, then supposing there are material atoms, each material atom has a nature of its own, and thus differs in some particular respect from all other atoms.
3. Now material atoms are by definition simple material extensions, without parts. So if they differ, they must differ with respect to extension; and since they are without parts, they would have to differ entirely if they differ at all. For extensions that only partly differ cannot both be simple: at least one must have a part or quantity of extension that the other lacks.
4. But if one atom differs entirely from all the others, no mind can ever have general (scientific) knowledge about material atoms, and hence ultimately about the world composed of them, since there will be no commonality between the atoms upon which one could base a generalization.

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C. This is reason to reject material atomism, considering that material atomism is presented as a theory that would provide general knowledge of the world.

My purpose here is just to highlight the internal coherence between various tenets of Leibniz's philosophy from Leibniz's own perspective. For the time I shall assume that the two arguments represent Leibniz's thought; afterward I'll try to indicate that textually. Lest my discussion of a and b before a presentation of the relevant Leibnizean texts be criticized as putting the cart before the horse, let the

reader be assured that the horse will indeed wind up in front and pulling. Sometimes careful examination of the cart beforehand makes for better pulling later on.

Comments on the First Deduction - The first argument is very simple and transparently Leibnizean. It hinges on an understanding of what Leibniz takes a substance to be: a unifying principle; that which gives unity to a thing. If what gives unity to an extended substance is immaterial, as Leibniz always argued, then there is simply no room for material unifying principles. If a corporeal thing had two unifying principles, one material and one immaterial, it would be two things, i.e. two substances, not one. But a corporeal substance is unified and therefore can only have one unifying principle. Moreover, besides there being no room for material or extended unifying principles, the very notion is impossible, for reasons given in the discussion of Proposition 7 above, in particular because there is no unity in mere extension.

Comments on the Second Deduction - The second argument in short is an attempt at indirect, separation-of-cases refutation of material atomism:

1. If material atomism is true, atoms are either exactly alike (except in number) or they differ (in some additional respect than number).
2. But:
  - a. no pair of them can be exactly alike, for that would violate the principle of the identity of indiscernibles; and

- b. they cannot differ, since, as simple, to differ they would have to differ entirely, thus precluding the possibility of scientific knowledge of them and the world by any mind.

C. Thus, material atomism is false.

Framed thus, the argument seems valid. Whether it is sound hinges on the truth of three conditions: first, the famed principle of the identity of indiscernibles; second, the proposition that a partial difference between two things with respect to extension implies the non-simplicity of one of the things with respect to extension; and third, the proposition that general (scientific) knowledge of the world - and its simple components, if it has such - is possible. The first condition bears upon a, the first case, while the second and third conditions bear upon b, the second case.

The Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles - One of the things Leibniz's metaphysics is most famous for, this principle is often treated as a curiosity, while at other times it is mistaken for an uncontroversial logical principle. In virtue of the latter a logical principle analogous to it has been named after Leibniz, but students of metaphysics know well that the principle as Leibniz used it was far from a tautology. Put briefly, it is that no two things can have the same nature, that is, be different only accidentally. The curiosity of this principle is why he would hold such a thing. In fact, as will be discussed in Chapter 3 (p. 244 ff.), he saw it as a necessary insurance of God's omniscience, God understanding things by their natures. At any rate, the principle of indiscernibles is a direct

consequence of Proposition 8 (see also p. 99 ff. and 156 ff. for related discussions).

It should be noticed that if the second and third conditions are true, then case b is true as well. The second condition requires that any difference between material atoms, if they exist, be complete, not merely partial. The third condition requires that material atoms, if they exist, have something in common by which they might be classified in order to be known or at least knowable scientifically. Hence, if the second and third conditions are true, allowing the existence of material atoms yields a contradiction: they differ completely and they don't differ completely.

The plausibility of the second condition depends on a recognition that we are speaking of simple extensions, that is, extensions not divisible into extended parts. Given two such things, they clearly could only be identical or wholly different; any partial difference would have to be a partial difference in extension, which in turn would entail that at least one of them is divisible into extended parts.

The plausibility of the third condition depends on the traditional teleological conviction that the world and man have been created such that man can have scientific knowledge of the world. Leibniz made it clear that he subscribed to this vision (Propositions 5 and 6).

### **Three Lines of Reasoning against Material Atomism**

I take the above two arguments to be representative of three separate lines of reasoning present in Leibniz's

thought in opposition to the existence of material atoms. The first line, reminiscent of Proposition 7, is that there is no unity in extension. The second line, a follow-up of Proposition 8, is that even if material atoms are not outright impossible, there is no sense in their existence; admitting their existence does no explaining and makes explanation of the world impossible. Finally, the third line, which turns out to depend on Leibnizean teleology and best-world theory (Propositions 5 and 6), is that the existence of material atoms is refuted by the axiom that nature does not act by leaps.

Citations Representing the First Line of Reasoning -

- i. "In the beginning... I had taken to the void and to atoms, for they best fill the imagination; but on recovering from that, after many reflections, I realized that it is impossible to find the principles of a true unity in matter alone,... since everything in it is only a collection or mass of parts to infinity. Now multitude can only get its reality from true unities which come from elsewhere.... Therefore to find these unities I was compelled to have recourse to a formal atom, since a material being cannot be both material and perfectly indivisible or endowed with a true unity." (From: "New System of Nature and of the Communication of Substances, as Well as of the Union of Soul and Body", No. 3; *Journal des Savans*, June 27, 1695. Wiener, p.107.)
- ii. "For although there are atoms of substance, namely our Monads which lack parts, there are no atoms of minimum extension as the ultimate elements, since the continuum is not composed of points." (From: "What is Nature? Reflections on the Force Inherent in Created Things and on Their Actions", § 11. Schrecker & Schrecker, p. 106)
- iii. "Matter is actually divided into infinite parts.... All bodies form a coherent whole. All are separable by force from the others, but not without resistance. There are no atoms, or bodies whose parts are never separable by force." (From:

fragment, c. 1671, entitled by editor: "On Aristotle's and Descartes' Theories of Matter". Wiener, p. 91)

Citations Representing the Second Line of Reasoning -

- iv. "I call possible that which can be supposed or conceived of without contradiction. For example, that in all the world there are nothing but globular material atoms (*globulos*) or [simple] round bodies in itself contains nothing that includes a contradiction." (From: *Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v. VIII, No. 2, Bl. 21, pp. 103-4.)
- v. "(14) ...[T]hat series has prevailed by which the greatest possible amount of distinct cogitability comes into being.  
"(15) Distinct cogitability in turn yields order in the thing and beauty in the thinker. Order is nothing other than distinct relation of a plurality of things. And confusion is when a plurality of things is present, but no reason exists for distinguishing one thing from another.  
"(16) Hence are excluded from existence atoms and whatever bodies in the universe in which there is no reason that would distinguish one part of one such body from any other part." (From: untitled and undated work concerning the principles of Leibniz's philosophy. Gerhardt, v. 7, VIII; pp. 289-90. See translation in Wiener, pp. 91-3, entitled: "The Exigency to Exist in Essences; The Principle of Plenitude".)
- vi. "[Imagine] two concentric perfect spheres, perfectly similar to each other in all their parts and the one enclosed in the other in such a way that there is not the least space between them. If, then, we suppose either that the enclosed sphere rotates or that it is at rest, it will be impossible even for an angel, not to say more, to notice any difference in the states of this system at different times, or to find a means of deciding whether the enclosed sphere moves or is at rest, and if moving, according to what law. What is more, it would even be impossible to determine the limit of the spheres, since there is neither any interval nor any difference between them. Consequently, the very fact that that any difference is lacking will make it impossible in this case to recognize any motion. This is why it must be recognized as certain... that such doctrines [that allow or call for indiscernible pairs of individuals] are alien to the nature and order of the universe and that never and nowhere is any perfect similarity to be

found.... Hence it follows also that in nature there are neither corpuscles of perfect hardness... nor those ultimate elements which are adopted by some under the name of first or second elements.... Those who adopt the theory of atoms and the void introduce, of course, some diversity into matter, assuming it to be divisible at one point and indivisible at another.... But once I had shed the prejudices of my youth [see i, above], I found out long ago that the theory of atoms and the void has to be rejected." (From: "What is Nature?". Wiener, pp. 109-110.)

#### Citations Representing the Third Line of Reasoning -

- vii. "From the fact that all things have been created in the most ordered fashion, it follows that there is no change by leaps (per saltum), but rather change always takes place by degree. For a hiatus or leap is a defect in order. Variety is greatly distributed so that more intelligibility will be present. Order is the rational disposition of diverse things. (From: *Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v.III, No. 5a, Bl.8, p. 69.)
- viii. "My axiom that nature never acts by a leap has a great use in physics. It destroys atoms, small lapses of motion... and other similar chimeras." (From: A letter to Canon Foucher, *Journal des Savans*, 1692. Wiener, p.71, under the editor's title: "On Some Philosophical Axioms and Mathematical Fictions".)

#### Discussion of the First Line against Material Atomism

These citations together represent the line that material atomism is false on the grounds that there is no unity in extension. i argues the point on metaphysical grounds, and ii on geometric grounds. iii, although not really presenting an argument, expresses an opposition to atomism on physical grounds.

Citation i: No Unity in Extension - I interpret i as expressing the following argument (Ai):



1. All that is real gets its reality from true unities.
  2. Extended matter is real.
  - C3. Extended matter gets its reality from true unities (1, 2).
  4. If there are such true unities, they are either themselves in matter (material), or they are immaterial.
  5. Everything in matter is a "mass of parts to infinity", i.e. is itself made up of parts *ad infinitum*.
  - C6. There are no ultimate unities in matter, i.e. that are material (5).
- 
- C. Extended matter gets its reality from true unities which are themselves immaterial (C3, 4, C6).

It should be seen right off that Ai is really an argument for the existence of formal atoms which contains in 5 and C6 a mini-argument against material atomism. But the first part of Ai - 1-4 - tacitly issues the challenge to develop a plausible metaphysics of formal atomism. Ai is only as good an argument as formal atomism is plausible. I say that because otherwise, assuming the soundness of the first part, the convincingness of Ai hinges entirely on 5, which as we will discuss, borders upon being question-begging.

Ai is a triply metaphysical argument since the three premises it hinges on - 1, 2, and 5 - are metaphysical, and each is independent from the other two. (We may consider 4 true by logic, since it is a disjunction between complementaries. C3 and C6 are subordinate conclusions from previous lines, as indicated.) What's more, each is in its own right controversial. But if each is true, then it seems we have no choice but to agree with Leibniz's conclusion.

It is difficult to say how Leibniz would defend 1 except by saying that on this point he agreed with the Scholastics, that whatever exists is intelligible in principle, and whatever is intelligible in principle has to be reducible to unities. To say that the unintelligible exists or can exist is like saying that there exists or can exist irreducible or primitive multiplicity, for that which is not understood is such because it has not been envisioned in a unified manner. But the idea of an irreducible or primitive multiplicity is arguably self-contradictory, in the square-circle family; for multiplicity implies a combination or collection of unities, whereas primitiveness or irreducibility implies basicness, non-derivedness. Irreducible multiplicity is not to be confused with the trait Leibniz ascribes to matter in 5. The trait he ascribes to matter in 5 is not irreducible multiplicity but infinitely reducible multiplicity. The former and not the latter is arguably self-contradictory. It remains, of course to be said whether the latter is not impossible on other grounds.

Premise 2 in the context of Leibnizean thought is not stating as much as it might be taken to state. Specifically, it is not saying that matter is irreducibly or primitively real. In fact, A<sub>i</sub> itself suggests that what is primitively real - what reality "boils down to" - is immaterial. What 2 expresses is that what we know as matter is a proper function of really existing things. If we understand the things that reality boils down to: the "true unities" - which it turns

out are not material - then we will see the material world as a true feature of reality. Moreover - and perhaps more importantly - we will never understand what reality ultimately boils down to unless we accept the material world as real. I can hardly overemphasize that this comes with a warning: for Leibniz, dreams, rainbows and shadows are all real, although their true realities are other than they appear. So, too, is the true reality of matter other than it appears.

I mentioned two paragraphs above that 5 ascribes to matter the trait of "infinitely reducible multiplicity". I should rephrase the trait as: "multiplicity infinitely reducible to material parts". In other words there are no simple parts of matter. This leads directly to C6 as a virtual paraphrase. The next question we need to ask is whether 5 presents a reason to reject material atomism or rather simply consists in a statement against atomism. If it is the latter it is question-begging, if not with respect to Ai itself, at least with respect to the conclusion that material atomism is false. But whether it is the former or the latter depends upon whether we interpret it metaphysically or physically, respectively. Metaphysically interpreted, 5 is almost if not entirely undeniably true, as long as we retain the traditional notion of matter. Who can conceive of something extended not having parts in a topological sense, i.e. not being divisible in principle? Anything extended takes up space, and the space it takes up

is infinitely divisible. And unless an atom is extended, it is not material. Moreover, if the claim is that atoms are not extended, but are as points (whether of energy or of matter) then, since points cannot compose a continuum (see ii), a void will have to exist, which Leibniz opposes on grounds presented in vi, vii, and viii.

If 5 is to be interpreted metaphysically, then one wonders whether it really has any force against material atomism. Does material atomism really insist upon the existence of topologically indivisible material extensions and thereby result in contradiction, or does it merely assert the existence of physically indivisible material extensions? Undoubtedly Leibniz was opposed to material atomism of the latter (see iii) as well as the former kind, but 5 is far from obvious interpreted as physical. Perhaps there are physically simple material extensions: extensions not divisible by physical force. Leibniz's opposition to such a view is found in iii.

In short, A1 is an argument based on two metaphysical premises (1 and 2) that are not so controversial, and a third premise (5) that is controversial both for being ambiguous and for relying so heavily on other arguments. I should note, however, that although a premise may be rhetorically bad because it is controversial, whether it is true or false is a separate consideration. Whether 5 is true or false depends on the soundness of other arguments we have yet to consider. If

5 turns out to be true, then given its truth I don't think Ai looks bad at all.

Citation ii: **No Atoms of Minimum Extension** - I take ii to express the following argument (Aii):

1. A material atom is defined as a minimum extension.
- C2. If material atoms exist, then minimum extensions exist (1).
3. Smallness of extension approaches the limit of a point.
- C4. If there are minimum extensions, they must be things as close as possible to being points (3).
5. If there are minimum extensions, they must compose a continuum.
6. Points don't compose a continuum.
7. Things as close as possible to being points must be so much like points that if points don't compose a continuum, neither do they.
- C8. If material atoms exist, they must be as close as possible to being points (C2, C4).
- C9. If material atoms exist, they must compose a continuum (C2, 5).
- C10. If material atoms exist, they don't compose a continuum (6, 7, C8).

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C. Material atoms don't exist (C9, C10).

Aii is a case of *reductio ad absurdum*: the conclusion follows since its negation is shown to entail a contradiction. In this case, the contradiction is implicitly expressed in the conjunction of C9 and C10. Assuming that material atoms exist - the negation of the conclusion and that which we are trying to disprove - the contradiction follows that material atoms at once do and don't compose a continuum.

Aii hinges on its basic premises, 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7. If they are true and Aii is valid, then we have no choice but to accept that there are no material atoms.

The most serious challenge to Aii's validity is the inference of C4 from 3. But I think it is a valid inference. 3 expresses that extensions can range from larger to smaller approaching only the minimum limit of a point. So much is uncontroversial. It follows that if there is a minimum, that is to say, smallest extension, it would have to be such that nothing - i.e. no extension - is closer to being a point than it. C4 is simply a paraphrase of this last inference.

5 is really a special case of a general statement about extensions that any collection of them by their very nature of being extensions can in principle compose or be used to compose a continuum, that is, a continuous stretch of matter of volume greater than zero. This is essential to being an extension, so it would have to be true of minimum extensions no less than other kinds of extension.

6 is a straightforward geometric statement about points that follows from their being dimensionless. Any continuum has dimensions and that which has dimensions cannot be composed of dimensionless objects.

7 is clearly a fill-in intended to relate 6 to C4. In fact the imagination (at least mine!) is deficient in supplying an insight once we get into the murky area of feigned possibility. It is all too clear that there is no such thing as an extension as close as possible to being a point; the only thing as close as possible to being a point is a point! Minimum extensions belong in the square-circle club, as surely as does the notion of the closest real number

to zero. Such notions are really pseudo-notions because they refer to no logically possible object.

With that said, the suspicion arises whether Aii should be taken as a serious argument against material atomism. Sure, it rules out one version of the theory, but one no serious-minded person is likely to choose. It may very well be a "straw man"; at best it does the work of explicitly confining the field of remaining plausible versions of material atomism. But as with Ai, it leaves one with the impression that the real material atomists have yet to be seriously challenged. That challenge is made in citation iii.

Citation iii: Matter Infinitely Divisible - Unlike i and ii, iii does not express anything that can be extracted in the form of an argument replete with conclusion and supporting premises. It consists, rather, in four independent statements of primarily physical import. These statements bear witness to the fact that Leibniz's opposition to material atomism was not merely pointed at more esoteric metaphysical or far-fetched geometric versions of it, but at the down-to-earth versions of it expressed in terms of physics.

Although he gives no supporting reasons in this citation to bolster the views he expresses, I am confident and aim to show that they are drawn as consequences from his metaphysics. If this is true then iii represents Leibniz's doing something philosophers rarely do or perhaps even have occasion to do: put a philosophical theory to an empirical

test. True, the outcomes of such empirical testing were not available in his time, although much of the scientific observation of his time may have been seen by some as pointing suggestively in favor of the views he expresses here. And true, perhaps contemporary empirical science tends to point if not conclusively at least suggestively against these same views. But perhaps also the fact that he boldly drew consequences from his philosophy which were in principle empirically testable is a sign that he was not an "armchair metaphysician", but was really convinced of the truth of his philosophy.

Let us label the four statements of iii accordingly:

- S1. Matter is actually divided into infinite parts.
- S2. All bodies form a coherent whole.
- S3. All are separable by force from the others, but not without resistance.
- S4. There are no atoms, or bodies whose parts are never separable by force.

S3 is in turn analyzable into two parts:

- S3a. All bodies are separable by force from the others.
- S3b. All bodies give a certain resistance to being separated into parts.

S2 can be understood as following from the definition of body: a body is a physical extension endowed with some unifying principle, that is, something that makes of the matter a coherent whole, a "natural automaton" (see Monadology, §§ 63, 64). In this usage we are opposing bodies to aggregates, which are mere collections of bodies.

S1 and S4 bear an interesting relation to each other in that they are both direct negations of material atomism. But



while S1 is a negation of metaphysical versions, S4 is a negation of physical versions.

S1 goes beyond mere geometry by adding that matter is actually divided, not just divisible, into infinite parts. Unless Leibniz went this far, he would not be ruling out the possibility that there are in fact atoms, which are in geometric principle divisible into further "parts" but in act have no parts, i.e. are simple. But Leibniz says elsewhere that matter is not divided in all possible ways, but only according to a "certain infinite progression" (from: "Primary Truths", c. 1686. Parkinson, p. 91). Obviously, all geometric possibility cannot be actualized at once with respect to division, since not all groups of different possible divisions are compossible.

We can see, then, that Leibniz's opposition to material atomism is thorough: enough so to bring him to go against a basic tenet of traditional Aristotelian metaphysics. As the reader may recall, Aristotle, in response to Zeno's paradox, concluded that extension in space - hence, matter - is infinitely divisible but not infinitely divided. (Zeno's paradox: that motion in space is inexplicable based on the fact that to traverse any distance requires first to traverse its half, but to traverse its half requires first traversing the half of the half, and so on. Thus, it would seem that we could traverse no distance at all in a finite time, since by this reasoning traversing any distance seems to entail traversing an infinite distance or at least an infinity of

distances one by one in time, which would seemingly take forever and still not be completed. See Aristotle's Physics, 233a, 21-29; 239b, 5-9.)

Now it should be remarked that in many respects Leibniz considered the Aristotelian-Scholastic tradition an important ally (see Discourse, § XI, for example). He tried his best to reconcile his views as much as possible with it and I would venture to say he only went against it when he felt he had to. Usually his criticism was aimed at its lack of clarity. With all this in mind, it is remarkable to see Leibniz directly oppose a basic tenet of this tradition. I don't think it would be wrong to surmise that he must have had a powerful motivation to do this here. We will discuss this question more definitively in Chapter 3, but for now we may just note that S1 can be seen as a consequence of Proposition 5, that the actual world is the best possible world. The best possible world by definition includes the greatest amount of being compossible. If in the actual world something is further divisible into smaller intelligible entities as parts but it is not actually so divided, that would entail in the actual world an unrealized possibility for more being, which in turn would entail that the actual world is not the best.

S4 by itself would seem to belong more to empirical science than to philosophy. For it goes completely beyond the metaphysical notion of material atom - simple matter without parts - to say that there are no material things that are

atomic in the practical sense that their parts cannot be separated.

S4 can be seen as a consequence of S3a if we read in the hidden premise:

S5. Every body is completely divisible into parts which are also bodies.

It is common knowledge to any student of Leibniz that he held S5. In his own words: "In every particle of the universe there is contained a world of creatures" (from: "Primary Truths". Parkinson, p. 91), such that "we shall always arrive at smaller bodies without end" (from: "Necessary and Contingent Truths", c. 1686. Parkinson, p.98). In fact, like S1, it is arguably deducible from his best-possible-world theory, and is needed as a support for S1 as well. If matter is infinitely divided into parts, but there is no complete division of matter into nothing but parts which are also bodies, then some matter comes under no unifying principle, for a body is an extension of matter which has a unifying principle. This is a *reductio* argument if we read in a further unstated premise:

S6. All matter comes under some unifying principle.

Again, Leibniz most assuredly held S6. (See i: "multitudes can only get their reality from true unities", and matter is a "mass of parts to infinity".) Perhaps v reveals his reasoning best: the best possible world must have distinct cogitability; it must be perfectly intelligible. The notion of ununified matter is not intelligible, and therefore ununified matter cannot exist in this world. In fact, the

case against ununified matter may be even stronger than that in Leibniz's eyes. For that is possible which can be thought by God. But that which is unintelligible in principle is not thinkable by God, and therefore impossible. (This reasoning is suggested by §§ 51 and 53 in the Monadology, as well as in the following, contained in his remarks upon a letter from Arnauld, in Montgomery, p. 115: "I agree that there is no other reality in pure possibilities than what they have in the divine understanding".) Is ununified matter unintelligible in principle? I can only refer back to the discussion of citation i, where it is suggested that the notion of irreducible multiplicity is unintelligible in principle. It seems to me that ununified matter is a pretty good candidate for an irreducible multiplicity: a non-unity that cannot be broken down into unities. But there are some who would regard this as meaningless talk.

Understanding S4 as a special case of S3a, it remains that we discuss S3a. I consider the following as a clue to Leibniz's reasons for holding S3a as well as S3b:

"[T]here is no body which is hard or fluid to a supreme degree; that is to say, no atom can be found of insurmountable hardness, nor any mass entirely indifferent to division" (Preface to New Essays, pp. 59-60. Erdmann, v. I, p. 199).

If there are no absolutely hard bodies, then there are no bodies "entirely indifferent to division", i.e. there are no bodies not naturally divisible. Likewise, contrasting fluidity with hardness, if there are no absolutely fluid bodies, then there are no bodies completely lacking in

resistence. The obvious next question is: on what grounds does Leibniz conclude that there are no bodies that are either absolutely hard or absolutely fluid? The answer to this question must have something to do with his understanding of what hardness and fluidity are.

**Hardness and Fluidity** - In Leibniz's first letter to Arnauld - a letter which, apparently unanswered, precedes the famous correspondence between these two men by about fifteen years (1671-1686) - Leibniz gives the following definitions for 'solid' and 'liquid':

"[T]hat is a solid whose parts move in conspiring motion. A liquid is an aggregate of smaller solids." (Appendix A, p. 353.)

Now if we agree that hardness is solidity: the quality of being solid, and fluidity is liquidity: the quality of being liquid, the above definitions may help us to see why Leibniz thought there is no such thing as absolutely hard or absolutely fluid bodies. According to Leibniz, an object is hard not because its parts hold rigidly or motionlessly together, but because its parts move in conspiring motion. Since even an exceedingly hard solid has moving parts by definition, it seems reasonable to conclude that its parts are separable: they are not "stuck together; they are moving in relation to each other. For this conspiring motion is, as he describes a few lines down from the previous citation, "a conspiring inner motion" (emphasis mine). Any fixedness of some of its parts with respect to each other would imply an

indivisibility Leibniz leaves no room for in his definition of a solid.

Likewise, since even a most fluid liquid must still meet the definition of being an aggregate of smaller solids, it follows that there does not exist an absolutely fluid body, one which would have no resistance to penetration. For the smaller solids within it do offer resistance, and their collective resistance is the resistance of the liquid.

Clearly this whole line of reasoning hinges on the appropriateness of the above-given definitions of solid and liquid, which are far from self-evident. Given the caliber of Leibniz as a philosopher, it would be quite a surprise if we could find no further support for them.

In fact, we are confronted by a surprise at this point, but not the one just mentioned. Leibniz does give his supporting reasons for the definitions mentioned above, but in giving them as related in the citation below, he suggests that though they can't exist in bodies, if they could, perfect hardness or rigidity and perfect fluidity or non-resistance would be the same thing:

"[T]here is no cohesion or consistency to a resting thing... consequently, whatever is at rest can be divided and moved by any motion however small. I followed up the consequences of this proposition a long way, and found that a body at rest is nothing; it does not differ from vacuous space."  
(Appendix A, p. 346.)

This text should be understood in conjunction with what comes in the following paragraph:

"The essence of body, rather than in extension, consists in motion." (Ibid.)

First it should be noted that perfect hardness and perfect fluidity are not even permitted as concepts by Leibniz's definitions. For solidity by Leibniz's definition is motion-dependent. Motion has no theoretical maximum in terms of velocity or force. Even if contemporary physics is correct in saying that the speed of light is the maximum physical speed, faster speeds are conceivable. As well as the motions of a body's parts conspire, the hardness of the body owing to this conspiracy can always be in principle outdone by equal conspiracy at greater force of motion. Regarding fluidity, any liquid has solid parts, so no matter how fluid something is, higher fluidity is in principle achievable by separating the parts of those solids it contains. This is conceivable *ad infinitum*.

Of course, even though Leibniz's definitions rule out absolute hardness and fluidity, until one finds justification for such definitions one cannot reason conclusively from them. The justification needed here is for why there can't be perfect hardness as in rigidity and why there cannot be perfect fluidity as in non-resistance. For seemingly, perfect rigidity is the limit hard objects approach as they get harder, and perfect non-resistance is the limit fluids approach as they get more fluid.

I think we may safely define a rigid body as one whose parts are and remain motionless with respect to one another. A rigid body lacks inner motion; if it moves, it moves as a whole, without changing its internal configuration of parts.

It is with respect to itself at rest. In this sense we may consider it as being and remaining a "resting thing". But Leibniz as read above argues that "there is no cohesion or consistency to a resting thing"; it "can be divided and moved by any motion however small". Now that which can be divided and moved by any motion however small must by that very fact lack any resistance. Hence, a perfectly rigid thing, as a resting thing, turns out to be a perfectly non-resistant or fluid thing as well! In short, a perfectly hard (rigid) body is one at rest, but a body at rest is the same as a perfectly fluid (non-resistant) body. So oddly, a perfectly hard (rigid) body would have to be at the same time and in the same respect a perfectly fluid (non-resistant) body.

This *reductio*-type argument: there are no rigid bodies because if there were they would be fluid, whereas fluidity is the opposite of rigidity - is only implicit. His main point is that both perfect rigidity and perfect fluidity are impossible, on the following grounds:

S7. There is no coherence or consistency to a resting thing; it can be divided and moved by any object however small.

and

S8. That which has no coherence or consistency is nothing, not differing from vacuous space.

(S8 is not stated by Leibniz, but is clearly alluded to in the claim that from S7 it follows that a thing at rest is nothing: it follows only if we assume S8 as a hidden premise.) To summarize: a perfectly rigid object is a resting



thing, and so by S7 has no consistency; having no consistency, by S8 it is nothing. A perfectly fluid thing has no resistance, and as such "it can be divided and moved by any object, however small". This is tantamount to saying it has no consistency, and as such is nothing by the same reasoning as that just shown.

Why was Leibniz committed to S7 and S8? The answer to this question is key to understanding Leibniz's opposition-on-grounds-of-metaphysical-impossibility to material atomism and other forms of passive materialism as well - such as Descartes's. Unfortunately, in the Arnauld letter he provides no further clues as to why he held these propositions. But he does provide such a clue in a work entitled "On Transubstantiation" (*De Transsubstantiatione*), which antedates the letter by about three years (circa 1668). This work consists mainly in the presentation and discussion of a 30-line argument to the effect that "the Substance of the glorious Body of Christ can be present in the species of bread and wine wherever [these species are present]." It is in the defense of 3 where we get our clue. Premise 3, which is immaterial in itself to our discussion, asserts that any body which has a principle of action has a principle of motion. In defense of this Leibniz writes as follows:

"[E]very action is variation of essence. Thereby every action of a body is variation of the body's essence. The essence or definition of Body is being in space. Thereby variation of a body's essence is variation of existence in space. Variation of existence in space is motion." (SSB, VI, 1, p. 508.)

From this passage it follows that a body's action is variation of existence in space. If we read this to mean, as I'm convinced Leibniz did, that all variation of existence in space is bodily action, it then follows that where action is lacking, there is no variation of existence in space. Now a resting body is one lacking in action, so in such a body there would by the present reasoning be no variation of spatial being. But spatial being is bodily being, so a body with no variation of spatial being is a body with no variation period. This reasoning may be elaborated in two directions.

First, although a body with no variation might upon initial consideration seem to be "consistent and coherent", it is actually incoherent and inconsistent, assuming S1 to be true, i.e. that matter is actually divided into infinite parts. For though such a body provides no differentiating criteria for its parts, it still has parts. Not only can Leibniz oppose the existence of such a body in that admitting its possibility contradicts the principle that no two things differ only in number, but ironically we can also call such a body "incoherent" or "inconsistent", in that there is nothing in it to bind its infinite parts into a unity. We argue this way for the following reason. A thing can be considered according to its being or according to its action. Since matter or spatial being considered alone has no unity, it follows that if a body has unity at all, only action i.e. variation of spatial being, can provide it. An infinity of

parts can be properly conceived as a unity if they are all participants in a harmonious pattern of variation i.e. of action. Without such unity, a body would be just an infinite collection of parts with no ultimate minimum of size, since there would be no ultimate elements to the collection, each exhaustive partition divided into a more fine-grained one, *ad infinitum*. Such a collection at rest could offer no resistance, however small, since it has no ultimate elements of determinate mass and there is no force of motion within it.

Second, not only is a body which lacks variation inconsistent or incoherent, but also it lacks anything that would distinguish it positively (it could only be distinguished negatively from every body possessing some variation). That body which has no positive distinction is indistinguishable in principle from vacuous space. That which is indistinguishable in principle from vacuous space is nothing.

From these two considerations we can see the basis for S7 and S8. S7 follows from the first consideration, while S8 follows from the second.

In short, although primarily of physical import, the ultimate reasons behind Leibniz's assertions in iii are metaphysical. With these assertions Leibniz goes out on a limb more than usual, and because of this they give us the opportunity to peer more deeply, albeit not without difficulty, into his basic convictions.

## Discussion of the Second Line against Atomism

Whereas the first three citations represent the line of reasoning that material atomism is false on the grounds that there is no unity in extension alone, the next three represent the line that material atomism is false because admitting the existence of material atoms fails to explain anything.

Citation iv: Atoms Metaphysically Possible - This excerpt serves to establish the fact that Leibniz conceded material atoms to be possible in a restricted sense, namely in that their notion does not entail contradiction. In light of this concession, it is plain that his geometric arguments against atomism - that the continuum is not composed of points, etc. - must be just a warm-up, a stage-setter for the real discussion. I say this because his geometric arguments are exactly to the effect that material atoms are impossible in the same sense as they are conceded possible in iv. This apparent contradiction is too obvious, and it only seems reasonable to search out a reconciling explanation. In fact there is one, already touched upon above: the material atoms argued against in the geometric arguments are of a different kind than those conceded as possible here. The former kind are metaphysically indivisible extensions, while the latter are physically undivided extensions. This latter kind of atom is the kind whose existence most material atomists advocated.

Of course to acknowledge something as possible in this one sense does not tie one's hands from decrying it as impossible in another sense. In fact, having been handed this concession, one almost expects Leibniz to proceed to do so; he is well-known for that sort of thing. In fact he doesn't take occasion to do so - and for good reason, I think. The fact is, Leibniz simply recognizes that physically undivided extensions are possible *per se*. The only question that remains is whether are compatible with the existence of the best possible world. The answer he gives to this, as will see below, is that they are not. This distinction between possibility *per se* and possibility in the sense of being compatible with a possible world, particularly the best, are, when all is accounted for, Leibniz's two basic notions of possibility. The first is known as absolute possibility, the second as hypothetical possibility (where the world being referred to, usually the best, is given. See Mates, pp. 71-72.)

Citation v: **But Atoms Contradict Perfect Order** - In this selection material atoms are rejected on the grounds that to admit them would be to admit confusion into existence, and confusion contradicts the order of actual being. Thus Leibniz does not rule them out as impossible, i.e. entailing contradiction in themselves, but as contradicting in principle the order of actual being. This subtle distinction points to a notorious problem in Leibniz, namely that he allows some things as possible which cannot in principle be

actual. This sounds wrongheaded to many. After all, isn't saying that something is possible the same as saying it can be, i.e. can be actual? In order to sort this out, the argument in v needs to be explained in more depth.

What is **confusion** according to Leibniz, such that it contradicts the order of actual being? As expressed in v, confusion is the presence of a plurality of things, where "no reason exists for distinguishing one thing from another". This definition can be read to cover two kinds of situation. The first is the by-now-well-known case of the coexistence of things, particularly atoms, which differ only in number. Although Leibniz had other ways of ruling out such a situation - ultimately they may all turn out to be various elaborations of the same reasoning - here he gives another way: to admit the coexistence of indiscernibles would be to admit confusion into the actual world, which is contrary to the latter's order.

The second kind of situation this definition of confusion can be read to cover is the case of the coexistence of things, particularly atoms, which differ significantly but it is impossible in principle to say in what respect they differ. Material atoms are typically made recourse to as the ultimate line of explanation of material being. Any difference - or at least any material difference - between two things is supposed to ultimately come down to some atomic explanation. So how do we explain differences **between** atoms? We cannot compare them by their parts, for even if it is

admitted they have them geometrically, the notion of an atom precedes the notion of any of its parts, just as the notion circle precedes semi-circle; the latter is intelligible only in reference to the former. Each atom is an ultimate element of explanation whose intelligibility precedes the intelligibility of its parts - if it is admitted to have parts in any sense. The consequence of all this is that differences between material atoms so conceived are unexplainable.

This is not to say that it is impossible for someone to look in a very powerful microscope some day and discover a pair of material-atom candidates, i.e. material extensions apparently indivisible by force, which differ in that, say, one is square and the other is circular. What is really being challenged in  $v$  is the notion of material atoms as elements of explanation. In this case, we distinguish between the two alleged atoms by means of a difference in notions: squareness vs. roundness; if we don't allow these to be contained in the being of the alleged atoms then we have to conclude that there is no reason in the atoms to explain their difference. Only if we allow squareness and roundness to be included in the being of these two things can we say they contain within themselves a reason for distinguishing them. But in neither case can there exist a material reason for distinguishing them, since they themselves are supposed to be the ultimate elements of explanation from a material perspective. If there are to exist things like material atoms without

confusion, they must also have formal content to their being. Form cannot be derived ultimately as merely an emergent feature of matter; the ultimate explanation of material being depends on form; excluding form as a basic feature of being results in confusion.

Confusion in being is not metaphysically impossible: confusion is not the same as inconsistency, which is impossible. Leibniz rules confusion out of actual being because of a commitment he has to the actual world's optimal distinct cogitability. This commitment can be thus articulated: the actual world is such that it contains within it the most amount of variety that it is possible for a world to have within a single order, i.e. under one principle which distinctly relates all the variety into a unity. Material atomism as a comprehensive theory of the world cannot be true because it leaves the variety of its own elements unexplained, ununified. Only a theory that includes form in being - in every being - can be true.

Citation vi: Identity of Indiscernibles (Revisited) - This selection represents one of Leibniz's most oft-repeated arguments: indiscernible pairs of things cannot exist, because if they did, they would be indistinguishable in principle. (See also discussion at p. 128 ff.) Thus even an angel, not to say more (God), would be unable to distinguish them. We are supposed to accept this as a *reductio* against indiscernible pairs on the grounds that it is impossible for purely spiritual beings, especially God, not to be able to



tell two things apart. What reasons are there that might lead us to concede this supposition?

Initially, the supposition seems difficult to concede, for the following reason: one would think that although two things are indistinguishable in principle, i.e. separately from their circumstances, yet their mere difference entails that they do have different histories, i.e. different circumstances. Even the most similar of physical objects don't share the same space. Therefore it would seem that an omniscient being - if not an angel then surely God - could distinguish any two objects by the different histories each would actualize. God may not be able to distinguish them in principle, by their mere concepts or natures, but he can still distinguish them by foreknowledge of their histories.

Such reasoning obviously does not countenance the alleged case of indiscernibles with identical histories as well. For such a case, the *reductio* argument definitely seems to work. If we read history as including inner events, and if in principle no set of outer or inner observations throughout the entire existence of two things suffices to distinguish them, then it seems safe to say that not even God could distinguish them. In fact Leibniz's principle of indiscernibles has traditionally been applied in this sort of uncontroversial way and in part owes its fame to such. That notwithstanding it is important to note that Leibniz's chief application of the principle is more controversial.

For Leibniz, the principle is applied chiefly to yield the conclusion that no two things have the same nature. On the surface this opposes the scholastic teaching that members of the same species have the same nature. Leibniz opposed the scholastic teaching because it entails that members of the same species are in principle (in concert) identical, only distinguishable *per accidens*.

The scholastics would be content in saying God distinguishes two members of the same species by his foreknowledge of their different futures and not by any difference in their concepts. But if the concept of a thing is that by which it is understood, shouldn't the concepts of two different things account for their difference? If God distinguishes two similar things by their histories, shouldn't their histories be part of their concept?

In order to even recognize that there are two things, there must be a recognizable difference between them. When God creates two members of the same species, he creates them with full knowledge of the difference between them. Does it make sense then to say he only creates them according to their similarity, their "nature"? Likening the scholastic notion of nature to a blueprint, if God actualizes the blueprint of humanness under one set of circumstances and gets me, then under another set and gets you, in full knowledge of the outcomes, then isn't it arbitrary to exclude the circumstances which in conjunction with the human blueprint resulted in me or you from my or your concept?

God's thought of me or you obviously includes the circumstances that distinguish me from you. Isn't God's thought of me the proper standard for my concept rather than the mere blueprint of humanness? What difference is there between considering my concept as a further specification of humanness, a view that the Thomists reject, and considering humanness as a further specification of animality, which the Thomists accept? Leibniz thought there was no real difference, and that any attempt to distinguish them was arbitrary.

This whole question comes down to how God thinks and how God creates, and the relation between the two. These issues are discussed in Chapter 4.

The application of the principle that indiscernible pairs don't exist to anti-atomism is the following. Material atoms were often alleged to be extensions of perfect simplicity which completely filled space. Being of perfect simplicity would presumably entail that they were all as small as can be; that they completely fill space would mean that they could fit together contiguously with no leftover space. The first of these two constraints presumably requires that they be of equal (equally perfect) smallness, while the first together with the second virtually insures that at least some of them, if not all of them, are the same shape as well. Since shape and size is all there is to a material atom by many accounts, such accounts would be refuted by the indiscernibility principle. Accounts of

material atomism which add any other commonly held trait to atoms, such as perfect hardness, are equally well refuted.

### Discussion of the Third Line against Atomism

The only versions of material atomism left still standing by the *reductio* we've been considering are those that accept the existence of a void. These versions are rejected by Leibniz on other grounds, among the most important of which is presented in vii and viii, and expressed rather cryptically by the slogan: "nature does not act by leaps".

Citations vii and viii: No Change by Leaps, hence No Atoms - The argument expressed jointly by vii and viii may be presented as follows:

1. The world is governed by a principle of maximum order. Whatever is in the world is part of that order.
  2. Maximum order is incompatible with "change by leaps".
  3. The existence of material atoms entails "change by leaps".
- 
- C. Material atoms don't exist in the world (i.e. they don't exist).

The argument is valid by a double application of *modus ponens* followed by an application of *modus tollens*: If the world exists, then maximum order exists. If maximum order exists, then no change by leap exists. If material atoms exist, then change by leap exists. But the world exists, therefore no change by leap exists, from which it follows that material atoms don't exist.

1 rests partly on a tautology that the world exists. The world is by definition that which actually exists, and

whatever exists exists. But this line mainly expresses a very controversial notion: that what is actual is maximally ordered. This is the generating notion of the argument. What is actual fits into a unified system and there is no part of what is actual with any lack of ordered content which it could have compatibly with the rest of its content.

2 can be defended by arguing that change by leap entails an unexploited opportunity to have change by gradation. Any unexploited opportunity to fit more being into actual existence, such as a void, or a change by leap, entails lack of maximum order.

3 may be defended by suggesting that Leibniz uses the expression "change by leap" to cryptically refer to any unexploited opportunity to fit more being into actual existence, such as a void. Some of the most well-known theories advocating material atoms suggest that a void exists in which the atoms move. Taking into account Leibniz's arguments against non-void-entailing versions of material atomism we may view the present argument as the second part of an attempted extensive separation-of-cases refutation. As such this part countenances only versions of atomism which do entail a void. Thus qualified and in light of the suggested broad reading of "change by leaps", it would seem reasonable to concede 3.

In short, the attack on atomism found in vii and viii rests on the proposition that the world - the actual world - is maximally ordered, in the sense defined above. It is

impossible for us to discuss Leibniz's motivation for believing such a proposition without discussing his theology.

### Summary of Proposition 9

In our treatment of Proposition 9 we have examined several reasons why Leibniz was opposed to material atomism. In retrospect his reasons might alternately be labelled as: physical, metaphysical, geometrical, anti-skeptical, and even in a sense moral - the world's goodness is incompatible with the existence of material atoms. Among his various reasons, some of them only applied to some versions of atomism, such as his geometrical reasons. But this is not to say his opposition lacked unity. I think that there is conceptual unity to be found in his anti-atomism, and that such lies in its connection to his theological commitments discussed in Chapter 1. This connection will be explored in Chapter 3.

### Proposition 10 - Substances Were All Created at Once

Strictly speaking it is perhaps a misrepresentation to suggest Leibniz held this, if by 'hold' is meant 'was thoroughly committed to'. But it is no less clear that he believed it, though he seemed to sense that he lacked metaphysically compelling proof for it.

### Evidence of Commitment

I think the following four excerpts together adequately reveal the nature of Leibniz's advocacy of Proposition 10.

- i. "[A]nimals and souls begin from the very commencement of the world...." (Monadology, § 82. Montgomery, pp. 269-70.

- ii. "If souls had a natural origin, then they could also be naturally extinguished, since nothing is more in conformity to reason than that anything can be dissolved or destroyed in the same manner in which it is put together or constituted. Thus it must be said that souls cannot be originated except by creation, i.e. by a miracle, and that their immortality alone does not rule out that they might be taken out of existence by annihilation, that is by miracle, if God so willed. Hence either souls are created daily, or, as I prefer, they are coetaneous with the world." (Handschriften, Ch.IV, v. III, No. 5a, Bl.11, p. 69.)
- iii. "There are many difficulties concerning the origin of souls.... If they were created all at once from the beginning and began with the world, it is to be said as well that the animal soul called 'man' existed from the beginning and that all rational souls preexisted already in act, in or with Adam.... If you say that souls are created daily by God, it is to be feared lest so much infer it on the other hand to be equally probable that they are annihilated daily by God with the dying of the animal. If such annihilation is so ordinary and frequent, then by the same token all argument for the immortality of the human soul will come to nothing which relies on the premise that the soul cannot perish unless it is annihilated." (Ibid., Ch. IV, v. VIII, No. 24, Bl.93, pp. 122-3.)
- iv. "I saw that these forms and these souls should be indivisible, as our mind is.... But this truth renewed the great difficulties of the origin and duration of souls and forms. For every substance, being a true unity and not capable of beginning or ceasing to exist without a miracle, it follows that they can only begin by creation and end only by annihilation. Thus, except the souls God wishes still to create expressly, I was obliged to recognize that it is necessary that the forms constitutive of substances should have been created with the world and that they should subsist forever.... And that should not appear extraordinary, since we are only giving to forms the duration which the Gassendists give to their atoms." (from New System of Nature, § 4, 1695. Wiener, p. 108.)

### Significance of Commitment

These four texts serve to establish two things: first, that Leibniz believed in Proposition 10 consistently

throughout his intellectual career, and second, that he was aware of being unable to prove it. To be sure, he occasionally does seem to convey an air of certainty:

"Thus, except the souls that God wishes still to create expressly, I was obliged to recognize that it is necessary that the forms constitutive of substances should have been created with the world..." (New System of Nature. Wiener, p. 108. Emphasis mine.)

But a closer inspection reveals that he still leaves room for the possibility that God might see it best to create substances at different times. Nonetheless he prefers the notion that creation is all-at-once, and he does offer reasons in favor of the proposition. Let's review his reasons.

There is an important background premise which Leibniz refers to in ii and iv, namely that souls do not have a natural origin. In ii he offers an indirect proof for this, and in iv a direct proof. The indirect proof can be presented as follows:

1. The soul has a natural origin (supposed for the sake of disproving).
2. Anything can be destroyed according to the same manner in which it is originated (principle of metaphysics).
3. The soul is immortal (principle of metaphysics).
- C4. If the soul has a natural origin, i.e. is originated naturally, then it can be destroyed naturally (Instantiation of 2).
- C5. The soul can be destroyed naturally (1, C4, *modus ponens*).
- C6. The soul cannot be destroyed naturally (3, definition 'immortal').
- C7. C5 and C6 contradict one another (logic).

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C. The soul does not have a natural origin  
(C7 refutes 1, proving its negation, C).

The pivotal premises are 2 and 3. 2 is unobjectionable if



charitably interpreted. I came into being through my mother's womb, but it is absurd to say I can pass out of existence in that same manner. On the other hand, if I can identify along more general lines all the contributing factors which in combination support my existence - air, water, heat, genetic inheritance, possibly a creative act by God - it seems reasonable to suppose that the subtraction/reversal of them or even one of them might lead to my perishing.

3 is also unobjectionable if a proof can be provided for it which is independent of the reasoning represented by this argument. For instance, it would be unacceptable to defend 3 by arguing that the soul has no natural origin, and that that which has no natural origin has no natural annihilation, and therefore is immortal. Leibniz's essential philosophical justification for 3 is represented in the direct argument, below.

The direct proof in iv can be expressed as follows:

1. Souls are indivisible substances (principle of metaphysics).
2. All cases of coming to be, and of ceasing to exist, according to nature are by composition and decomposition, respectively (principle of metaphysics).
3. If something is indivisible it cannot be formed by composition or destroyed by decomposition (definition 'indivisible').
- C4. Souls cannot be formed by composition nor destroyed by decomposition (1, 3, *modus ponens* - 3 instantiated to souls).

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C. Souls neither come to be nor are destroyed according to nature. The soul does not have a natural origin, nor a natural annihilation (2, 4).

The crucial premises are 1, 2, and 3. 3 is an uncontroversial

consequence of the definition of 'indivisible'. 2 is a widely accepted belief based on the limitation of nature according to the dichotomy of the natural vs. the supernatural. According to this distinction, nature can only create and destroy by combining and separating elements; it does not create the elements, whatever they are, and it does not destroy them. Nature is thus viewed as an equilibrious system, which ultimately neither adds to or subtracts from the world. Any bottom-line addition to being would have to have a supernatural cause.

Support for 1 might be drawn from several sources. In fact a great portion of Leibniz's philosophy goes toward supporting it. In Chapter 3 I argue that such support ultimately rests on evidence of God's existence and nature. But for now we may characterize such support by saying that souls are immaterial unities, and immaterial unities are indivisible.

Only equipped with the reasons such proofs provide can Leibniz legitimately move on to the next step, expressed in each of ii, iii, and iv:

- O. Either all souls are miraculously originated (created) by God at the beginning of the world, or they are created by Him piece-meal, day-by-day.

In each of these same texts as well as in i Leibniz leaves no doubt but that he prefers the first disjunct of O. In ii, iii, and iv he gives reasons for this preference, making it clear, however that the piece-meal option is not strictly speaking ruled out by these reasons.

Why did Leibniz prefer the first option to the second? The only reason presented in these four texts is given in iii. There he expresses a wariness about the possibility of piece-meal creation of souls "lest so much infer it... to be equally probable that they are annihilated daily by God with the dying of the animal". In other words, once admitted that our conception as members of the human species is simultaneous with our inception as existing souls, the suggestion offers itself that our dying as humans is simultaneous with our termination as existing souls, which is unacceptable to Leibniz in that it opposes the doctrine of immortality. I think this reasoning warrants several remarks.

First, this is not intended to be an argument of necessity, but an argument of probability in the classical sense. In the absence of any other argument on this matter bearing the markings of a necessity argument, the assertion of this one carries with it an implicit admission by Leibniz that he was not aware of any conclusive philosophical reasons favoring the hypothesis of all-at-once creation. Second, despite the absence of conclusive reasons Leibniz shows a surprising degree of commitment to the hypothesis. Leibniz was not given to leaving his important commitments without adequate defense; perhaps his reasons for this commitment lie in some other area. I suggest that his commitment to defending the doctrine of Original Sin is what ultimately motivates him in opting for all-at-once creation.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, if all human souls were actively present in Adam, this might explain how when Adam was tainted by original sin, so were the rest of us. Many would take this idea as absurd and perhaps it is, but the philosophical acrobatics Leibniz performs in arguing this position, along with the historical importance of exposing the views of such a famous philosopher, make it worth discussing.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF LEIBNIZ'S PHILOSOPHY

#### Evidence of Priority of Intent in General

To the extent that one can be sure about what a person holds based solely on his writings, we can be sure that Leibniz held revealed Christian theology with a full degree of commitment; that revealed theology occupied for him a position of primacy over philosophy and rational thought; and that his philosophy actually results from a far-reaching strategy of defense of Christianity. This statement warrants a good deal of explanation and defending, to which the rest of this section attends.

#### The Quality of Evidence of Leibniz's Writings

It has to be acknowledged that there are some difficulties in drawing conclusions about a person's views from his writings, especially in the era in which Leibniz was writing. There was obviously much contention in the air. Protestants who thought themselves to be good Christians were dismayed to be thought of as heretics in danger of losing their salvation. Catholics were offended by the accusation made by militant Protestants that the Pope was the anti-Christ. Within each denominational group the standards of orthodoxy were high, as if to draw battle-lines. There was some dialogue, but not much, and it was very difficult to overcome contentiousness. For someone interested in discussing religion in a conciliatory way, as Leibniz was, he

had to be acutely aware of the sensitivities of his audience. A considerable amount of waffling and circumlocution, not to mention temporary compromises of personal vision, were to be expected, and occurred. Indeed, with different audiences Leibniz used different tones and censured different subjects. Even his use of different languages leaves one suspecting that he was protecting himself. (For example, he wrote comparatively little in German, but much of what he did write concerns the reconciliation of the Reformers with the Evangelicals, two largely German-speaking Protestant groups. One would think those intellectuals to whom he was writing knew Latin, which was still being used as an academic *lingua franca*.) Leibniz occasionally spoke about the necessity to speak in different ways to different people:

"Among this kind of people nothing is persuaded by proofs of long duration, but by consensus of the people. Others, though, philosophize with their own minds." (Leibniz to Arnauld, 1671. Appendix A, p. 343.)

and

"Metaphysics should be written with accurate definitions and demonstrations, but nothing should be demonstrated in it that conflicts too much with received opinions. Thus this metaphysics will be able to be received if it is once approved; then afterward, if any examine it more profoundly, they will hold the consequences to be necessary" (Lestienne, *G. W. Leibniz: Discourse de métaphysique*, p. 14, no. 1. Taken from Mates, p. 171, footnote 5).

These passages suggest that Leibniz, although prudent, was a man of some intellectual courage - not an intellectual coward, as Russell argued (Mates, p.171). For both of them

reveal that he is out to make changes in the way people think about things. In the first, he is subtly trying to persuade Arnauld to "philosophize with his own mind", and not simply be persuaded by "consensus of the people"; all this to prepare him to consider some startling views on the Eucharist. In the second his aggressiveness is less masked, despite the prudent, non-confrontational method of persuasion he is advocating.

His courage is perhaps due to his for years unbounded optimism regarding the prospects of reconciling the views of unfriendly opponents, especially on the touchy matter of religion. As he'd revealed a few years earlier, ("*De Demonstratione Possibilitatis Eucharistiae*", SSB, VI, 1, p. 517) he'd wished to be able to have a heart-to-heart discussion over the compatibility between Lutheran and Catholic views on the Eucharist with someone of "such great moment" as Arnauld. This is a brave topic to broach across denominations, without question; and there are many other cases where he shows similar bravery. If intellectual cowardice in a person is a failure to express his views based on "audience-interference" or fear of an unreceptive audience, then we shouldn't impute cowardice to Leibniz. There is a manageable amount of audience-interference in his writings; with a bit of care we can get at his views through them.

## Leibniz's Subscription to Christian Doctrine

Leibniz was a confessed subscriber to the Augsburg Confession [Confessio Augustana] ("*Dem. Poss. Euch.*", SSB, VI, 1, p. 516) and thus was officially Lutheran. However he not rarely identified himself as "Catholic". In a letter to Marie de Brinon (July 16, 1691; in Gaquère, p.46), one of his more frequent Roman Catholic correspondents, Leibniz writes:

"You are right, Madam, in judging me a Catholic at heart; I am the same openly..."

In the latter it should be noted that Leibniz was not confessing to be a Roman Catholic, but Catholic in the sense that Anglicans and Episcopalians apply the term to themselves today. In another place, though, he goes further to say:

"If I had been born into the Roman Church, then certainly I would not now leave it, even if I believed everything I now believe." ("*De Scriptura Ecclesia Trinitate*", Grua, p. 178)

This indicates that Leibniz felt his beliefs to be close enough to those of Roman Catholicism to allow him to remain in good conscience a member of that church, under different circumstances. In each of these citations he is declaring himself unqualifiedly to be a Christian and to subscribe to Christian doctrine.

Besides these three citations there is ample testimony throughout Leibniz that he was and remained committed to the truth of revelation and therefore not a deist (as were many philosophers among his contemporaries). This is evident in two of his major works: the Discourse On Metaphysics and the



Theodicy. Although the latter begins with an almost deist tone:

"the outward forms of religion... are of two kinds: the one consists in ceremonial practices, and the other in the formularies of belief.... [F]ormularies are like shadows of the truth and approach, more or less, the true light.... [The formularies of belief] would be valid provided there were nothing in them inconsistent with truth unto salvation, even though the full truth concerned were not there." (Farrer, pp. 49-50.)

in the same work he confesses his Christian theism even more explicitly:

"the object of faith is the truth God has revealed in an extraordinary way" (Farrer, p. 73).

and

"For, after all, one truth cannot contradict another, and the light of reason is no less a gift of God than that of revelation." (Ibid. p. 91.)

The way Discourse ends gives even more poignant testimony to Leibniz's commitment:

"XXXVII. Jesus Christ has revealed to men the mystery and the admirable laws of the kingdom of heaven, and the greatness of the supreme happiness which God has prepared for those who love him." (Montgomery, p. 62.)

In short, Leibniz's was commitment to Christian revelation - 'Revelation', for short - was as to a separate source of knowledge alongside our natural means of knowing, but one not irreconcilable with our natural way of knowing. We shall return to this theme in the discussion of the primacy of theology over philosophy which follows.

## Revealed Theology's Primacy as Goal or Standard of Thought

Some philosophers who subscribed to revealed religion did not take much pains to set their philosophy in subordination to it. Leibniz counted Descartes among these:

"It is amazing how much the philosophy of Descartes confirms them [the foes of Christian doctrine]" (Appendix A, p. 344.)

and

"He [Descartes] has also artfully evaded the mysteries of faith by claiming to pursue philosophy rather than theology, as though philosophy were incompatible with religion, or as though a religion can be true which opposes truths demonstrated elsewhere." ("On True Method in Philosophy and Theology", 1686. Wiener, p. 59.)

A similar charge was made against the medieval Muslim philosophers, such as Avicenna and Averroes, who, though confessed Muslims, appeared to openly contradict the Koran in their esoteric philosophies. This claim ought not be made about Leibniz. His philosophy was motivated by concerns of faith and theology. As a young adult (1671) he wrote to Arnauld:

"Amid so many distractions, I deem myself to have dwelt more persistently on hardly another issue in the course of this life of mine, however short, than on what it is that will secure my well-being in the life to come. This has certainly been for me, I confess, the chief cause of philosophizing." (Appendix A, p. 345.)

Since the context of the passage is a letter defending the Eucharist, I think it clearly ought to be read as an admission that understanding Revelation was the aim motivating Leibniz to philosophize. He'd expressed the same point even more emotionally two years earlier in

"Confession of Nature Against the Atheists":

"[A]fter their attempt had met with some little success, they proclaimed... that they could find neither God nor immortality of the soul by natural reason.... Unfortunately there are those who have gone even further and who now doubt the authority of the sacred scriptures and the truth of history and the historical record, thus bringing an unconcealed atheism into the world. It seemed to me unworthy for our mind to be blinded in this manner by its own light, that is, by philosophy. I began therefore myself to undertake an investigation, and all the more vigorously as I became more impatient at being dispossessed, by the subtleties of these innovators, of my life's greatest good, the certainty of an eternity after death and the hope that the divine benevolence would sometime be made manifest toward the good and the innocent." ("The Confession of Nature Against Atheists", 1669. Loemker, v. 1, pp. 168-9.)

This text suggests that Leibniz's main if not only business in philosophy was that of launching a project aimed at supporting Christianity. More than that, it shows Leibniz's support of the notion of the primacy of Christian theology over philosophy, but not without granting a crucial role for philosophy in the aid of Christianity. Leibniz faults other philosophers for allowing their philosophizing to go astray of Christian doctrine, yet is drawn to philosophy in order to defend Christianity against them.

How, for Leibniz, theology can have primacy over philosophy yet require philosophy to lay theology's groundwork remains to be established.

It is not difficult to see that Leibniz held theology to be the highest point of knowledge in some sense:

"theology is the highest point of the knowledge of things regarding the mind" (Leibniz to Bouvet, 1697. Wiener, p. 105).

In light of what we've already read, we shouldn't take him just to be talking about natural i.e. philosophical theology, but revealed theology. This points us in the direction of understanding the sense in which theology has priority over philosophy: the truths of revealed theology are established not by reason, but, prior to reason and philosophy, by faith. These truths are justified prior to their acceptance by true philosophy, i.e. prior to the aid of perceived facts directly concerning them. This sets them apart from other beliefs, which do not have the privilege of this priority. Of course, the truths of theology are true, so they can't possibly contradict the true philosophy, as stated in the initial essay of Theodicy, "Preliminary Dissertation on the Conformity of Faith with Reason". So they are a standard for naturally gained beliefs in that if the latter contradict them, they are false.

It might be objected that this standard could be used either way - e.g.: "Revelation cannot entail such-and-such because such-and-such is contrary to reason" as well as "This cannot be the truth because it contradicts the content of Revelation" - and therefore does not entail the primacy of theology. But in fact, its convertibility is a trivial matter of logic. The claim being made by Leibniz is not that either Revelation/faith or philosophy/reason is the primary source of justification for our beliefs and not both. His claim is rather the following:

There are two primary sources of knowledge. The first is reason aided by perceived facts. The second is divine revelation. All our beliefs except those of the second source must pass the scrutiny of reason-cum-natural-perception in order to be justified. The most important truths belong to revealed theology.

This is witnessed to by the following:

"[T]he object of faith is the truth God has revealed in an extraordinary way... reason is the linking together of truths, but especially (when it is compared with faith) those whereto the human mind can attain naturally without being aided by the light of faith...." (Preface to Theodicy. Farrer, p. 73.)

and

"The ancient philosophers knew very little of these important [theological] truths. Jesus Christ alone has expressed them divinely well.... His gospel has entirely changed the face of human affairs. It has brought us to know the kingdom of heaven, or that perfect republic of spirits which deserves to be called the city of God.... He alone has made us see how much God loves us.... [and that] God alone can render the soul happy or unhappy." (Discourse, § XXXVII, Montgomery, pp. 62-3.)

I shall take the second passage to speak for itself as supporting the idea that Revelation gives us the most important truths. What can be more important than our destiny and happiness, of the perfect everlasting outcome of creation in union with the Perfect Being? Even if the truth of these things is doubted their eminent importance if they are true cannot be doubted. If one believes in these things, and the evidence is pretty convincing that Leibniz did, it would hardly make sense for them not to be, in the sense discussed, the "goals" of thought - of truth-oriented thought at any rate.

In the first passage Leibniz expresses that there are two sources of truths: revelation, or "the light of faith", and natural human perception prescinding from faith. Reason is normally associated with the latter, as the linking together the truths attained by that way. In this sense, 'reason' really means, as put above, "reason-cum-natural-perception". Along similar lines one could speak of "reason-cum-revelation", or "reason-cum-faith-perception". Perhaps this is key notion of Leibniz's project of defending Christian theology. Reason, on account of its habitual association with natural perception, has accidentally been opposed to faith, or the object of faith, here Revelation. But true knowledge i.e. science of Revelation - revealed theology - is hampered, to remain in a state of disunity - unless it makes full use of reason to link its truths together, and ultimately, since all truth is unified, to link its truths to naturally attained truths.

In short, the truths of Revelation are both the standard and goal of thought for Leibniz. Revealed theology being the science of these truths, it has primacy over all other thought, particularly philosophy, in providing for it a standard and goal. Yet, although reason-*cum*-perception or "natural reason" is not the justifier of theology, according to Leibniz it plays a foundational role with respect to theology. For although items of revelation, such as: "God is triune", are not a matter for natural reason to decide, it is for it to decide whether the doctrine is possible. Clearly possibility is a precondition for something being true. On the other hand, some doctrine relies on certain historical facts being true, such as the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ. Whether the texts recording the life of Christ are historically reliable is a matter for natural reason, not faith, as is the matter of deciding facts about what accepted literary genres and devices the writers of scripture were using. These facts have a great impact on how Scripture should be interpreted. Moreover, it is for reason to decide whether two candidates for doctrine are compatible or contradict. An item of scripture clearly committing itself to propositions incompatible with the rest of the content of Revelation would have to be false, if the rest of Revelation is true. Hence it would have to be excluded as unorthodox. Finally, it is for reason to decide whether a naturally acquired belief contradicts Revelation. But for all these reasonings to yield

true results, theology - the science of Revelation - must first be properly developed, and philosophy plays prominently therein.

### Christianity in Danger without Philosophical Support

An added motivation for working out a philosophically centered defense of of Christian doctrine was the fear that Christianity was in danger without it. Leibniz wrote:

"The philosophical age is dawning in which a more acute interest in truth is being diffused even outside the schools, among men born in the Republic. The true propagation of religion will be hopeless unless it satisfies these men.... Nothing works better at confirming atheism or certainly at strengthening rationalism and undermining from its foundation - as it has nearly already done - the slipping faith of many... than on the one hand to advocate that the mysteries of faith are always believed by all Christians, and on the other hand to be convinced of stupidities by certain kinds of demonstrations of "right reason". There are many within the Church that are more bitter enemies of Her than the Heretics themselves. It is to be feared lest the heresy in the end will be, if not atheism, then a vulgarized naturalism.... It is set before us to do battle with these enemies..." (Leibniz to Arnauld, 1671. Scare-quotes mine. Appendix A, pp. 344-5.)

Leibniz saw danger for the Church - Christianity - from within and without. In his eyes the danger from the inside was caused by intellectual sloppiness on the part of Christians, who by this allow many stupidities and fallacious ways of reasoning to be associated with them, discrediting the truth of their faith. Of course, the enemies on the outside reason poorly by discrediting the faith on account of "stupidities" accidentally associated with it. This being the enemy, the bad use of reason both inside and outside the Church, it seems clear that the battle that Leibniz calls to



be waged is one of establishing true philosophy within and without the Church. This leads to a more detailed look at Leibniz's far-reaching (mostly) philosophical project to defend his Christian faith.

### Project of Defending Christianity

The claim to be a subscriber to Christian doctrine - to Revelation - is a complicated one, especially in light of the fact that then as before and now theologians are still struggling to reflectively determine just what the content of Revelation is. Yet, isn't that more or less the case for many of the things people normally claim to subscribe to? Consider, for example: 'My spouse loves me'. It is certainly difficult to reflectively render the content of such a declaration. Yet arguably this is no cause to doubt its truth, for we have a good sense of its meaning. Of course, I may be mistaken on other grounds that my wife loves me.

The case of revealed Christian doctrine is even more puzzling. We can try to liken the subscription to it with the confidence many of us have in doctors. We normally will believe their diagnoses without being able to give a reasoned account of them ourselves. Our confidence is based on the doctors' professional authority. Not that we don't have some understanding of the diagnoses; without that there would be no sense in saying we believe them. We know what a diagnosis means in terms of our health and how we feel, our prospects for a long life, what we have to do to get better. So much understanding suffices to allow us to cooperate with doctors.

But the analogy to religion is imperfect. In the case of doctors our confidence in their authority lies in the track record of modern medicine, its standards, its accountability, and on our ability to directly observe in ourselves the symptoms which would corroborate or falsify the physicians' diagnoses and prove their prescribed treatments to be effective or ineffective. Although our acceptance of revealed doctrines lies in our confidence in their source, it is far more difficult to say what justifies the confidence. The source of Christian revelation is supposed to be Jesus Christ, who established his authority as a divine prophet by making prophecies that would be seen by his followers to come true - such as the fall of Jerusalem, by miracles of healing, by perfect moral witness, by an expressed clarity of spiritual vision, by rising from the dead, by reappearing in a glorified bodily form, and finally by ascending into the sky. His followers would add that more proof of his authority comes from the effects of calling on his name: conversion, peace, a sense of victory over the powers of evil. This may be all well and good, but before it can be accepted as justification for belief, some historical facts need to be verified. Was there a man named Jesus? Did he do and say, at least in substance, all the things ascribed to him by his followers? Even if the New Testament is granted not to be a hoax, how did its writers intend it to be interpreted? Is there anything about the scriptures themselves which indicate either that they are trustworthy or

how they are supposed to be read? Even if we resolve all of these initial problems, how shall we apply the revelation of Jesus Christ to our lives in the modern world? More generally, how are we to handle the actual revealed material: are we to develop it into a conceptual whole, relating it to the rest of our thought and each item in it to the others harmoniously, or are we to guard it without modification or elaboration? In the life of the Church are we to allow free and vibrant discussion and debate over the content of revelation, or are we to follow rules of censure? What means are there of deciding the truth in doctrinal disputes: does the revelation itself indicate some guidelines of its own - a hierarchy, a divine guarantee of infallibility to some person or body of persons - or are people left to their own human resources to do the best they can? In the former case, does corruption disqualify such persons from exercising their infallibility? In the latter, is the authority of revelation lost? Finally, if the Church became divided, how was it to regain its unity? When would it be proper to expel the rebellious factions? When is tolerance appropriate? Could both sides of a division both be in good conscience? What steps could be taken toward reconciliation?

The issue of faith in divine revelation through Christ is a can of worms and Leibniz knew it. But more than a millenium and a half had passed before a situation - the Reformation - arose that suddenly opened this can entirely, creating a dire urgency for its contents to be sifted,

inspected, and set in order. In the preceding centuries there had been plenty of heterodoxies (I use this term relatively to the Roman Catholic church), but the numbers of people involved in them were not nearly as great, and the points of contention for each particular heterodoxy were usually few. There were other schisms, but these were, in retrospect, more political than doctrinal. (Today it is hard for a layperson to see much difference in point of doctrine between the Catholics and the Eastern Orthodoxes or even the Anglicans.) The writings of the great theologians and Christian philosophers of those times occasionally reveal a sensitivity to the set of problems we are presently discussing, but whereas then it was an esoteric complex of puzzles not much affecting the surface-life of Christianity, now it had exploded to the surface to become a serious obstacle to many. The in-house solutions occasionally provided by past thinkers to one or another of these questions were now not acceptable, not radical enough. Unless these problems were successfully addressed in a manner universally satisfying to all good-willed persons, the Church and its prospects for unity were in jeopardy. Certainly, as Leibniz thought, it was the duty of any good Christian who was fit to the task to attempt such a project. Leibniz felt fit to the task, and he dutifully undertook the project, that of "well establishing the truth of the Christian religion" (Leibniz to Thomas Burnett, Feb. 11, 1697. Gerhardt, v. 3, p. 190).

In the above cited passage from "The Confession of Nature Against the Atheists", (p. 175), Leibniz left the impression that he was initially drawn to, and continued ever more vigorously doing philosophy, for the sake of defending the Church and its Revelation. In fact, Leibniz over the course of his intellectual career had conceived of and was undertaking a project aimed at establishing revealed theology as a complete science of Revelation. Though he had no pretensions of completing this project, he seemed definitely intent on establishing the project so that others might carry on after him. The project involved also historical and jurisprudential research as well as philosophical research; my interest here is in the philosophical. (It should be remarked that questions of proper methods of doing history and of jurisprudence are philosophical questions, while case studies of law and things like the interpretation of ancient artifacts are more properly to be considered as jurisprudential and historical research, respectively.)

The following long but very important citation from a letter to Thomas Burnett (Feb. 11, 1697. Gerhardt, 3, pp. 193-194) testifies to Leibniz's vision of this project. It sets in order his views on the proper rapport between matters of faith and matters of reason. Let it serve as well to dispell any lingering doubts that Leibniz was serious about his commitment to Christianity. Note that he writes this letter at the ripe age of 50; he is not writing out of youthful frivolity.

"Thus therefore theological truths and consequences are of two types: some are of metaphysical certitude and the others are of moral certitude. The first presuppose definitions, axioms, and theorems taken from true philosophy and natural theology. The second presuppose in part history and facts, and in part the interpretation of texts. But to gain proper access to this history and these texts in order to establish not only the truth and antiquity of the facts, the genuinity and divinity of our sacred books; but also the antiquity of the Church and finally the meaning of the texts; it is necessary again to have recourse to true philosophy and in part to natural jurisprudence. In short it seems that such a work requires not only history and ordinary theology, but also philosophy, mathematics, and jurisprudence. Now philosophy has two parts: theoretical and practical. Theoretical philosophy is founded on true analysis, of which mathematicians give us bits and pieces, but which one must apply to metaphysics and natural theology, giving them good definitions and solid axioms. But practical philosophy is founded in true topics or dialectic, that is to say, on the art of estimating degrees of proof, something not yet found among logician-authors, rather of which only jurisconsults have given scraps, which are not to be looked down upon and can serve as a beginning in forming the science of proofs, which is proper for verifying historical facts and for giving the meaning of texts. For the jurisconsults themselves ordinarily occupy themselves with doing both in legal proceedings. Thus before one can do theology by 'method of establishments', as I call it, one needs first a metaphysics, or demonstrative natural theology, and one needs also a moral dialectic and a natural jurisprudence, by which one might learn demonstratively the manner of estimating degrees of proof. For many probable arguments brought together sometimes make a moral certitude, and sometimes not. One needs therefore a certain method to be able to determine such a thing. It is often said and correctly so that reasons don't need to be counted, but weighed; yet nobody has up to now given us this scale which should serve to weigh the force of reasons. It is one of the greatest defects of our logic, one whose effects we suffer even in the most important and serious matters of life, regarding justice, the security and welfare of the state, the salvation of humans, and even religion. It has been almost thirty years since I've made these remarks publicly, and since that time I have done a great amount of research to lay the foundation of such a great project. But a thousand

distractions have impeded me from establishing with precision these philosophical, juridical and theological elements that I had projected to establish. If God gives me some more life and health, I shall accomplish my main business. I would still not prove all that one can prove, but I would prove at least a very important part, in order to begin the method of establishments, and to give others the opportunity to go farther still."

This passage shows the Nature of Leibniz's commitment to the truth of Revelation: despite our imperfect grasp of it, it is true; yet to ascertain its truth is a project requiring philosophy and the patient consideration of naturally accessible facts. There can hardly be any question here but that doctrinal or revealed theology - the science of inferring doctrines from Revelation (theology by "method of establishments") - is the goal of Leibniz's thought, with the eminent suggestion that it is the proper goal of thought; to which philosophy, the study of history, jurisprudence, etc. are, at least in the order of intentions, subordinated. Philosophy is essential to the establishment of the content of revelation and hence to theology and the faith community. Philosophy may even be said to "come first" in this sense, that a firm philosophical foundation must be laid before theology can be fruitfully and definitively done. But this philosophizing is done with an eye to supporting revealed truth. It thus provides not only the goal, but a standard for philosophy to meet up to.

#### **Evidence That Leibniz Undertook the "Project"**

Where did this project ultimately take him? One can cite the reams of religious authors he claimed to have read, of

which, by the age of 26 - assuming he was not exaggerating - he had read 45 "among others", all at least in a "sufficiently careful manner" if not "extensively" or even exhaustively (letter to Arnauld, 1671. See Appendix A). One can examine his correspondences and find that a preponderance of them regard religious matters. One can cite the theistic intent of four of his major works - the Monadology, the Discourse on Metaphysics, Confessio Philosophi, and especially the Theodicy - let alone so many of his smaller works - of which I count well over 50 significant ones written from 1668 to 1715, the breadth of his intellectual career.

Keep in mind that according to what he wrote to Burnett in the long citation above, much of this project is not explicitly to regard religion, but merely be ordered to it: establishing a metaphysics, a theory of epistemic justification, a logical calculus. Keep in mind as well that another considerable portion of the project is to involve only natural theology, that is the ascertainment of what we can know about God by reason alone. So even when Leibniz is not discussing Revelation or explicitly Christian interests, this is not evidence that his intent is other than religious. Finally, Leibniz's virtually lifelong obsession with reconciling religious divisions, especially those between Christians, (a preoccupation which dominates his correspondences), bears further witness to the existence of a far-reaching apologetic project. With all this in mind, it is



hard to see how anyone could fail to classify Leibniz as primarily a religious thinker.

A general survey of Leibniz's writings reveals that he produced roughly three main kinds of literary works to directly advance Christian interests in the world: refutations of objections to, or critiques of writings of others concerning doctrine; proofs of the possibility of doctrines; and irenics, or works promoting reconciliation, usually between Catholics and Protestants or between Lutherans and Reformed Christians. In the first group belong for example "*Refutatio Hypotheseos Thomae Angli*" (1668-9?), "*Defensio Trinitatis contra Wissowatium*" (1669), much of his correspondence with Thomas Burnett (1694-1714), as well as comments on Bellarmino (1681), on Pellisson's "*Reflexions sur les differends de la Religion*" (1692), on the Dutch Dominican Thomas du Jardin's "*Catholycke Bemerkungen*" (1710), on Arsenius Sophianus's "*Vernunftige Religion*", (1706), and on Christoph Matthaeus Pfaff's "*Dissertatio de Consecratione Eucharistiae*" (August, 1715). Belonging to the second class of works would be, for example, "*De Transsubstantiatione*" (1668?), "*De Demonstratione Possibilitatis Mysteriorum Eucharistiae*" (1668?), "*Demonstrationum Catholicarum Conspectus*", (1668-9), "*De Incarnatione*", (1669-70?), "*De Possibilitate Gratiae Divinae*", (1669-70), "*Apologia Fidei Catholicae ex Recta Ratione*", (1683), "*De Revelatione et Ecclesia*", (1685), "*De Scriptura Ecclesia Trinitate*" (1683-86?), "*De Deo Trino*" (? See Grua, p. 179), and "*De Persona*

*Christi*" (? See Grua, pp. 179-80). In the third group belong the bulk of his correspondences with Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels (1680-1693), his Roman Catholic patron; Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux (1679-1702), through which he also entered upon an emotional correspondence with Marie de Brinon on the same topic; Gerhard Wolter Molanus (1677-1716); Cristobal Rojas y Spinola (1683-4, 1688-95); Bartolomaeus Des Bosses, S.J. (1706-1716); and others. Also in this third group belong works such as "*De Religionis Mutatione et Schismate*" (1686?); "*Catalogue des trois decades des controverses vidées entre les Catholiques Romains et les Protestans*" (1698); "*Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken über die Schrifft genandt [']Kurtze Vorstellung der Einigkeit und des Unterscheids im Glauben beider protestirenden Kirchen[']*", written by Daniel Ernst Jablonski]" (1698), which Leibniz collaborated upon with Molanus; "*Sentiment de St. Augustin sur le purgatoire*" (1694); "*Tentamen expositiones irenicæ trium potissimorum inter Protestantæ contraversiarum*" (1698); "*Bedencken über die Vereinigung der Evangelischen und Reformirten*" (1700); and "*Über die Bedingungen für eine mögliche Reunion*" (1700). It is highly probable that there are other writings of these three kinds hidden among the considerable unpublished portion of Leibniz's writings. The collective force of these writings is as a striking testimony to the religious motivation of their author, lending a definite sense of his being on a mission such as the one he delineated to Burnett (p. 175).

Yet as far as these writings are concerned, the student of Leibniz the philosopher might argue that though they show him to have been out to defend and reunite the Church, still his philosophy proper, i.e. that work of his which does not consider the Church or its teachings as its explicit subject matter, was unaffected by all this, or at any rate could be accurately studied without reference to his religious convictions and aspirations. After all, the present century has seen in Bertrand Russell a noted philosopher and anti-war activist whose philosophy and social activism were by his own admission unconnected. Nobody would suggest that to understand Russell's theory of universals one must examine his pacifism. Isn't it the nature of philosophy as a discipline to be autonomous in this same kind of way? Isn't Leibniz's philosophy-proper therefore quite rightfully separable from his religious writings?

To these two questions I answer: in a sense yes and in a sense no. I answer "yes" in the following sense: insofar as philosophy in general and Leibniz's in particular is or approaches a demonstrative system of propositions based on a set of core premisses. I answer "no" in the following sense: insofar as the issue is where the core premisses come from. Given a set of basic premises, philosophers can make all kinds of clever derivations which can be evaluated in the public domain. But when it comes to explaining the basic premises, there is little consensus on how to proceed. Therefore in studying a philosophical theory or perspective,

once we determine its core premisses, we may very well be disappointed and even confused as to how anyone could consider them to be basic, or how they were chosen. Sometimes this frustration leads perhaps wrongly to the conclusion that the author just had some strange beliefs, period. Other times it may lead to the conviction that some mistake had been made by the student and these couldn't be the real founding premises, assuming that all unusual or counterintuitive propositions in philosophy must be derived. (I see Leibniz's philosophy, *qua* object of study, as a victim of both these reactions to frustration.) After all, philosophy depends largely on argument, and argument is supposed to go from what is conceded to what is disputed. The conviction that some mistake had been made leads in turn to a renewed attempt to find the real basic premisses. If the philosophy being considered is a particularly meticulous one, it may be possible to repeat this whole activity several times and come up with varying sets of "axioms" from any one set of which the whole philosophy is deducible. This is surely the case with Leibniz (see Introduction, p. 12 ff.).

This kind of scholarship, one which insists on the conceptual autonomy of philosophy, thus often fails to answer the question: where does the view in question come from? Proximately, it comes from a set of core premises which are assumed, though usually not without controversy, to be self-evident. But ultimately it comes from wherever the core premises come from. If these are alleged to have a source

other than our natural perception, some scholars may consider it beyond their jurisdiction to explore, leaving the roots of the view ever a curiosity. But this is a shame. Whose jurisdiction is it to say where a philosophy ultimately comes from, if not philosophy's? Even the aforementioned Russell took it as his duty as a historian of philosophy to consider socio-political roots of philosophical ideas. (in his A History of Western Philosophy, Simon & Schuster, 1967; Preface, p. ix.) Why not religious roots?

The claim I've been making is that Leibniz's philosophy has religious roots in that its core premises *qua* philosophical are really derived from support from another alleged source of evidence than philosophy's "native" source of natural perception, and that this other source is Revelation. In this section I've defended the claim generally by trying to establish that he believed in Revelation, that he held it in a position of primacy over philosophy, and that his philosophizing and philosophy arose largely as a chief component of a project to defend Revelation and the Christian Church. To drive the point home more definitively I propose in the next section of this chapter to show several key examples of core propositions of Leibniz's philosophy as grounded in his religious convictions. Specifically, I hope to show that the six propositions discussed in Chapter 2 have their roots in the religious convictions discussed in Chapter 1.

## The Question of Philosophical Honesty

I cannot end this section without addressing the following question: is it honest to philosophize subjecting, as I'm claiming Leibniz did, one's philosophy to a standard external to it, in his case Revelation? I think most would agree that one of the main distinctions between real philosophy and ideology is that the latter has the ulterior motivation of justifying a set of beliefs, actions, attitudes, or policies which it unquestioningly accepts as above its criticism. We normally consider the philosophies of known ideologues to be suspect and discreditable, if not downright dishonest, for this very reason. The "philosophers" of Italian fascism and of German Nazism are not taken seriously; Heidegger is now held in disrepute by some because of his apparent acceptance of Hitler's policies.

Philosophy, to the contrary, is supposed to have priority over all other intellectual enterprises in that it is within its jurisdiction alone to determine, if it can, the answers to the basic questions, such as: what kinds of things can be known, what is necessarily true or false, what kinds of things are undeniable, and even what the conditions are for justifiably believing something. Arguably, no knowledge is had in rigour until and unless the basic philosophical questions are answered; philosophy doesn't even assume that they can be answered. How then can one creditably do philosophy with a preconceived set of "truths" to which philosophy must be subjected? This question clearly seems to

take a rhetorical "no", in light of which it has been argued that Christians - or any subscriber to an allegedly divine revelation - cannot really be philosophers. The reasoning is that since real "believers" have by definition a bottom-line commitment both to the facts that divine revelation is possible and actual and to its content, what they take to be the divinely revealed truths, it is impossible for them to philosophize, because to philosophize entails starting out with no bottom-line assumptions except, perhaps, the most basic of logical principles.

A common response to this philosophical purism is that everyone has bottom-line commitments of one kind or another, and therefore anyone brings to philosophy an external standard in the form of a set of beliefs philosophy must agree with. This is a pessimistic response in that while apparently acquitting the believer/philosopher of being a sort of ideologue, it does quite the opposite: it makes every philosopher an ideologue of sorts. If this is a defense of philosophy against excessive purism, philosophy surely needs no enemies.

I think there is a better response to that kind of excessive purism which would disqualify believers from the ranks of philosophers. It is true that anyone brings to philosophy some deep convictions, such that if one's philosophizing conflicted with them, one would tend to suspect an error in the philosophizing rather than in the

beliefs. But this does not corrupt the philosophical process of any person *p* as long as he accepts:

- a. that if *p*'s commitments are true, then philosophy can yield results that at the very least are compatible with them;
- b. that the more persistently *p*'s philosophizing leads to conflict with those beliefs, the greater the probability of the following disjunction:
  - i. Either *p* is a bad philosopher or
  - ii. some of *p*'s commitments are false;

and

- c. the more others disinterestedly corroborate *p*'s philosophical **work** in varied ways, the less the probability of i.

Of course, b and c have all the defects of inductive statements; but the fact is that despite its problems, we all depend on induction heavily in our thinking. I propose that we actually depend on it as a way of testing our own philosophical honesty. It is not dishonest to abandon a line of reasoning because it conflicts with a deeper conviction. We very well may make mistakes in our reasonings. What is dishonest is not to begin to suspect a belief which persistently flies in the face of apparently sound and exhaustive philosophical reasoning.

In short, I believe it is quite possible to be a believer/philosopher at least from the philosophy side. We'd have to see for each particular set of beliefs if the same is possible from the believer side - that is, if that belief system itself prohibits philosophizing. It is an interesting question to ask of Christianity; one might get differing



answers from denomination to denomination. I shall not pursue the matter here, other than to say that just in being a philosopher-Christian, Leibniz was arguably more in line with Roman Catholic tradition than with the tradition up to his time of Martin Luther, noted for his anti-philosophical stance (cf. W. T. Jones, Hobbes to Hume, Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1969, p. 65). See also Leibniz's qualified acknowledgement of this in Theodicy, "Preliminary Dissertation on the Conformity of Faith with Reason", § 12.)

### The Roots of Leibniz's Metaphysics in Christian Theology: The Derivation of Six Propositions

#### Derivation of Proposition 5: That The Actual World Is the Best Possible World

It is probably as well known as any fact about Leibniz's philosophy that he derives his best-possible-world theory from the proposition that God, the Perfect Being, exists (Proposition 1, from Chapter 1). Leibniz backs this deduction by attempting to prove God's existence philosophically. Yet, although hinting that rigorous philosophical proofs may be possible, to the chagrin of philosophical purists he at times conceded that even what he considered his best, the ontological proof, was not rigorous, and indeed seems never to have produced a rigorous version (see Leibniz to Eckhart, April-June?, 1677. Gerhardt, v. 1, pp. 220-224; and Jalabert, p. 80). Still more disturbing to the purists is the fact that the importance of proving God's existence is played down by him in favor of advocating the presumption of truth "*donec*

*probetur contrarium*" ("until the contrary be proven") that belief in God is shown to have via the ontological argument (ibid., pp. 80-81).

Thus, what initially might have seemed like the makings of a rigorous natural theology, where God's existence is first painstakingly established and then other things are drawn from it, begins to take on a different look. The theocentricity of Leibniz's philosophy now seems prior to and autonomous of the proofs. This suggests that he considers the justification for his theism to come from a source other than the proofs provided by natural reason. Now Leibniz admitted only two sources of knowledge: natural perception and revealed perception. The inference seems to be that Leibniz felt entitled to believe in God based on God's existence having been revealed.

If so much is true, then what looked like an exercise in unrevealed theology, or philosophical theology, now looks like it may be tied to Revelation. That is why I include discussion of Proposition 5 in this section.

This should not be taken to mean that Leibniz was a fideist, or one who denied the importance of reason in matters regarding religious faith. By his own account, this was certainly not the case:

"I am very far from credulity.... even regarding the faith. I have held in fact that any amount of rigour that was surrendered in an affair of such importance as religion amounted to evasion of truth." (Letter to Arnauld, 1671; Appendix A. p. 351.)

And again:

"But indeed, that religion is suspect which shrinks away from the very analysis of its terms, which despises self-examination, and hates [rigorous] philosophy" (Ibid., p. 344).

The point is rather that natural reason works behind faith, not before, in supporting it. Faith already has its own inspired source to justify it, so reason is not required as if to ratify it. Faith in this sense is belief grounded on grace; yet whatever belief is grounded in this way can also be grounded in reason (cf. New Essays, Bk. IV, Ch. xviii, p. 497). Its rational grounding may be shown in the form of its defensibility against attacks, proofs of its possibility, and occasionally demonstrations. But our failure to demonstrate its rational grounding in one of these ways shows nothing against it. Normally, repeated failure to prove something has the force of a probable argument against it. But this is so assuming the lack of greater evidence in its favor. Certainly, if God makes some things known directly to humans that the limits of their minds prohibit them from demonstrating on their own - as is alleged of the doctrine of the Trinity, for example - our inability to demonstrate those things is insignificant evidence against them in the face of their having been divinely revealed. And we can still call upon reason in their defense against attacks.

There is no doubt that Leibniz took the task of supporting the tenets of faith with the use of reason as being of dire importance. He spent his life doing this. But where he failed to achieve the rigour he aimed for as a

philosopher, he went on to the next point, clearly confident that what he had not quite managed to do was yet feasible, and comforted by the thought that his work, if lacking in rigour, still advanced the degree of probability in the tenets of faith from a rational standpoint.

In short, Leibniz's commitment to the existence of God, the perfect being, should not be considered as resulting from a dry, rational derivation, but rather as religious in nature. Yet it stands candidly at the very heart of his metaphysics, unfortified by the pretensions of philosophical high rigour. This seems a bit ironic for a philosopher of the age of enlightenment; and quite in contrast to Descartes, who, claiming adherence to a rigorously skeptical method, avowed to have derived God's existence by reason alone. Now of course, most take Descartes to have failed, and so much of his philosophy, depending strictly on God's existence, falls victim to the very skepticism he advocated. Leibniz does not have this vulnerability, since, although like Descartes, his philosophy depends largely on the proposition that God exists, his project was never to construct an independent edifice of natural reason. He constructed his edifice of natural reason (metaphysics) from fixed touchpoints with Revelation, as is witnessed by the following:

"Just as regarding matters of physics there is no one who does not prefer to trust the observation of the senses... over reasoning by demonstration, ... so too would it be wiser, when reason and revelation appeared to conflict, to mistrust reason, rather than make revelation by contorted interpretation accommodate reason" ("*Apologia Fidei*")

*Catholicae ex Recta Ratione"*, 1679-86?, in Grua, p. 31).

Convinced of the truth of Revelation, he remained quite confident that proceeding in the manner just described would reveal the true philosophy, which, though in itself possible to derive independently, was much easier to construct with the teleological guide of Revelation (cf. Discourse, §§ XIX, XXI, and XXII on helpfulness of teleological method). If he could sketch out its rough structure, others might be able to flesh it out later in rigour. In this way, revealed truths which are also knowable by natural reason, such as the existence of God, can be held from the start as linchpins of metaphysics even before being rigorously established by natural reason. The perfection of metaphysics would of course have to await the demonstration by natural reason by all that can be demonstrated; but the lack of perfection would not halt the sketching out of the true metaphysics.

The roots of Leibniz's best-possible-worlds theory (Proposition 5) lie in the defense of God's existence, more specifically in the balanced defense of God's "greatness" and "goodness":

"Theologians of excessive rigor have taken into account his greatness at the expense of his goodness, while those of greater laxity have done the opposite. True orthodoxy would consist in paying equal respect to both perfections" (A Vindication of God's Justice, § 2, 1710. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 114).

The greatness of God is His omnipotence combined with his omniscience; the goodness of God is his omnibenevolence "and

the perfections which derive from it, namely, his justice and holiness" (Ibid., § 1). The classic theodicean defense, which Leibniz roughly follows, is this: God's goodness entails that He wants to create the best thing possible; God's greatness entails that He knows which is the best and is able to create it. So God's goodness and greatness seen together entail that God creates the best creatable thing.

Now for Leibniz the best creatable thing is the "best possible world". To understand what this means it is important to grasp, as I see it, three accompanying assumptions and one stipulation. The stipulation is that a world is a saturated complex of created substances. Worlds are saturated in the sense that, respecting the law of non-contradiction, nothing could be added to them; each is a creation complete to the minutest detail, with no open variables (Ibid., p. 116, § 15).

The first assumption can be considered as part of the common property of traditional Scholastic metaphysics. It is that created substances can have comparatively more or less being or perfection (see: On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe, 1697. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 86). God can create a spectrum of substances ranging from very narrow limits of being, such as lifeless material objects, to very broad limits, such as immaterial intelligent creatures, angels. Moreover he can, of course, create diverse complexes of these; in fact, an "infinite number of combinations and series of possibles" (ibid.).

According to the stipulative definition of 'world' and the first assumption we can see that there are countless possible worlds, each one either comparatively better, worse or, until this is ruled out, equal to any particular one of the others.

The next two assumptions are particularly Leibnizean. The second is that possible worlds in the stipulated sense (call them: 'Leibnizean worlds') are the only candidates considered for creation. I can find no passage in which this is explicitly said, but nonetheless Leibniz makes it abundantly clear that he holds it. The defense of this assumption must be that somehow creating something other than a Leibnizean world contradicts God's perfection, namely either His goodness or greatness. We might go a step further and say the defense must be that to allow such a possibility contradicts God's greatness. For the question is not what He does create, but what He can create, i.e. what candidates He has to choose from; God's goodness is only at issue with respect to the choice He actually makes. The only weakness in this further step is that perhaps Leibniz neglected to explicitly mention non-Leibnizean-worlds as creation-candidates simply because he thought his worlds were categorically the cream of the crop and anything less than a Leibnizean world, such as - to take it to the extreme - a creation consisting simply of a pastrami sandwich, was, though technically a candidate, not worth mentioning for reasons obvious to him and his perceived audience. This

second assumption, then, is either to be seen as a preliminary circumscription of God's creative options, intended however to honor rather than to dishonor His greatness; or it is to be seen as a precursory elimination of candidates which were seen to be *prima facie* unqualified in a way that Leibnizean worlds weren't.

The third assumption is that there is a maximal degree of created goodness which is in principle actualizable. Thus there must be a best among possible worlds. This in combination with the preceding assumptions and stipulation entails that that world is the actual one:

"From this it is to be concluded that, out of the infinite number of combinations and series of possibles, one exists through which a maximum of essence of possibles is produced into existence" (On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe, 1697. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 86).

As he wrote to Des Bosses (1711):

"In my opinion, if there were no best possible series, God would have certainly created nothing, since he cannot act without a reason" (Wiener, p. 95).

The argument depends on dismissing the option of there being more than one best no less than there being no best; there must be only one best, for if there were a tie, God, being rational, would by definition have no ulterior criterion for choosing one or the other, so would not create; for "there must be a sufficient reason for the choice of God which determines Him to select one rather than another" (Monadology, § 53. Montgomery, pp. 262-3). But if He didn't create nothing would exist other than Him, whereas



it seems absurd to deny that other things exist. Thus we are supposedly compelled to rule out the possibility of more than one best possible world. Similar reasoning rules out there being no best.

An admission that Leibniz's best-possible-world theory of creation, represented in Proposition 5, is drawn by him from his not-quite-rigorously-but-quite-religiously based commitment to the existence of God, the perfect being, is not tantamount to an admission that it is properly so drawn. I question the legitimacy of his derivation, and my problems with it relate especially to the second but also to the third assumption. This matter is treated in Chapter 4.

The connection between God and the best possible world is seen to be even more intimate when Leibniz's metaphysical essentialism is taken into account: the view that essence is metaphysically prior to existence. (For an initial discussion of Leibniz's metaphysical essentialism, see Chapter 1, p. 46 ff. See also p. 321 ff.) The following excerpt from an early untitled work (undated. Gerhardt, v. 7, pp. 19-20) illustrates this intimate connection, in a way almost suggesting emanationism:

"[Since necessary being exists] there is therefore a cause why existence prevails over non-existence, to wit: necessary being is the *existentifier* (*Existentificans*). But the cause which makes it be the case that something exists, that is that possibility claims existence, makes it be the case as well that every possible has an exertion toward existence, since a reason restricting the field to certain possibles cannot be found. In this sense it can be said that every possible is-for-existing (*existurire*), namely in that it is founded in the Being existing by necessary act, without which

there is no way in which possibles might make it into act.

"However from this it does not follow that all possibles exist; this would rightly follow if all possibles were compossible. But since some are incompatible with others, it follows that some possibles don't make it into existence. Some in fact are incompatible with others, not only with respect to the same time, but also with respect to the entire universe, since future things are involved in present things. Meanwhile from the conflict among all possibles competing for existence it at once follows that that series of things exists by which the most exists, i.e. the greatest of all possible series." (Textual numbering scheme omitted in translation.)

The picture painted here is that creation happens in the following manner. Possibilities, which already are just by the existence of a being capable of actualizing them, also have by the same fact a demand or exertion to exist in proportion to how much reality is in them to be actualized. From here the determination of what actually exists is almost geometrical. Since not all possibilities can coexist - some are mutually exclusive - the greater possibilities outcompete the lesser ones so as to bring into act the maximum amount of being. Thus the necessary being's very act of existing brings about the existence of the best possible world.

This almost sounds like emanationism - a theory Christian doctrine opposes - according to which finite existence flows necessarily from God's nature. Leibniz no doubt didn't want to appear an emanationist, and his commitment to Christian doctrine suggests that he was not one. Yet it is tough to decide whether this excerpt expresses emanationism. To be sure, in other places he makes it clear that creation proceeds from God's will, not His

nature. But he also stresses that God's will is perfectly determined by His nature: His perfection entails that He wills the best (possible world).

It is not hard to imagine why Leibniz ran into difficulties with this position. If His will is determined by His nature, then indirectly so is everything the will determines. This may not yet be emanationism, but it seems to come close. The defense of Leibniz is that the best possible world is not strictly a necessity because alternative worlds are possible. Unfortunately this response has the appearance of begging the question. What is at issue is exactly whether in light of God's perfection other "possible" worlds are really possible. The strict test of possibility is non-contradiction; but doesn't assuming the existence of another possible world other than the best lead to a contradiction, namely that the perfect being is imperfect? Consider the following definition of "existing thing" that Leibniz offered: "that which is compossible with the most perfect being" ("*Definitiones*", 1683-94?, in Grua, p. 325). According to this, only actual things are compatible with the existence of God, the necessarily existent. It is difficult to see in what meaningful sense that can be considered possible which is incompatible with the existence of the necessary being.

It might be argued that a substance's possibility has only to do with the coherence of its notion. Thus something would be possible if it is not self-contradictory; but in determining if a notion is self-contradictory, necessary

truths not exclusive to that notion may be legitimately used: all the theorems and principles of logic, to say the least. This puts us in a bind: if we make use of the proposition that God exists, nothing but actual things turn out not leading to contradiction, since anything non-actual is by definition according to Leibniz incompatible with God's existence, not to mention with that of the best possible world. On the other hand, if we categorically refrain from making use of the theistic proposition in doing our possibility tests, we have to say why this necessary truth is out of play while the others aren't. Arguably that God exists is not a logical truth; does Leibniz insist we must confine ourselves to logical truths among necessary truths when we are determining whether something is possible? I think not. Leibniz certainly gave loose rein to some metaphysical principles, such as the principle of sufficient reason. It is difficult to see any other justification for suspending the reference to God's existence in any proof or test, if in fact it is a metaphysically necessary proposition.

Another question Leibniz's essentialism causes to arise is how, by the competition of individual possibles, the best possible world infallibly results. If the competition is indeed individual, the whole intent is to gain entry into the actual world. To be sure, we have to think of this as perfectly simultaneous, not a one-by-one sorting procedure. Yet it is conceivable that a world would result which contains the best individuals crammed to capacity, and still

not be the best world. Maybe the best world has a variety between great and small, incidentally including some lesser beings to the exclusion of some greater ones. Leibniz's response to this is that each substance God considers is complete in concept, so as to include reference, albeit vague, to the whole world it would exist in. The upshot of this is that possible substances have built-in world designation; each substance is compatible with exactly one world, so if you choose one substance, you must choose the entire world that goes with it. As a result, the ultimate competitors for actuality are not individual substances, but worlds. And in a competition of worlds there can be only one winner: the best.

#### **Derivation of Proposition 6: That Teleological Explanation Is an Indispensible Key for Revealing the Sufficient Reason of Things**

I propose that in Leibniz's thought, Proposition 6 draws its support ultimately from Proposition 1: that God, the perfect being, exists. The general idea is that because God exists, we can understand every existing thing as existing because it conforms to God's perfect creative purpose, which is the best possible world, and every possible but non-existing thing as not existing because it fails to conform to God's purpose. Moreover, God's existence not only makes sense of the principle of sufficient reason, that nothing is without sufficient reason for its being exactly as it is; but also provides the key to the sufficient reason of things: the criterion of conformity to the best possible world.

There is some controversy in the claim just made that ought to be pinpointed. Certainly it is not controversial to subordinate teleology to a belief in God's existence. It is difficult to find anywhere an atheistic or even agnostic natural philosophy that is teleological. That everything has a purpose which serves in explaining its reality strongly suggests that there is a being responsible for ordering things according to purpose. What is controversial is to subordinate the principle of sufficient reason to the proposition that God exists, or to claim that Leibniz did so. Normally proofs of God's existence proceed from an initial concession, implicit or explicit, to the principle of sufficient reason and go on to the conclusion that God exists. Leibniz himself once wrote that "the existence of God cannot be demonstrated without this principle" ("*Conversatio cum domino Episcopo Stenonio de libertate*", Nov. 27, 1677. *Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v. IV, No. 3, Bl. 12, p. 73). How can this not rule out the subordination of the principle of sufficient reason to the existence of God? It seems that we would be left with a vicious circle: God's existence is supported by the principle of sufficient reason, which in turn is subordinate to God's existence.

It is difficult at times to definitively decide on claims of circularity, since a proposition may be basic in one sense and not in another. For example, Descartes accepted the proposition 'I exist' as basic, in the sense that I cannot fail to believe it on its own merits. Yet in

another sense it is not basic: it is not necessary that I exist. Other people might reasonably doubt my existence.

Circularity is inconsistency in the priority order of a set of beliefs. Some beliefs may be basic, held on their own merits, while others may be deduced from more basic ones. It is invalid to justify belief A by belief B, then justify the latter by the former; this would entail the contradiction that A is more basic than B and B is more basic than A. But sometimes a system of thought may only apparently have circularity. The reason is that, as I've just illustrated, an order of priority for beliefs may hold for one perspective and not another, whereas it is not untypical to jump from one perspective to another. Of particular concern are two perspectives philosophers jump between. Aristotle expressed it as follows:

"Now 'prior' and 'better known' are ambiguous terms, for there is a difference between what is prior and better known in the order of being and what is prior and better known to man." (Posterior Analytics, Bk. 1: Ch. 2, 71b-72a. McKeon, p. 112.)

Thomas Aquinas later developed this into the distinction between the "quoad nos" (to-us) and "quoad se" (in-itself) perspectives. What is most prior *quoad nos* are principles self-evident to us; what is most prior *quoad se* are principles self-evident in themselves. If God, the necessary being, exists, then certainly that He exists must be a principle *quoad se*, for the very conception of Him entails His existence; this does not mean that it is a principle *quoad nos*, since it may be far from self-evident to us, not

having immediate access to a sufficiently clear and distinct conception of Him, that He exists.

In short, I am claiming that Leibniz subordinated not only teleology but also the principle of sufficient reason to the existence of God; yet Leibniz also seemed to agree that use of the principle of sufficient reason is indispensable in proving God's existence. This looks like the makings of a case for circularity against Leibniz. To defend Leibniz, it would have to be shown that the support sufficient reason gives to God's existence is according to a different perspective than that according to which, as I am claiming, Leibniz draws support for the principle of sufficient reason from God's existence, just as in a sense the proposition 'I am.' is basic, and in a sense not. This matter will be returned to shortly.

Teleology Derived from Theism - The less controversial matter is to show that the proposition that teleology is indispensable has its roots in a theistic commitment. It is hard to imagine teleology without such roots. Accordingly, most of Leibniz's direct discussion of teleology, the science of things according to purpose, is theistic. Observe how the Discourse starts out:

- "1. Concerning the divine perfection and that God does everything in the most desirable way.
- "2. Against those who hold that there is in the works of God no goodness, or that the principle of beauty are arbitrary.
- "3. Against those who think that God might have made things better than he has." (from a letter to Count Ernst, Feb. 1, 1686. Montgomery, p. 68.)



The implication is that the actual world is the best possible creation because of God's perfection. By inference, anything in the actual world should be studied according to the key of its being in conformity with the best possible world, and anything possible but not actual should be studied according to the key of its not being in conformity with the best possible world.

It may be wondered to what extent this kind of study leads to knowledge, even if the perfect being does exist. Leibniz was not a skeptic on this point:

"As regards the ends which God proposed to himself, I am convinced that we can know them and that it is of the greatest usefulness to investigate them. In general whenever we realize that a certain thing renders some eminent services we can safely affirm that this, among others, was the end intended by God when he created that thing."  
("Critical Remarks Concerning Descartes' Principles", on § 28. Schrecker and Schrecker, pp. 30-31)

Back to the Discourse at XIX., Leibniz continues to argue the centrality of teleology or reasoning by final cause, still referring to God:

"I bring no accusation against our new philosophers who pretend to banish final causes from physics, but I am nevertheless obliged to avow that the consequences of such a banishment appear to me dangerous, especially when joined to that position which I refuted at the beginning of this treatise. That position seemed to go the length of discarding final causes entirely as though God proposed no end and no good in his activity, or as if good were not the object of his will. I hold on the contrary that it is therein [in final causes] where the principle of all existences and of the laws of nature must be sought, because God always proposes the best and most perfect." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 825. Montgomery, pp. 33-4 followed in part.)

Not only does this passage make clear that Leibniz thought both that teleology is essential to gaining a true understanding of things and that it accepts God's existence as a given, i.e. as more basic; it also suggests something stronger: that the most fundamental understanding of things is to be gained by teleology or the study of final causes. This points in the direction of saying that the sufficient reason for things, especially for existents, is revealed by teleology.

**Sufficient Reason a Derived Principle?** This passage from the Monadology expresses the connection Leibniz sees between teleology, sufficient reason, and God's existence:

"53. Now as there are an infinity of possible universes in the Ideas of God, and but one of them can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for the choice of God which determines him to select one rather than another.

"54. And this reason is only to be found in the fitness or in the degree of perfection which these worlds possess, each possible thing having the right to claim existence in proportion to the perfection which it involves.

"55. This is the cause for the existence of the greatest good; namely that the wisdom of God permits him to know it, his goodness causes him to choose it, and his power enables him to produce it." (Montgomery, pp. 262-3. Emphasis mine.)

In short, Leibniz is saying that the sufficient reason for existence is fitness; now fitness is a teleological notion: the fittest world is the best, the one which conforms to God's purpose. This suggests that the sufficient reason of things cannot be expressed or discovered outside of a teleological framework. This establishes a sense in which

sufficient reason is subordinate to teleology, and through the latter to God's existence.

Yet it is far from clear how significant this subordination is, whether we can infer from it that Leibniz's commitment to God's existence is more basic than his commitment to the principle of sufficient reason. Subordination of the latter to the former can be in either of the following senses:

- i. *quoad nos*: God's existence is more clear to us than the principle of sufficient reason; our natural disposition to believe in God is stronger than that to believe in sufficient reason.
- ii. *quoad se*: God's existence is more basic in itself; the principle of sufficient reason cannot stand theoretically justified without admitting God's existence.

It surely doesn't seem that i is true, nor that Leibniz intended it; otherwise it would surely be inappropriate to support God's existence with the principle. I think ii stands a better chance of being the sense Leibniz intended, while probably the converse of i is true, namely that the principle of sufficient reason is more clear to us.

To complicate matters is the following admission by Leibniz:

"One of my great principles is that nothing happens without reason. This is a principle of philosophy. Still, in the end, it is nothing else than the avowal of divine wisdom, although I don't mention it at the outset." (*Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v. I, No. 4, Bl. 39, p. 58. Undated and untitled.)

I take this to express something close to what is expressed in ii, above; that to accept the principle of sufficient

reason as known or justified is tantamount to admitting to God's existence.

Having just considered another claim by Leibniz to the effect that God's existence cannot be demonstrated without the principle of sufficient reason, one is hard-pressed to refrain from accusing Leibniz of circularity. At one moment he suggests that the principle of sufficient reason is more basic, at another moment he hints that the proposition that God exists is at least as basic, if not more so. Our best chance to acquit Leibniz of this charge is to somehow show that the Aristotelian-Thomistic perspectival distinction applies.

This is how I think Leibniz's reasoning works. He begins with his version of the ontological argument, which he takes to establish not that God exists but that belief in God is justified (on this see also New Essays, v. IV, Ch. x, p. 438), and upon it supports the principle of sufficient reason. Then he uses sufficient reason to demonstrate God's existence along a *posteriori* lines. This would clear him of circularity, since the initial argument justifying belief in God does not employ the principle of sufficient reason. Subsequently the principle of sufficient reason is justified by the legitimately presumed existence of God, which the initial argument permits to us; and finally, the independently justified principle of sufficient reason is employed to demonstrate God's existence from other evidence

more clear to us. This is not circular, given the change in perspective from *quoad se* to *quoad nos*.

This thinking can be characterized more vividly as follows:

1. The idea of God contains existence. Therefore if God is possible, He exists.
  2. The only way for something not to be possible is if its idea is inconsistent, such as the idea of a round square.
  3. We are theoretically entitled to believe in the possibility of anything, until it is shown or it is clear that it is not possible, i.e. that its idea is inconsistent.
  4. It hasn't been shown nor is it clear that the idea of God is inconsistent.
  - C5. We are theoretically entitled to believe that God is possible (2, 3, 4).
  - C6. We are theoretically entitled to believe that God exists (1, 5).
  7. God exists (Justified assumption, C6).
  8. We are naturally very disposed to believe the principle of sufficient reason.
  9. If God exists, the principle of sufficient reason has decisive theoretical support.
  10. We are theoretically entitled to accept as certainly true anything we are naturally very disposed to believe which has decisive theoretical support.
  - C11. We are theoretically entitled to accept as certainly true the principle of sufficient reason (7, 8, 9, 10).
  12. The principle of sufficient reason is true (Justified assumption, C11).
  13. God's existence is demonstrable *a posteriori* if and only if the principle of sufficient reason is true.
- 
- C14. God's existence is demonstrable *a posteriori* (12, 13).

But why should we grant a presumption of truth to God's existence, in virtue of the ontological proof given above in 1-7? As Jalabert explains (p. 81), to show an idea consistent, and therefore a substance possible, is, strictly speaking, impossible. The only thing we can prove directly is inconsistency or contradiction. Consistent ideas are never

deductively proven consistent, but rather over time inductively, by the persistent failure to of an inconsistency proof to come to mind. A criticism of this might be that the only ideas we are entitled to inductively presume consistent are those which are clearly and distinctly grasped, whereas the idea of God is not so grasped. Leibniz's response to this was that consistency is itself the mark identifying clear and distinct grasping of an idea, so the latter cannot be used as a condition for identifying the former. (Ibid., pp. 79-80.)

Lest it be thought that the principle of sufficient reason is being treated too lightly and deserves to be considered as an absolutely basic principle, it should be noted that, like the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, it has a trivially basic logical application which tends to get confused with the more theory-laden metaphysical application we have been discussing. The following passage may serve to illustrate the principle's trivial application:

"For the existence [of a thing] all of its necessary conditions (requisita) must be present in being. A necessary condition is that without which a thing cannot exist; the aggregate of all its necessary conditions is the full cause of the thing. Nothing exists without reason. For nothing exists without the aggregate of all its necessary conditions." ("*De Existentia*". Grua, p. 267)

I consider this to be suggestive of a trivial version of the principle of sufficient reason because no mention is yet made of what the necessary conditions are. We would all have to admit that things have necessary conditions all of which must be satisfied for the thing to exist. Controversy only arises

when we try to identify the necessary conditions for existence.

Leibniz remained skeptical regarding actual attempts at a definitive version of the *a priori* (ontological) proof (see Leibniz-Eckhard correspondence, especially Eckhard to Leibniz, 4-9-1677 and Leibniz's reply. Gerhardt, v. 1, Nos. III and IV, pp. 215-224). Nevertheless, his claim that it is impossible to prove that God exists without recourse to the principle of sufficient reason ought, I believe, be interpreted as relative to the more common *a posteriori* kinds of demonstration (motion, efficient cause, design, etc.) His preference for the *a priori* proof, if a definitive version could be found, compared to his relative deemphasis on the *a posteriori* proofs (Jalabert, p.69), indicates that the former occupies the crucial position in his philosophy that the characterization on page 217 illustrates.

**Derivation of Proposition 7: That the Substance of a Body Is Not Its Extension, but Its Active Principle**

I propose that Leibniz's commitment to this proposition, so central to his philosophy, comes out of a prior commitment to Propositions 2 and 3, discussed in Chapter 1: the doctrine of Real Presence, and the conviction that the Lutheran and Catholic (and perhaps even Calvinist) accounts of the Eucharist are compatible in their most important tenets.

This theological derivation has been suggested elsewhere. In his work, Le Dialogue Irénique Bossuet-Leibniz, François Gaquère declares:

"The study of Catholic dogma, of Transubstantiation and of the Lutheran dogma of Real Presence conducted [Leibniz] to a conception of substance consisting... in force, in opposition to that of Descartes which consisted in extension." (p. 28.)

The general idea is that if we follow the then popular conception of substance advocated by Descartes, that the substance of body consists in extension, the doctrines of Real Presence, Transubstantiation, etc. appear absurd, since they entail the following propositions undigestible by Cartesian metaphysics:

1. A body can be really present in a place where its own proper extension is lacking (from Real Presence);
2. The extension of a body can be present where the body itself is substantially lacking (from Transubstantiation);
3. A body can have substantial presence through an extension that is not proper to it (from Real Presence, Tran- and Consubstantiation).

As this line of thinking goes, if any of these metaphysical underpinnings of Eucharistic doctrine are true, the Cartesian view of substances is false. Leibniz accepted the antecedent, so he accepted the consequent and searched for another conception of substance which was compatible with the Eucharist.

In the meantime he was also motivated by a desire for Christian unity, and like other irenists of his time was convinced that the doctrinal disputes to some extent were semantic (see Eisenkopf, p. 139). This motivation led him to look for a conception of substance which would reconcile doctrinal disputes regarding the Eucharist, especially but



not exclusively those between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. What resulted was of course his conception of a substance as unified not by extension but by a principle of force or activity, which is itself immaterial. This would square well with Eucharistic doctrine and in fact go far in dissolving doctrinal disputes between Christian sects. Another result, as suggested in several of the citations in this section and throughout Leibniz's writings on the Eucharist, is Leibniz's anti-Cartesianism.

I believe to have already established in Chapter 1 that Leibniz had the theological commitments referred to in this section, and in Chapter 2 that Leibniz held that the substance of any body is its principle of activity. The point here is to show that and how the latter is generated from the former, as from accepted truths.

**Textual Evidence** - It is really not difficult to prove that this is how things happened, since he recounted the same several times. The main confession of his being up to such a project is contained in his early letter to Arnauld (1671):

- i. "It remains that I speak of the Eucharist. It has been four years... since I have been reflecting on the following problem: how to explain the possibility of the mysteries of the Eucharist.... And this, happily, I seem to myself to have finally accomplished.... When it was first grasped by me both that the essence of body does not consist in extension, as Descartes thought -a great man otherwise, without a doubt - but in motion, and that therefore the substance of body, that is, its nature -and this agrees even with Aristotle's definition -is its principle of motion... and yet also that the principle of motion, the substance, of a body lacks extension; at that time it appeared most clearly why substance differed from its appearances, and the method was discovered by which

God can be clearly and distinctly conceived to bring it about that the substance of the same body be in many scattered places, or, what is the same, under many appearances (species). In fact, this also will be shown -something which has not occurred to anybody -Transubstantiation and Real Multipresence do not differ in the final analysis. Nor can a body otherwise be able to be in many scattered places but that its substance be conceived as given under various appearances. The substance of the body by itself is not in fact subject to extension and not, consequently, subject to the conditions of space.... Nor therefore does Transubstantiation, as expressed in cautious phraseology by the Council of Trent, and as elucidated by me in accordance with Doctor Thomas, contradict the Augsburg Confession. On the contrary, the former follows from the latter." (Appendix A, pp. 349-50.)

Earlier during the same year he wrote, in "*Demonstratio Possibilitatis Mysteriorum Eucharistiae*":

ii. "having worked for a time at demonstrating the possibility of Real Presence, in accomplishing the same task I came, beyond my expectations, upon Transubstantiation; indeed I found that Transubstantiation and Real Presence contain one another in intimate, ultimate analysis" (SSB, VI 1, p. 516).

Another significant mention of his Eucharist-project comes in "On True Method in Philosophy and Theology", (c. 1686):

iii. "[A]pppearance differs from substance: there is nothing repugnant about *polytopia* nor even *metousiasmon*. For, as might seem astonishing, consubstantiation of bodies resolves into transubstantiation, and whoever claims the body is given under the bread unknowingly asserts the bread's substance to be destroyed with its appearance remaining. The latter is confessed by those who have come to understand the true and inevitable notion of substance." (Gerhardt, v. 7, no. XIV, p. 327. See also Wiener, pp. 58-65.)

Definitions - In these three citations are thrown around a small array of theological technical terms: Real Presence, Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, Real

Multipresence; as well as two metaphysical terms of unknown origin: *polytopia* and *metousiasmon*; and mention of the Council of Trent and the Augsburg Confession. I refer the reader to the preliminary discussion of these terms in Chapters 1 and 2, as indicated. Here I simply provide cursory definitions or descriptions sufficing to illustrate the connection Leibniz claims to be making between them by means of his conception of substance.

**Real Presence:** (P. 50 ff.) The doctrine that the body and blood of Christ are substantially present in the elements of the Eucharist. Both Catholics and Lutherans subscribe to this, but occasionally the term was used to indicate Lutheran Eucharistic doctrine as opposed to Catholic Transubstantiation.

**Transubstantiation:** (P. 50 ff.) The doctrine, subscribed to by the Council of Trent, that in consecration of the elements of the Eucharist:

- i. the substance of the bread and wine cease to exist while their appearance continues; and
- ii. the Real Presence takes effect through the elements.

**Consubstantiation:** (P. 50 ff.) The doctrine, subscribed to by Lutherans which differs with Transubstantiation only in insisting that consecration does not bring about the substantial annihilation of the bread and wine, but the union of the body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine.

**Real Multipresence:** (P. 94 ff.) Never defined by Leibniz and not often referred to; the context suggests RM denotes a Lutheran position opposed by Catholics. Lutherans accepted the notion that Christ's heavenly body is present "at one time in many places" in the Eucharist

(Formula of Concord, 1577, VII, Antithesis 11; later comprised in The Book of Concord, 1580) while Catholic authority is opposed to this, insisting that the Real Presence is not the Presence of Christ's body. (See The Catechism of the Council of Trent, "The Meaning of Transubstantiation" pp. 238-240.) This is my guess of what RM refers to.

**Elements of the Eucharist:** The objects of consecration, which undergo whatever transformation consecration imparts on them, starting from bread and wine.

**Consecration:** The ritual, more or less following some compilation of the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper and the words of St. Paul, which is believed to summon a miraculous intervention by God in which the elements, as proponents of Real Presence believe, are transformed into the body and blood of Christ.

***Polytopia:*** (P. 94 ff.) The state of one substance being physically present in more than one discontinuous location simultaneously.

***Metousiasmon:*** (P. 94 ff.) The change of something from one substance into another; the genus of which Transubstantiation is an instance.

**Council of Trent:** A Roman Catholic council, begun in 1545 and completed in 1564, to define Catholic orthodoxy on issues challenged by reformers, especially Protestant reformers. In the Council the doctrine of Transubstantiation was officially declared as well as an anathema against subscribers to Consubstantiation.  
(CT)

**Augsburg Confession:** The first conciliar document or "symbol" officially defining the Lutheran theological stance (1530), making up a part of what is now known as The Book of Concord (1580). In the Confession the doctrine of Real Presence is upheld, while it is unclear whether Tran- or Consubstantiation is supported.  
(AC)

Principle-of-Activity

Theory of Substance: (P. 98 ff.) The proposition that the  
(PA) substance of any body is its principle  
of activity.

The Main Reconciliatory Work of Proposition 7 - In each of i, ii, and iii, Leibniz makes claims about the work that PA does both in supporting the possibility of the Eucharistic mysteries and in dissolving the differences between accounts of the Eucharist thought to be in mutual conflict.

In i Leibniz makes three such claims:

- a. PA supports the possibility of RP.
- b. PA collapses the difference between T and RM.
- c. PA shows that the portion of AC regarding the Eucharist entails T.

In ii he makes the further claim:

- d. By PA, T and RP are mutually entailing.

Finally, in iii he asserts:

- e. By PA, C is a cryptic version of T; if PA is true any confessor to C is unwittingly confessing to T.

We can simplify these into the following four propositions:

- a'. PA is compatible with RP.
- (b & d)'. If PA, then RP, T, and RM are mutually entailing.
- c'. If PA, then AC entails T.
- e'. IF PA, then C entails T.

a' appears to be the first proposition of the four that Leibniz discovered. It is in a sense most basic; it supports belief as opposed to unbelief in the Eucharist, whereas the others (implicitly, i.e. in their consequents) take belief in the Eucharist for granted. Not that a' proves RP or even its possibility. Even if PA is conceded to be true, compatibility with it is not a criterion for truth, for many falsehoods are compatible with truths. It is not incompatible with the fact

that I ate grapes today that I did so yesterday, though I didn't. Moreover, something which is not possible may be compatible with some truth, at least in the restricted sense that the particular truth gives us no additional leverage for proving the thing's impossibility. Nonetheless, we can say a doctrine is supported when a plausible metaphysics is proposed which allows us to envision the doctrine's own plausibility. The currency of the Cartesian view of substance, as Leibniz often lamented, tended to convince people of the implausibility of the Eucharist, despite acrobatic attempts by Descartes and other Cartesians to reconcile with it (see Pellisson to Leibniz, Oct. 23, 1691: "I have many Cartesian friends who have not ceased being quite good Catholics; they explain themselves according to their manner, but it is true that the opinion of their founder is not fit for bringing an understanding of this marvel [the Eucharist] to those who lack it"; see also Leibniz's "On True Method in Philosophy and Theology", 1686: "Once when compelled to speak on the Eucharist, he [Descartes] substituted apparent species for real ones, reinvoking a doctrine repudiated by consensus among all theologians." Gerhardt, v. 7, No. XIV, p. 326). Leibniz's theory of substances supported the Eucharist by providing a way around the obstacle Cartesianism presented.

If the substance of a body is its immaterial principle of activity, that opens the door for discontinuous real extensions being substantially one: provided that they are

governed by the numerically same immaterial principle, a "soul or something like it", then they are the same substance. My hand is me no less than my nose is me; what Leibniz's notion allows for is to say that it is not impossible for something not contiguous with what is normally considered to be my body to be just as much me as the "main" me. This paves a straight path to envisioning Real Presence, where the consecrated elements are supposed to be just as much Christ as is Christ's heavenly body. We should be reminded that an immaterial principle is not literally contained in a place; local containment is only proper to something material. Rather it is present in a physical extension by virtue of its being its active principle, its vital organizing force. By this view it could not be said that only part of me is substantially in my finger; for as Leibniz at length argues, the immaterial principle is not divisible; only bodies are divisible; my soul is therefore completely present in each body part.

Part of the consequent of (b & d)', that RP entails T, looks as if it favors Roman Catholic at the expense of Lutheran theology, while another (implied) part of the consequent, that RP entails RM, looks as if it favors Lutheran at the expense of Catholic theology - albeit this connection is made through T, which Lutherans don't accept. Regarding the former, indeed the theologians of Trent argued the same, although in a different way than Leibniz (The Catechism of the Council of Trent, p. 236). Regarding the

latter, Lutherans felt commitment to RP compels us to assert that Christ's body is not bound within the limits of heaven, while Catholics insisted that Christ's heavenly body is not involved in RP.

In Leibniz's eyes, the effect of his notion of substance upon these doctrines is to make them all amount to essentially the same thing. That same thing is the multiply transubstantiated substance of Christ. RP has Christ becoming really present within what was bread and wine. By PA that means Christ becomes the principle of activity of the elements. Whatever principles of activity were initially in the elements causing them to be bread and wine are now subsumed under Christ's own principle, just as a brain cell's principle of activity is subsumed under the animal's principle. The brain cell is considered to be under the control of a higher principle of activity; we don't say that besides the animal, there is the brain cell. This being the case, we don't consider the bread and wine to be any longer substantially present, but subsumed. To be sure, the bread and wine were never substances metaphysically, but they were certain aggregates of substances. The principle of activity of the substances of these aggregates don't have to be annihilated for T to take place; T only requires that the bread and wine cease to exist substantially, and that can happen by subsumption. Another analogy is eating. Part of what I eat gets subsumed by my organism. Yet I am not made of applesauce and pomogranates. Stuff once in those things are



now in me, but having been consumed, those things cease to exist, since the stuff of them is now under another principle of activity. For Leibniz, this would be true even without annihilating the principles of the subsumed substances. Hence RP can only happen by T.

The next point is that to admit T (or RP) is an implicit admission of RM. In the Eucharist through T, Christ becomes bodily present in many places at the same time. Nothing prohibits us from concluding that Christ's body is present in many places at the same time. Now to be the body of  $x$  is simply to be an extension whose principle of activity is  $x$ . In this sense 'body' is almost a collective term: my hand is my body, my sperm is my body, my lungs are my body, etc. Moreover, contiguity has no essential significance by this definition, so no preference is given to a bigger chunk of body over a smaller one as being more truly the body, nor for one part over the other for any other reason. So just as it doesn't make sense to say that my hand is unrelated to my leg, since they are extensions sharing the same principle of activity, so too it doesn't make sense to say that Christ's heavenly body is unrelated to Real Presence. That Christ does not feel the sensation of being bit whenever the Eucharist is consumed does not entail non-relation, but simply a different function being carried out by the principle of activity in one part of the collective embodiment than in another. The Real Presence is only separated from Christ's heavenly body in that the two are discontiguous; but contiguity is no

condition for bodily relation according to PA. Hence, we say that in a sense Christ's body is reproduced without excluding his heavenly body for any special reason. But the sense in which we say his body is reproduced is a collective one: his principle of activity covers more extension through the Eucharist.

A footnote to the last paragraph is that 'Real Multipresence' is a misleading term. One would think Leibniz would have been opposed to any version of RM to the effect that Christ himself is reproduced; for his soul or principle of activity remains one and never gets multiplied. The question of entailment in the other direction is less of an issue. Certainly, T entails RP, since it presupposes RP in being a manner of explaining how RP happens. On the other hand, RM entails T, since the only way for Christ to become really present in many different instances of bread and wine is for his principle of activity to subsume them, substantially eliminating them.

The puzzle about c', namely that PA surprisingly allows AC to entail T, is that AC never seems to take a stand against T in the first place. Interestingly enough, AC speaks very briefly on the Eucharist, or *Lord's Supper*, making only the following pronouncement on it:

"It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received." (Article X, German edition. Tappert, p. 34.)

This is clearly an affirmation of RP, but indicates no preference between C and T. For here it is unclear whether by 'form' is meant something accidental or something substantial. In the former case we have a straightforward confession of RP, and may refer to the derivation discussed above, from RP to T assuming PA. In the latter case, Article X expresses RP and C; in this case we may still refer to the discussion of e' below for the derivation of T from C assuming PA and thus avoid conflict.

In fact, the first Lutheran statement in opposition to T occurs in the Smalcald Articles, written by Martin Luther himself in 1537:

"As for transubstantiation, we have no regard for the subtle sophistry of those who teach that bread and wine surrender or lose their natural substance and retain only the appearance and shape of bread without any longer being real bread, for that bread is and remains there agrees better with the Scriptures...." (Tappert, p. 311.)

Contrast this with Melancthon in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession six years earlier, who concurred with Vulgarius that "the bread is not merely a figure but is truly changed into flesh." (Tappert, p. 179. See note 5.) It is odd that Leibniz failed to draw attention to the fact that Lutheran opposition to T had not yet surfaced in AC, but indeed was present in other documents or "Symbols", such as the Smalcald Articles, as definitive of Lutheranism as was AC.

As for e', the derivation of T from C is to some extent a return to the discussion of (b & d)'. Assuming PA, C entails that both the principles of activity previously in

the elements and Christ's principle of activity are present in the Eucharist. Now C does not entail that part of the consecrated elements are Christ and part bread and wine, but that they are at once wholly Christ and wholly bread and wine. To be wholly Christ, they must be unified by the active principle of Christ, so that they are no longer mere bread- and wine-aggregates. Thus the aggregates of substances making up the bread and wine are subsumed under Christ's active principle. This is identical to Leibniz's account of T. Thus it is rather a case of misspeaking to say that the bread and wine are still wholly present, since they are subsumed under the order of Christ's active principle. True, nothing of them has been positively annihilated, but coming under a higher order of activity, they lose their substance.

**Proposition 7 and Virtual Presence** - As discussed in Chapter 1, (p. 59 ff.), Calvin attributed not Real Presence but Virtual Presence to the Eucharist: Christ is not immediately present in the consecrated elements, but acts upon them from a distance. Leibniz interpreted this talk as talk of a spiritual or metaphoric distance rather than a spatial distance. In the following extract from a letter to Pellisson (Jan. 8, 1692) he hints at a way of reconciling the doctrines of Virtual Presence and Real Presence:

"the subject itself is present, and its presence is real, in that it emanates immediately from its essence.... A virtual as opposed to real presence has to be without this immediate application of essence or primitive force, and only comes about by actions at a distance or by mediate operations. But here [in the case of principles of activity vs. their corresponding corporeal substances] there is

no distance. Those who follow Calvin admit a real distance, and the virtue of which they speak seems to me to be spiritual, only having relation to faith.... I will say further that it is not only in the Eucharist but everywhere that bodies are only present by this application of primitive force to location; but naturally this is only according to a certain extension or magnitude and figure and with regard to a certain location, from which other bodies are excluded." (SSB, I, 7, p. 249.)

Here Leibniz is being cautiously unforthright, but nonetheless it is possible to grasp his radical point. The category of distance is inappropriate to the relation between a principle of activity and the body it informs. For principles of activity are immaterial, and immaterial things lack location, whereas distance is a relation between locations. Therefore it is just as incorrect to say that Christ's principle of activity is in the same place as the consecrated elements as it is to say it acts upon it from a distance. Christ's principle of activity, just as mine, is properly speaking in no place. A substance only has real physical presence in virtue of a principle of activity acting upon it and organizing it into a whole. This understood, any dispute over the Eucharist as to where Christ's principle of activity resides, in the elements or elsewhere, is shown to be irrelevant. I take it Leibniz is suggesting that the dispute between proponents of Real Presence and those of Virtual Presence is of this nature, and that therefore one side cannot be condemned without condemning the other. If this is realized, the dispute should be rendered obsolete, and there should be no further reason for disagreement on the same score. This reconciliation hinges only on the acceptance

of PA, which might lead one to consider whether this was a added motivation for Leibniz to hold Proposition 7, or whether this only occurred to him after his metaphysical convictions had matured.

I remain a bit tentative about suggesting this as a conviction Leibniz wholeheartedly stood behind, or much less that the search for a reconciliation between RP and VP played a motivational role in the development of his metaphysics. For one thing, Leibniz himself did not press this point as strongly as he pressed the other points. Besides, it is quite possible that VP proponents would turn the tables and consider Leibniz's metaphysics as heterodox since it doesn't allow for a distinction between Real and Virtual Presence. At any rate, there is no doubt in my mind that Leibniz at least put out feelers in this direction, and possibly had something like this in mind from the start.

#### The Theological Significance of Leibniz's

Anti-Cartesianism - In reading Leibniz it is hard not to notice his opposition to Cartesian metaphysics, most pointedly on the issue of the substance of bodies. This is witnessed by several of the citations quoted thus far in this section. Leibniz's Eucharistic commitments provide the key to understanding this opposition. Again, I favor Leibniz's early letter to Arnauld as providing a clear indication of this:

"it is amazing how much the philosophy of Descartes confirms them [opponents of the Eucharist]; and it has been favorably received by their school, both because it is so elaborate and because it seems

irreconcilable with the Roman Church. For will one who believes that the essence of body consists in extension ever believe that a body can take on the extension of something else, while retaining its own substance? Whence all of Descartes' protests to the contrary are believed simulated and inconsistent with fact" (Appendix A, p. 344).

Is Leibniz insinuating that a true believer in the Eucharist cannot be a Cartesian? Perhaps not, but there is no doubt that Leibniz saw no plausible way of reconciling the two. This is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Leibniz proved himself over and over to be quite adept at envisioning plausible ways of reconciling or accommodating ideas thought to be irreconcilable. An extreme example is that at one time he apparently accepted or at least tolerated both heliocentrism and geocentrism, apparently subscribing in the same letter to the Copernican hypothesis:

"Concerning motion, then, several propositions of great importance have been demonstrated by me.... First, that there is no cohesion, or consistency, to a resting thing.... [From this] follows a demonstration of the Copernican hypothesis." (Appendix A, p. 346.)

and to a geocentric physical hypothesis:

"Although I may seem to have proven elsewhere [earlier in the letter] the motion of the earth... still a light circles around our earth in a daily motion." [He goes on to explain the physical cause of this motion, indicating that he does not consider it to be an illusion, as heliocentrists look upon the movement of the sun]. (Ibid., p. 352.)

Second, Leibniz was not an anti-traditionalist, and Cartesianism was by his time tradition. Leibniz was wont to reconcile his views as much as possible with widely accepted views. for these two reasons I think it highly probable that

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AN EXERCISE IN RECONCILING FAITH AND REASON

A Dissertation Presented

by

BRIAN D. SKELLY

*Volume  
III*

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University  
of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 1991

Department of Philosophy



Leibniz could not imagine a plausible way in which Cartesianism could square with the Eucharist and his other theological commitments, and thus felt compelled to oppose it.

#### Derivation of Proposition 8: That the Active Principle or Nature of an Existing Substance Is Its Actualized Complete Concept

I propose that it was a commitment to the existence of God, the perfect being (Proposition 1) which led Leibniz to so vehemently hold Proposition 8.

The Argument Suggested by the Monadology - From the start it should be conceded that the evidence for this point is a bit subtle. Leibniz argued for it in several different ways varying in degree of rigour and often in a manner less than obviously revealing dependence on his theology. One of his most famous arguments for Proposition 8, that contained in the beginning of the Monadology, illustrates both this apparent independence from theology and lack of rigour:

- "2. Now there have to exist simple substances, for composites exist; a composite is nothing other than a mass or aggregate of simple elements....
- "6. Thus one may say that Monads cannot begin or cease to exist except [for any monad] all at once. That is to say they can only begin by creation and cease by annihilation; whereas that which is composite begins or ceases to exist by [combination or dissolution of] its parts.
- "7. There is also thus no way of explaining how a Monad can be altered or changed in its interior by another creature.... The Monads have no windows through which something might enter or leave.... As such neither substance nor accident can enter into a Monad from without....
- "10. I take it for granted that all created being is subject to change, and by consequence the Monad as well....

"17. .... Furthermore, there is nothing besides these that can be found in a simple substance, that is to say, perceptions and their changes. It is in these alone in which can consist all the internal action of simple substances....

"70. ... [E]ach living body has a dominant Entelechy which is the soul of the animal. But the members of this living body are full of other living things, plants, animals; of which each in turn has its own Entelechy or dominant soul."  
(Erdmann, v. II, pp. 705-10.)

Here there is no hint at a theological underpinning.

(First mention of God in the Monadology, in fact, doesn't come until § 38, in the conclusion of an argument from sufficient reason.) On the other hand, there are enough unguarded premises in the argument expressed in this selective excerpt, as well as throughout the Monadology, to cause suspicion as to whether he was really expressing in rigor a deduction from basic commitments to derivative ones, as one might suppose. I don't believe he was doing so, and an examination of the argument expressed in the Monadology may allow me to explain why.

I think the argument goes something like this:

1. If there are composites, there are simple substances i.e. Monads (definition 'composite').
2. There are composites (observation).
- C3. There are simple substances (1, 2).
4. All transeunt change is by composition or division.
5. Simple substances are not composed, nor can they be divided (definition 'simple substance').
- C6. Simple substances are not subject to transeunt change (4, 5).
7. Change in a thing is either transeunt or immanent i.e. proceeding from the nature of the thing (exhaustive disjunction).
8. All created substances are subject to change (metaphysical principle).
- C9. All simple, created substance is subject only to immanent change, i.e. change proceeding from its nature (C6, 7, 8).

10. Everything about a created substance is contained in its sequence of changes conjoined with its initial state.
  11. The initial state of a substance proceeds from its nature (metaphysical principle).
  - C12. Everything about a simple, created substance proceeds from its nature (C9, 10, 11).
  13. That nature from which proceeds everything about its corresponding substance is a complete concept (definition 'complete concept').
  14. Every substance that exists is the actualization of a nature (metaphysical principle).
  - C15. Every existing simple substance is the actualization of a complete concept (C12, 13, 14).
  16. In the final analysis every substance is simple.
- 
- C. Every existing substance is the actualization of a complete concept (C15, 16).

The argument contains 11 independent premises. Of these, four - 1, 5, 7, and 13 - are based on less-than-controversial definitions, 2 is a concedable "observation", and 8, 11, 14, and 16 can be considered as strong principles from a traditional standpoint. That leaves 4 and 10 to set the Leibnizean tone against a traditional background. It is not that they are outlandish; both have a certain plausibility. The problem is that not being self-evident, they require defense; whereas in the above citation they are not even expressed, but tacit. Reasoning in which the crucial premises are tacit is not characteristic of a definitive treatise by as disciplined a philosopher as Leibniz. To be sure, things which at one time tacitly enjoy consensus approval might in another age be judged as requiring express scrutiny. Still, the laxness of reasoning here indicates that the Monadology is not a primary exposition of Leibniz's commitments.

Transeunt Change by Composition or Division - Transeunt change in a thing is change brought about by the causation of another thing. Leibniz's view, discussed in Chapter 2 was that among finite things there are no transeunt causes; only God can effect changes on other things. Here the issue is what kind of change transeunt causation between finite things would bring about if it occurred. Leibniz argues from simplicity to non-interaction as if the connection were obvious, hinting that premise 4 is tacitly operative. If substances cannot interact because they are simple, then interaction must depend on being composite. The kind of interaction peculiar to composites to the exclusion of simples is that resulting in dissolution or recombination of parts in various ways. When I walk down the street, my shoes strike against the pavement, causing a gradual dissolution of the soles, and perhaps an even more gradual dissolution of the pavement. Moreover, the force of my steps adds a motion to the air which in turn adds motion to my eardrums, whereupon I perceive a sound. Except for my perception of the sound, none of this can exist if in the final analysis nothing exists but simple substances.

One problem with this premise is that it is not difficult to imagine partless creatures truly interacting. Some claim to have direct spiritual contact with spirits, or with their twin around the world. Leibniz would in the end write this off as predetermined harmonization by God, but until he proves this, it would beg the question to discount

the competing hypothesis. This alone gives reason to doubt that Leibniz intended the Monadology as a rigorous exercise, rather than less charitably and less believably conclude that Leibniz's sense of rigour was lax.

Substance as a Sequence of States - Premise 10 seems sensible enough: all there is to know about something is how it starts out and the sequence of changes it undergoes. It is reminiscent of a mechanistic outlook, and as such it may seem to have the same possible flaw: the absence of teleology. Someone who accepts final causes as essential to the understanding of things - Leibniz does - wants to know not only about initial states and sequences of change from one state to another, but also the purpose of the thing's existence; the purpose guiding the changes; how the thing fits into the scheme of things. The complete concept of a thing should entail these things as well as states and sequences. But there is no hint of teleology in the cited excerpt. The failure to introduce a teleological perspective into the early stages of the treatise is a signal to me that the Monadology is, or at least starts out as, a less-than-rigorous formalist exercise, an attempt to hint in a sketchy manner at the formal deducibility in principle of his metaphysics, which is primarily teleological. This is in contrast to saying that the treatise deduces less basic commitments from more basic ones.

**The Monadology: An Apology to Formalists** - In short, I consider the Monadology at best as an attempt by Leibniz to

present his philosophy to opponents of teleology, i. e. to formalists, starting from common beliefs more basic to them. As such it cannot be used as evidence for how Leibniz developed his philosophy or how he came to be so convinced of Proposition 8.

Overview of the Theology of Proposition 8 - Before presenting the texts that evidence the theological origins of Proposition 8, the following should be noted: from a theological perspective, there really are only two possible reasons that would support the truth of Proposition 8. The first reason is that God can only create substances according to complete concepts. The second is that substances created according to complete concepts are always better, or perhaps better put, that the best possible world is a world all of whose substances are created according to complete concepts. In other words, if we assume God, the perfect being, exists, then for Proposition 8 to be true, one of the following must also be true:

i. The existence (actuality) of open substances (substances created according to incomplete concepts) is metaphysically impossible.

or

ii. The best possible world entails that all created substances are closed (created according to complete concepts).

Note that in this context i entails ii but not vice-versa. If i is true then no actual world can have but closed substances; now since we are assuming God, the perfect being, exists, it follows that the best possible world is the

actual world; hence it can only have closed substances. On the other hand, there are reasons for ii that don't involve i. ii can be true because, although God is able to create open substances, they are inferior categorically to closed substances.

So if Leibniz held Proposition 8 for theological reasons, it had to be either because open substances are inferior, or because they are uncreatable (even prescinding from God's goodness). To argue for Proposition 8 by the former is obviously an attempt to defend God's goodness. To argue for Proposition 8 by the latter is, perhaps less obviously, an attempt to defend God's greatness, by dissociating it from inconsistency. For if God's greatness entails that He might create what is uncreatable, then the notion of God involves contradiction and thus God, not being possible, does not exist. Texts which display either way of reasoning therefore can be counted as revealing the theological motivation for Proposition 8: God, the perfect being (i.e. both perfectly good and perfectly great), exists.

**Theological Support for Proposition 8: The Inferiority of "Open" Substances** - From time to time Leibniz wrote things that suggest his commitment to Proposition 8 is on account of a conviction that open substances are inferior to closed ones. In an early untitled and undated work (Gerhardt, v. 7, No. VIII) for example, he writes (p. 290):

"9. ...[F]rom the conflict of all possibles demanding existence this at once follows, that that series of things exists by which the most

exists, that is the maximum among all possible series....

"14. It follows also that that series has prevailed, by which the most distinct cogitability comes into existence.

"15. For distinct cogitability gives order to the thing and displays beauty to the thinker. Order, in fact, is nothing but the distinct relating of many things. And confusion is where many things are present, but there is no way of distinguishing one thing from another....

"17. It follows, too, that the world is a cosmos, an ornate plenum, so made as to maximally satisfy the intelligence."

The thought here seems to be that the actual world must be completely determined because anything less would lack "distinct cogitability", would entail confusion, would fail to be maximally beautiful to the intelligence; in short, would be less good, or inferior.

Compare the above with a comment made in a letter to Des Bosses late in Leibniz's life (August 19, 1715; Loemker, v. 2, XVI, p. 999) which comes in response to an analogy Des Bosses offered suggesting that a world in which substances interact might be a better one than a world in which they don't:

"In reply to your analogy, I admit that the architect who rightly fits stones together acts with greater art than one who has found the stones already so prepared by someone else that they fall into order when merely brought together. But on the other hand, I believe you will admit that the craftsmanship of the architect who can so prepare stones in advance will be infinitely greater still."

Des Bosses by the analogy referred to was favorably comparing a world in which we are the original architects of our actions to a world in which God has beforehand determined our actions. Leibniz concedes this point from the point of



view of the created agent, but adds that a world fully predetermined from its outset is better overall, since it is of the greatest conceivable craftsmanship. This gives a pretty solid indication that Leibniz never dropped the inferiority argument even in his latter years.

**A Stronger Line of Support: The Uncreatability of Open Substances** - Although Leibniz from time to time employed the inferiority argument as a defense of Proposition 8, it should be noted that he more often utilized the stronger uncreatability argument. Indeed, use of the latter makes the former almost superfluous, since the latter trivially entails the former. The fact that he never quite dropped the inferiority argument might be an indication that he was not completely confident in the correctness of his reasoning with respect to the stronger argument. Lack of confidence on this matter is also suggested by the tentative language he uses and the repeated failure to plainly state his position.

Consider for example the following, from the same letter to Des Bosses:

"I do not believe a system is possible in which the monads act upon each other mutually, for there seems to be no possible way to explain such action. I add that influence is superfluous, for why should one monad give another what it already possesses? It is the very nature of substance that the present is great with the future and that everything can be understood out of one..."

Not only is there uncharacteristic tentativeness: "there seems to be no possible way, etc." - but there is question-begging as well. Clearly, a system in which substances or monads really interact is one in which they do not already

possess what other monads are to give them, and is one in which a substance is not "great" with its future in the sense of virtually or predeterministically containing it. That is exactly what is at issue! Des Bosses is challenging Leibniz to give his reasons for believing real substantial interaction to be impossible, and Leibniz, at least explicitly, fails to do so. Still, Leibniz's words do hint at the uncreatability argument. Confessing that there is no possible way to explain substantial interaction is tantamount to confessing that open substances are impossible. He hints at the same both in pressing the claim that monads already possess what they apparently receive from others, and in insisting that it is the very nature of substance to entail at any moment anything that will ever happen to it. It is difficult to see any other apparently compelling reason against open substances but that God cannot create other than in accordance with his complete knowledge. If we insist on steering clear of theology in interpreting Leibniz, as many scholars have done, how can we come to any understanding of Leibniz's motives for Proposition 8? The trivial fact that every substance has a corresponding complete concept does not empower us to come to any conclusion about the nature of substances. It is ridiculous therefore to posit a logical genesis for the Proposition.

Having said that I should admit that Leibniz at times appeared to offer a logical defense. One case of this appears in the Discourse, under § VIII. This text presents a defense

of Proposition 8 that seems to be based on the logic of propositions:

"Now it is clear that every true predication has some foundation in things; when a proposition is not identical, that is when the predicate is not expressly contained within the subject, it must be that it is virtually contained therein, which the philosophers call *in-esse*, meaning that the predicate is in the subject. Thus the term of the subject must always enclose that of the predicate, in a manner that whoever completely understood the notion of the subject would also judge that the predicate pertained to it. That being the case, we can say that the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to comprehend and allow to be deduced from it all the predicates of the subject to which this notion is attributed." (Erdmann, v. II, p. 819. Emphasis mine.)

The reasoning can be paraphrased as follows. If a subject in any manner contains all the predicates that are truly attributed to it, it seems as though the true notion of that subject must entail all the predicates as well, in such a manner that it entails all and only true predications of the subject. But there is a catch, however, and it is that a subtle reference to God is made by the phrase: "whoever completely understood the notion of the subject". In view of this fact, I think we are warranted in suspecting a theological basis. Perhaps Leibniz is suggesting that since God is omniscient, his conception of every possible substance is complete, and that being the case, it only seems proper to conclude that whatever He chooses for existence, He chooses and creates according to His perfect conception of it. This would rule out open substances. If a nature is that in accordance with which, as if a blueprint, God creates a

substance, then by the present reasoning it seems that all of these "blueprints" He has to consider are, in virtue of His omniscience, filled out in every detail, with no open variables. Since it is impossible for Him to render Himself ignorant, it would seem that He could do no less than create closed substances.

The context from which the above excerpt is taken bears further witness to the theological source of this argument. The main statement of § VIII reads as follows:

"VIII. In order to distinguish between the activities of God and the activities of created things we must explain the conception of an individual substance." (Montgomery, p. 12.)

The argument in the earlier citation would have no force in defending Proposition 8 unless there really existed someone who "completely understood the notion of the subject", i.e. of any candidate for individual existence. For Leibniz, God would be the only one capable of such understanding.

The difficulty in definitively establishing Leibniz's motives in ruling out open substances is that he often takes so much for granted. For example, he typically defines 'substance' as 'complete being' (see "*De Mente*", in Grua, p. 266), thus making it seem trivial that substances are closed. In fairness, this was the same definition used by Spinoza, and probably enjoyed popularity among determinists. After all, if determinism is true, all substances are closed. Yet I think it unsatisfactory to say Leibniz opposed open substances because he was a determinist; this could be said of some determinists, but in his case I would think it the

other way around. My reasoning is that a determinist is either agnostic/atheistic or theistic; the former presumably have a bottom-line commitment to universal causation, that the universe is governed by a set of infrangible physical laws; while the latter may base their determinism on God's greatness. While the former don't have to address the question of why God doesn't create open substances, the latter do, and Leibniz belonged to the latter. So of Leibniz and other theistic determinists it would have to be said that they are determinists because they are opposed to open substances, more particularly to God's creating them; either because He can't or because He won't.

Perhaps the closest Leibniz ever came to actually stating the uncreatability argument is in *Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v. VI, No. 12, Bl. 14; p. 88):

"From the foresight of God it follows that things are determined in their causes. For to know something is to know the truth of a proposition; to know the truth of a proposition, however, is to know why it will be so. If therefore God perfectly foresees things, he foresees not only that they will be, but also why they will be..."

The thought expressed here in other terms is that prescience can't be had of an open substance, i.e. of a substance whose total history is not determined from the start. For true prescience includes full knowledge of the reason why everything that happens happens. But knowledge why, in this context, is assumed to be causal knowledge, and full causal knowledge entails full explanation of latter states of things from earlier states. The perfect, omniscient being has to

have such knowledge of everything, therefore things have to really be that way. Things really being that way, when He creates the first state of things, he virtually creates every subsequent detail, since all is determined from the first state.

There is no doubt something odd about this way of thinking that concludes to determinism from the premise of foreknowledge. But as there are different ways of knowing, quite plausibly there are different ways of foreknowing; maybe determinism is a necessary condition for some kind of foreknowledge. Still it is far from clear that is a necessary condition for all kinds of foreknowledge, much less for God's way of foreknowing. The question of whether the foreknowledge-to-determinism inference is valid will be discussed in Chapter 4 (p. 305 ff.).

In short, I believe Leibniz felt he could not support the existence of open substances and was committed to Proposition 8 because he could not imagine how God could create them without compromising His goodness, but especially His greatness. Open substances have comparatively less created detail than closed substances and thus, as creations, have less goodness or being. But more importantly, the creation of open substances looks like it contradicts God's omniscience, in that it curtails His having perfect foreknowledge of them. In a similar vein Leibniz was motivated to hold that no two substances can be identical in their nature or "blueprint", because that would curtail God's

being able to distinguish them *in abstracto* (*Confessio*, pp. 124-6). If substances are open, with variables yet to be filled in, that opens the door to all kinds of indistinguishable pairs. For instance, if it was not part of George Bush's creation blueprint that he go to Yale, as the actual George Bush did, then there may be a possible George Bush who goes to Harvard. Yet this pair of George Bushes would be identical as open-substance creations, since it is not written into the blueprint by which they were/would have been created where either goes to college. Leibniz would consider them in principle indistinguishable as creations, and thus perfect foreknowledge of either could not be had. This in turn would mean God is not omniscient, since there are some things He does not always know. So Leibniz, by holding individual substances to be "infima species" (*Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v. VIII, No. 24, Bl. 86; p. 120), in the sense that no further detail about them is left to be filled in, no doubt thought himself to be defending his commitment to the proposition that God, the perfect being exists. For if individual substances are indeed *infima species* in his sense, then there is no problem envisioning how God can always have perfect knowledge of each of them.

**Derivation of Proposition 9: That There Are No Material Atoms**

**Overview and Some Textual Evidence** - I propose that Leibniz's commitment to this proposition is grounded in several theological commitments. First, since Proposition 9, as discussed in Chapter 2, is arguably deducible from either

Proposition 7 or 8 and we may justifiably give Leibniz credit for recognizing this, it enjoys the theological backing that each of these enjoy. Beyond that, Leibniz's opposition to material atomism is motivated by a defense of God's perfection (Proposition 1), the Real Presence (Proposition 2), and perhaps even of the Reconcilability of apparently opposing doctrines of the Eucharist (Proposition 3), most notably Real Presence with Calvin's Virtual Presence. We have already discussed the theological backing of Propositions 7 and 8, so we need not bring it back into discussion here, except as it relates to new points made.

It should be conceded that Leibniz's own argumentation against material atomism is largely lacking in significant express reference to theological commitments. True, an occasional hint of theological reasons is dropped, such as the following from a December 8, 1686 letter to Arnauld (Erdmann, v. II, p. 836):

"I recall that Mr. Cordemoy in his treatise on the discernment of the soul and body felt obliged, in order to save substantial unity in the body, to admit atoms or indivisible extended bodies... but you have judged well, sir, that I would not be of this sentiment.... The man who only consists in a mass characterized by an infinite hardness - **which conforms no more to divine wisdom than does the void** - would not be able to contain in himself all past and future states, much less those of the universe." (Emphasis mine.)

But these are few and cryptic, mostly embedded in discussions of other things and difficult to extract in argument form. Still, it is not difficult to notice a distinctly theological background to the reasons he does express, especially in



light of how his opposition to atomism fits in to other aspects of his philosophy which do have express theological backing.

I can provide one instance of an express theological argument against material atomism, from a letter to Des Bosses (November 7, 1710. Gerhardt, v. 2, No. LXXIII, p. 409):

"Among many contentions of mine [against material atomism] is the following, which I demonstrate: matter is not composed of atoms, but is infinitely subdivided in act, such that in any particle of matter is a world of creatures infinite in number. For if the world were an aggregate of atoms, it could be accurately comprehended by a finite mind sufficiently noble."

Here Leibniz gives the view, discussed more below, that material atomism is false on the grounds that God can do and has done much better: He has created a world which is not perfectly knowable by any finite mind. But it is not clear why the assumption of material atomism would necessitate finite comprehensibility; why not have an infinite number of atoms? Still, a Leibnizean best world could be thought of as superior in that every chunk of it is infinite, comprehensible only to God.

Leibniz's opposition to material atomism was a complex battle fought on many fronts, but a careful analysis reveals three principle grievances against it (paraphrased from Chapter 2):

- i. There can be no material atoms, since there is no unity in extension.

- ii. There can be no material atoms, for if there were the universe would be in principle unintelligible, either because of too little or too much distinctness.
- iii. There can be no material atoms, for if there were, the actual world would not be a *plenum*, being which is requisite to being the best possible world.

Now there are varying versions of material atomism, as Leibniz acknowledged; it is not the case that each of the above complaints applies to each version. Perhaps we can safely say that i does apply to all versions of material atomism, but ii would apply only to versions insisting on material atoms as simple extensions with no other traits, whereas iii applies only to theories entailing the existence of a void.

What I will argue in this section is that i has behind it a commitment to Propositions 2 and 3, while ii and iii ultimately gain their support from a commitment to Proposition 1: ii relying on God's omniscience and iii on God's perfection as a whole.

Much of the material in this section relies on work already done both in earlier sections of this Chapter and in earlier Chapters. For that reason, many of the notes refer to earlier points in this work, in which places the bulk of the textual evidence from Leibniz is cited.

**No Unity in Extension: In Defense of Real Presence and Its Reconcilability with Virtual Presence** - By his own confession, Leibniz had embraced the theory of material atomism early in his life as a philosopher, but then, "after many reflections", dropped it ("New System of Nature, etc.",

in *Journal des Savans*, June 27, 1695; in Wiener, p. 107). The reason he gave for disavowing atomism was, as is paraphrased in i, that "it is impossible to find the principles of a true unity in matter alone", whereas "multitude can only get its reality from true unities" (ibid.). There are two plausible interpretations of this, which may have been intended simultaneously. The first is that matter is infinitely divisible in principle, and though there may be practically indivisible bodies, mere practical indivisibility does not constitute a criterion for unity. The second plausible interpretation is that there are many substantial unities in the world - such as humans, dogs, plants - whose unity is obviously not accounted for by material atomism.

I concede that one does not have to resort to theology to find in Leibniz good motivation to be opposed to material atomism. But I believe to have already presented good evidence in this Chapter that Leibniz's search for an alternative to Cartesian dualism was motivated by a desire to defend the Eucharist and reconcile the varying doctrines. Now what Leibniz was opposed to in Descartes was precisely his contention that material extension was a criterion not only for unity but for substantial unity of bodies, which in short, amounts to a materialist conception of body. This bone of contention between Leibniz and Cartesianism stands also between him and material atomism, for it too is a

materialist conception of body. Unless there can be unity in extension, material atomism cannot be true.

There is abundant textual support, a good amount of which I have cited, for concluding that throughout his life, but especially from the outset of his philosophical life, incompatibility with the Eucharist was what bothered Leibniz so much about materialist conceptions of body in general. If that is the case, then it was a commitment to the Eucharist, particularly to the Real Presence, that ultimately moved Leibniz against atomism as well as Cartesian dualism. I think there are good reasons backing this specific claim, despite a shortage of express textual support.

Admittedly, in the absence of express textual support, my claim can go only as far as it is true that Leibniz regarded atomism as a materialist conception of body incompatible with his formal conception, which was designed to accommodate the Eucharist. The best way to establish this is to show that the contrary contradicts Leibniz's philosophy. Supposing material atomism to be compatible with Leibniz's formal atomism, then to a substance, say, a human being, it would have to be possible to ascribe two principles of unity, one being the atoms (indivisible material entities) that compose her body, and the other being her soul or formal principle of unity. This would amount to a kind of dualism; hence when making a substantial account of a human being it could not be said that she is unqualifiedly or ultimately a single unity; ultimately she is an aggregate of atoms and a

soul, with primacy granted to neither. Thus this kind of dualism could not give us a unified view of bodies. But it is clear that a unified view of bodies was just what Leibniz wanted. So he had to oppose even a dualist version of material atomism.

Leibniz so confidently insisted on the unity of bodies because he recognized it to be a necessary condition to the Eucharist. He did so in spite of the fact that the prevailing philosophy of the time, Cartesianism, had already discarded the notion, as well as atomists such as Gassendi. Leibniz was frustrated that apparently sincere Catholics like Descartes and Gassendi could put forward philosophical doctrines which were to all appearances incompatible with the Eucharist. He was flabbergasted at the disposition of such people to arrive at and hold on to philosophical conclusions in blind independence of theological commitments. This motivated him to argue vehemently for the unity of all truths, and especially for the reconciliation of truths of faith with truths of reason. Descartes's disclaimer that he was a philosopher and not a theologian did not wash with Leibniz.

Both Propositions 2 and 3, excluding extreme feats of conceptual acrobatics, depend on a unified notion of body. Proposition 2, does so because in order for the Real Presence to be true, the body of Christ must be present although the particular atoms of his natural (heavenly) body have not been sent into the elements. Pure material atomism, where a body

is simply an aggregate of material atoms, could not make sense of this doctrine. Nor could a modified dualistic version, since the body would have also to include the material atoms that make up his natural body. It would not help to remand the miracle to each of the material atoms of the natural body, since they would be pure extensions incapable of being imperceptibly present in other extensions. All dualism would allow us would be the presence of Christ's soul and divinity, but not his body. Now according to Leibniz's formal atomism, the body and blood of Christ are present when his own monad is the active principle in the extension of the elements. For the active principle is what gives a body identity and unity, not extension.

Proposition 3 depends on a unified notion of body because if any substantiality is granted to extension on its own, then it could not be said that the bread and wine are substantiality absent after consecration, making at best Consubstantiation true - assuming a dualist version of material atomism - and Transubstantiation false in either case. Moreover Virtual Presence would remain irreconcilably distinct from Real Presence, since the former would mean that Christ's monad is acting on the elements without the presence of his material atoms, while the latter, though now practically absurd, would mean that both Christ's monad and his original material atoms were present.

In short, it is not difficult to see how commitment to any form of material atomism would necessarily have strained

Leibniz's commitment to Propositions 2 and 3, especially in light of the fact that Leibniz was an activist for the reconciliation of faith and reason. This would naturally motivate him to oppose material atomism as incompatible with true faith doctrine.

**Unintelligibility of Material Atomism: In Defense of God's Omniscience** - As shown in Chapter 2 and as recapped in ii above, the theory that there are material atoms as simple extensions would lead either to the conclusion that some atoms are identical in nature, or that each is incommensurably different. In the first case, Leibniz would argue in accordance with his principle of the identity of indiscernibles that God could not tell them apart viewed separately from their contexts, which of course infringes upon God's omnipotence and thus is to be rejected. In the second case, where all atoms differ, they must as simple extensions differ incommensurably. They cannot have anything in common extension-wise, for any similarity of extension entails more elemental extended parts, which would contradict their simplicity. Thus it would be impossible to group them as a genus though in fact they ought to be. This unintelligibility in principle would limit God's ability to have a unified science of His creation, thus challenging once again His omniscience. In either case, the simple-extensions version of material atomism looks incompatible with Leibniz's theology.

**Inferiority of Material Atomism: In Defense of God's Perfection, or of the Best Possible World** - iii is intended against atoms-in-a-void versions of material atomism. The argument is that void entails lack of being where more being could have been. Void is emptiness, whereas the best God can do is create a world as full as can be with being. A world with a void is not as full as can be with being. Therefore, assuming the actual world to be composed of atoms in a void, it cannot be the best possible world. But if the actual world is not the best possible, then either God failed to choose the best, didn't know the best, or couldn't produce the best. Thus God could not be the perfect being, lacking either omnibenevolence, omniscience, or omnipotence. I think this is what ultimately motivated Leibniz to reject any atoms-in-a-void theory.

It is hard to give a blanket summary of Leibniz's opposition to material atomism. But if forced to choose a prevailing reason, it would have to be the same that moved him against Descartes: extension is not a satisfactory criterion for substantiality. This motivation has been traced earlier in Chapter 3 to the defense of the Eucharist.

#### **Derivation of Proposition 10: That Substances Were All Created at Once**

I propose that Leibniz's commitment to this proposition, which was perhaps less than certain, was motivated by a more basic commitment to the Doctrine of Original Sin (Proposition 4). He revealed this motivation expressly rather late in his life, but rather openly. Still, there is some indication in



his earlier writings defending Proposition 10 that he had a secret reason for being convinced (see Chapter 2 - in short because he never revealed a sufficient motivation for having this view until he revealed the one about which we are now speaking), and I propose that this later-revealed reason is the same as the secret one.

Textual Evidence - Besides an occasional indication that his motivation for advocating all-at-once creation was to avoid undermining the proposition that the soul is immortal (see for example *Handschriften*, Ch. IV, v. VIII, No. 24, Bl. 93, pp. 122-3: "If you say that souls... are created daily by God, it is to be feared lest someone infer that it is therefore equally probable in return that [souls] are also daily annihilated by God in the dying of the animal. And if annihilation is so ordinary and frequent, then all that reasoning in favor of the immortality of the soul also perishes which is based on the premise that the soul cannot perish except by annihilation."), Leibniz chiefly argued for it because of its usefulness in accommodating the doctrine of Original Sin, to which there is no doubt that he was committed. He aired this view mainly in two treatises: the *Theodicy*, and another known by its Latin title, *Causa Dei Asserta*, originally published together with the *Theodicy*, both completed in 1710. He also brought up the matter in a letter to Des Bosses in 1709 (September 8), but the discussion there essentially refers to a writing of his which would turn out to be the *Causa Dei Asserta*.

It is interesting to note that the discussion in the Theodicy proceeds in an opposite direction from that in the Causa Dei; the former proceeds, despite an initial mention of the problem of original sin, along independent lines in favor of all-at-once creation and treats its accommodation of Original Sin almost as a lucky find, while the Causa Dei, I think more indicative of Leibniz's thinking process, shows the accommodation of Original Sin to be a primary motivator in his opting for all-at-once creation. My reasoning in favor of the Causa Dei is supported by Paul Schrecker:

"The Causa Dei (A Vindication of God's Justice), published as an appendix to the Théodicée in 1710, summarizes in a rigorous and concise style the development of ideas in the great work.... [T]he Théodicée is much more a highly popularized work than a methodical... exposition of Leibniz's philosophy. That is why Leibniz... added to it a systematic abridgement in Latin [the Causa Dei]." (Schrecker and Schrecker, p. xxvii.)

I cite the following tracts from the Theodicy and the Causa Dei (Vindication). First the Theodicy:

"86. The first difficulty is how the soul could be infected with original sin, which is the root of actual sins, without injustice on God's part in exposing the soul thereto....

"90. Now as I like maxims which hold good and admit of the fewest exceptions possible.... I consider that souls and simple substances altogether cannot begin except by creation, or end except by annihilation. Moreover, as the formation of organic animate bodies appears explicable in the order of nature only when one assumes a preformation already organic, I have thence inferred that what we call generation of an animal is only a transformation and augmentation. Thus, since the same body was already furnished with organs, it is to be supposed that it was already animate, and that it had the same soul: so I assume *vice versa*, from the conservation of the soul when once it is created, that the animal is also conserved, and that apparent death is only an

envelopment, there being no likelihood that in the order of nature souls exist entirely separated from all body, or that what does not begin naturally can cease through natural forces.

"91. Considering that so admirable an order and rules so general are established in regard to animals, it does not appear reasonable that man should be completely excluded from that order, and that everything in relation to his soul should come about in him by miracle.... It is thus my belief that those souls which one day will be human souls, like those of other species, have been in the seed, and in the progenitors as far back as Adam, and have consequently existed since the beginning of things, always in a kind of organic body.... This explanation appears to remove the obstacles that beset this matter in philosophy or theology. For the difficulty of the origin of forms disappears completely; and besides it is much more appropriate to divine justice to give the soul, already corrupted physically or on the animal side by the sin of Adam, a new perfection which is reason, than to put a reasoning soul, by creation or otherwise, in a body wherein it is to be corrupted morally." (Farrer, pp. 169, 172-3.)

Now the Causa Dei:

"81. We must now deal with the hereditary transmission of the contagion, engendered by the fall of our first parents and passing from them into the souls of their posterity. There does not seem to be any more suitable explanation for this than to state that the souls of his posterity were already infected in Adam. To understand this doctrine, we must refer to recent observations and theories which seem to support the opinion that the formation of animals and plants does not proceed from some amorphous mass, but from a body which is already somewhat preformed, enveloped in the seed, and animated long before. Hence, it follows that by virtue of the primeval divine benediction some organized rudiments of all living beings... and even their souls, in a certain way, were already existent in the first specimen of every genus to evolve in the course of time. But the souls and the principles of life which are in the seeds destined to be human bodies are supposed to run through a special process. They remain at the stage of sensitive nature, just as do the other seminal animalcules which have not that destination, until the time when an ultimate conception singles them out from the other animalcules. At the same time the organized body

receives the shape of the human body and his soul is elevated to the degree of rationality (I do not decide here whether through an ordinary or an extraordinary operation of God).

"82. .... One may... believe that the corruption of the soul induced by the fall of Adam, albeit this is not yet a human soul, attains the force of the original inclination to sin when later on it finally rises to the degree of rationality....

"83. Thus we may overcome the philosophical difficulties engendered by the origin of forms and souls....

"84. At the same time we overcome the theological difficulties concerning the corruption of souls." (Schrecker and Schrecker, pp. 131-3.)

Discussion of Textual Evidence - What is peculiar about Leibniz's reasoning here is that it doesn't cease to be probabilistic as opposed to demonstrative. He is advocating a metaphysical thesis - all-at-once creation, without rigorous metaphysical argumentation. He goes so far as to bring in the tentative biological observations of his time as supporting evidence. This is an indication that his motivation isn't philosophical.

The Causa Dei text practically allows us to conclude that Leibniz felt the only good way to explain the doctrine of Original Sin was by recourse to the literal preexistence of all human souls in Adam. The puzzle of how a privation suffered by Adam because of his disobedience could be passed on to others thus would be resolved by saying that the transmission was physical and immediate. Our souls were present in Adam, in a prerational form, our rationality at best present in unactivated blueprint form; yet we were not present in addition to Adam, for our souls were subjugated to the organizing principle of his soul. So anything suffered

by Adam in his entirety, including all that came under the subjugating influence of his soul, would be suffered by any subjugated soul within him capable of ever receiving it. We were capable of receiving it since we were to become rational and were and remain animals. So at that time we received it as a latent defect, which became active on our becoming rational.

It is to be admitted that all this is far from perspicuous, yet it is not without its genius. It is not ridiculous to say that a defect may be held latently by a creature even though the faculty to which it pertains is not yet operative. A defect pertaining to an as yet unactual faculty may be carried in another actual faculty as a change in it which though not harming its own operation *per se* would harm the operation of the as yet unactual faculty once it began to operate. More generally it may be held as the privation of some actually held trait the presence of which would be essential to the unflawed exercise of the as yet unactual faculty. In this case, though he does not give us a full elaboration, Leibniz does suggest that the privation we receive in our prerational state which upon our coming to rational becomes the defect of original sin is an inordinate inclination to sensible things (Schrecker and Schrecker, 133-4); it is not implausible to see this as receivable by us in our prerational state.

The fact that Leibniz also argued that "the true root of the fall... lies in in the aboriginal imperfection and

weakness of the creatures" (ibid., p. 131, No. 79), does not indicate a parallel line of reasoning alternate to Original-Sin thinking. Leibniz thought sin unavoidable from the creative standpoint; the best world has sin in it. But it is clear by the close juxtaposition of these two commitments that he believed God chose original sin transmitted to all humanity through Adam as the best way to cope with evil. That being the case, we are not absolved from trying to get at the mechanics of its transmission from Leibniz's standpoint.

Of course, Original Sin has the problem of appearing to be unjust. Why would God choose to create us in such a way that we all virtually become disgraced sinners by the disobedience of one (or two)? Leibniz feels all-at-once creation vindicates God from the appearance of injustice, for according to it He is not placing newly created rational souls into corruption, but rather is giving already corrupted souls, or allowing them to attain to, reason (he doesn't commit himself to whether our becoming rational is by an ordinary or extraordinary act of God, although this very distinction is not very significant in Leibniz), by which they will be enabled to choose to flee corruption in Christ. But why create humans so intercorruptable in the first place? Leibniz does not go as deep as this; he was of the disposition to concede that the answers to many questions of this type are simply beyond our ken, we not being omniscient.

Nowadays many have problems just getting a clear idea of what Original Sin is. This is in contrast to Leibniz and his

perceived audience, who felt comfortable enough with the doctrine to enter into discussions about it without feeling the need to give a full exposition of it. That is why the contemporary reader is likely to come away disappointed after reading Leibniz's discussions of it. The question of whether the disobedience of Adam was the immediate cause of the defect of original sin, or whether it merely provoked God to deprive Adam of something, is not discussed. Nor is it discussed exactly what is the trait deprived or suppressed. A full exposition of this, and other puzzling matters is contained in Chapter 1, Proposition 4.

### Final Note to Chapter 3

It bears repeating that the selection of the six propositions discussed in this Section and in Chapter 2 was not intended as representing the core premises of Leibniz's metaphysics, although most of them are central. The intention rather was to show significant examples of Revealed-theological motivation in Leibniz's metaphysics and especially among its key or oft-repeated themes, as specific support of the thesis argued in general in Section 1 of this Chapter that Leibniz's metaphysics was Revelation-motivated.

## CHAPTER 4

### EVALUATING LEIBNIZ'S "CHRISTIAN METAPHYSICS"

#### Synopsis

From the evidence presented in the preceding chapters, I think it is clear that Leibniz was out to establish a Christian metaphysics, as a chief component of a strategy to establish and defend the truth of Christianity; and that the metaphysics he did was the result of that intention. Although he openly admitted that he would never be able to complete this task, it is fairly certain that he felt he'd sketched out its structure in enough detail to enable others to carry forth the metaphysical project. (It is doubtful whether he ever thought to have accomplished the same with respect to other components of the larger strategy, such as that of developing a clear and distinct science of jurisprudence, or that of establishing a methodology for historical research capable of eliciting universal consensus on the facts of history.)

His attempt at a Christian metaphysics in retrospect was a balancing act of attempting to satisfy at once four objectives: to establish a metaphysics that is:

1. **Christian**, by **accommodating** the articles of Christian faith -most expressly those which have been challenged in the public forum - and essentially the whole "Gospel truth";
2. a **metaphysics**, by having formal dependence only on self-evident principles of natural reason;



3. reunion-oriented, having the power of resolving, between the different Christian denominations on the one hand and science and religion on the other, semantic disputes and disputes grounded essentially in confusion about metaphysical propositions; and
4. not ideology, i.e. not a system of thought intended to uncritically support a doctrine, in this case Christian doctrine.

This metaphysics would accommodate Christian doctrine by having the power to be used to prove things like God's existence, to display the possibility of things like the Eucharist, and at least to refute all contrary arguments, such as those against the Incarnation and the Trinity. Leibniz on this point not rarely lashed out at Descartes for philosophizing in a manner which "artfully evaded the mysteries of faith" ("On True Method in Philosophy and Theology", 1686. Wiener, p. 63).

As a metaphysics, it would have to be drawn deductively from tenets of natural reason. But it is not as if these tenets are what would have generated the metaphysics altogether, for in the more important teleological or motivational sense it is Revelation that is basic; indeed, ultimately the most basic of Leibniz's commitments. This way of thinking avoids circularity, since the "order of execution" (the formal deductions) of the metaphysics is one thing, and its "order of intentions" (the motivating commitments) are another. (Note the Scholastic dictum: "First in the order of intentions is last in the order of execution.") This theme is discussed at length in his Feb. 11, 1697 letter to Burnett. (See pp. 185-7.)

What gives a most distinctive twist to Leibniz's metaphysics was a deep motivating commitment to the proposition that the truth leads to reconciliation. So in particular, metaphysical truth will lead to the dissolution of many doctrinal disputes. As Leibniz saw it, division in the Church was a problem to which a solution existed, and a true, comprehensive metaphysics would naturally play a significant role in the solution, since so much of Christian theology presupposes it. Cleaning up metaphysics would lead to more perspicuous theology. Beyond that, reconciliation involves the accommodation of already existing views as much as truth will allow: in religion, philosophy, or science. But whatever view, however popular, that tended to divide rather than unite the fields of knowledge and faith had to have falsehood in it and should not be received without qualification. Leibniz's lifelong commitment to the conformity of faith and reason witness to this, as do his efforts to reconcile Christendom. On this note Paul Eisenkopf aptly observed (p. 47) that "Reform is for [Leibniz] a way to Church unity".

Finally, it would be no help to Christianity if a "metaphysics" were developed to accommodate it uncritically. The task, rather, must be to seek a true, critical metaphysics which could stand on its own and also accommodate Revelation. If there didn't exist such a metaphysics, this would mean Christianity were false. This conviction, together with the commitment to Christianity, yields a conviction that

there is such a metaphysics. Leibniz's contempt for ideology comes through in comments criticizing the Scholasticism of his time ("that frivolous philosophy, by no one understood, a big part of which is solely in defense of Transubstantiation, or prepared solely for defending it"; Appendix A, p. 344) and in emphasizing the importance for Christendom of a critical attitude. Writing to Arnauld for the first time in 1671, he put it as follows:

"let me say something of the worry I've had concerning religion. Now, I am very far from credulity.... I have believed in fact that any amount of rigour that was surrendered in an affair of such importance as religion amounted to evasion of truth." (Ibid, p. 351.)

If Leibniz was true to his words, he clearly must have striven against an uncritical attitude toward Revelation while not forfeiting belief in it, a line which only someone quite confident in the truth of his faith could resolve to toe.

#### Why Not Traditional Scholasticism?

In defending the claim that Leibniz was after the establishment of a sound Christian metaphysics, the question arises: in what respect did Leibniz think the traditional scholastic metaphysics not to fit the bill? Wasn't Thomas Aquinas after the same thing in adapting Aristotle to a Christian agenda? The four conditions discussed above could serve as a key to answering this question.

In the first place, it is arguably ill-fitted for expressly accommodating Revelation in an up-to-date fashion. For part of accommodating a doctrine is defending it against

well-known objections. Scholasticism was and is rather rigidly anchored in philosophical work done in Medieval times when controversies were less abundant. As such it lacks the flexibility to respond to the vigorous new attacks and disputes.

In the second place, Scholasticism had some significant problems and disagreements within it on basic metaphysical issues, which almost seem to require a breaking of new ground to resolve. Consider especially the disagreement between Thomists and Scotists on the individuation of corporeal substances. The former place it in matter, the latter in form.

In the third place, if reconciliation is truly possible then it arguably begs the question to insist that Scholasticism not be radically transcended in some ways, for it is almost exclusively associated with support of one side (the Roman church) of the dispute. It was one of the aggravating factors effecting the schism in the first place, which would definitely seem to disqualify it from serving the mediating function. Even if it were a fundamentally sound metaphysics, another system of thought would be required to display the truth of it in terms more understandable to its opponents. This other system would because of the work it would have to do be a metaphysics.

Finally, it is not at all obvious that Scholasticism provides sufficiently critical support for Christian doctrine. Since it was principally developed at a time when

doctrine was not being strongly doubted or scrutinized by scholars to nearly the extent that it later was during the Reformation, it might very well appear to be ideology through the eyes of an Enlightenment scholar. At any rate, Leibniz hinted that such was his suspicion regarding the Scholasticism of his time.

### Christian Metaphysics: Did Leibniz Succeed?

The question whether Leibniz was actually successful in sketching out a Christian metaphysics along the lines just described cannot be definitively answered philosophically. For one thing, his success depends on whether Christian doctrine is true; now it would defeat his own purpose to suggest he establishes such a thing philosophically, since to claim it is contrary to Christian teaching: the articles of faith or truths of Revelation are not demonstrable by natural reason. In fact Leibniz did have dreams of establishing the truth of Christianity; however this was not to be a demonstration of it, but more of a comprehensive account of its credibility, involving several disciplines such as history, jurisprudence, etc.

Another problem in answering this question is that Leibniz concentrated mostly on the accommodation of a select few doctrines that were in crisis during his time. In light of this fact it is hard to see how he would have tried to accommodate many other aspects of Christian doctrine, even some that were also subjects of contention: the status of

Mary among the saints and practices venerating her, doctrines regarding the other Sacraments of the "Roman church": Confession, Matrimony, Baptism, Holy Orders, etc. It is even unclear what doctrines he would have been out to defend. I think it is the case that he was unsure about many of these things himself, and this unsureness was part of his motivation in developing the comprehensive strategy we've been speaking about: to determine which are the real doctrines. His starting point would be a metaphysics guided by the inspiration of a few central propositions regarding Christianity that he was sure of.

Still, it might be asked whether the metaphysics Leibniz did do is supportive of Christianity in the way he intended it to be. On this score, seven observations may be noted, the first four tending to an affirmative answer and the latter three tending to a negative answer. **First**, his metaphysics allows us to envision the possibility of the Eucharist, which had been suffering a loss in credibility due to materialistic developments in modern, especially Cartesian, metaphysics. **Secondly**, it allows a reconciliatory envisionment of the Eucharist with respect to disputed interpretations of it within Christianity. **Thirdly**, it provides a more elegant way of explaining the remaining appearance of bread and wine after consecration than that provided by Scholasticism. **Fourthly**, it provides a way of reconciling the existence of evil with the existence of God, and in particular provides a way for explaining Original Sin. But **fifthly**, it makes

envisionment of some doctrines, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, even more difficult, despite Leibniz's own efforts to defend these doctrines. Moreover sixthly, it remains difficult to see the validity in Leibniz's metaphysics of concluding that the world is perfectly determined in all its details. And seventhly, it remains difficult to see how a deterministic metaphysics can be Christian, despite Leibniz's lifelong advocacy of that position.

#### Envisionment of the Eucharist

The advent and popularization of both Gassendi-type atomism and Cartesian dualism during the Enlightenment made it more difficult to see the possibility of the Eucharistic presence of the body of and blood of Christ. If extension is the criterion for bodily substances, how can the substance of Christ, the God-man, be present in the extension of something else? Presence of a body would seem to require presence of its own, proper extension. A Gassendist or Cartesian to avoid conflict with the Faith typically did at least one of two things: claim the mutual autonomy of philosophy and theology, or begin speaking of a distinction between apparent and real extension. In the first case these philosophers could be accused of committing the double-truth fallacy: that two incompatible propositions may simultaneously be true, provided that one of them treats of natural things and the other of supernatural. In the second case, these philosophers could be accused of adding

incredible complexity to metaphysics. For if before consecration the bread and wine have real extension, and afterward only apparent; whereas after consecration Christ is present by virtue of real, while lacking apparent, extension; then to what cause are we to attribute apparent extension? Is it just a miraculously sustained illusion, thus making God out to be a deceiver? If it is regarding sacred things permissible for God to deceive, then what about ordinary things? The admission of real extension above and beyond the perception of it is only economical for the Christian of the Enlightenment assuming that God would breach His moral perfection were He to deceive us into perceiving things as real independently of being perceived which have no reality other than in being perceived. If it turns out that He can regarding such an important thing as the Eucharist choose to deceive us or some of us *salva* his moral perfection, then it is difficult to see why He could not with moral justification use this same kind of "deception" in other instances, or indeed universally. Thus the whole idea of real extension becomes dubious in that it seems superfluous.

On the other hand, if we opt not to refer to God to explain this distinction between real and apparent extension, our hands are tied with respect to explaining it at all.

Interestingly enough, the difficulty of Cartesians and Gassendists who wish to maintain Eucharistic doctrine plays right into Leibniz's hand. The only reasonable way out of



their difficulty is to admit that it is (at least sometimes) permissible for God to "deceive" us in a sense by creating a world in which perceptions are harmonized without the help of any ultimately material anchor. Once this is admitted, a great obstacle to the reception of Leibnizean metaphysics has been lifted or at least displaced. For Leibniz believed that the reality of this world lies in perfectly harmonized perceptions with no ultimate material anchor. It would be very difficult for Christian Gassendists and Cartesians to admit some "deception" of this kind and yet avoid the slippery slope to the Leibnizean position.

Leibniz's non-materialism provides an elegant envisionment of the Eucharist by making the criterion of bodily substance to be an immaterial organizing principle of activity (monad). This has the force of deemphasizing appearance, contiguity, and propriety of extensions. If Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist depends only on the coopting of the elements by an immaterial principle - Christ's monad - then the remaining appearance of the elements is no puzzle. Nor is it any longer a puzzle how Christ's body can be fully present in many scattered places yet unmultiplied: the unity of body is provided by the monad, and a monad is either present or not in a body accordingly as it has active control. In this sense, just as my monad or "soul" is fully present in every portion of my body by being its principle of activity, without resulting in an infinite multiplication so too is Christ's monad fully present in any

consecrated element, and any part of any consecrated element, without resulting in an infinite multiplication. Finally, the question of which extension is proper to a bodily substance is moot, since a monad may and does appropriate and vacate extensions on a continuous basis in the course of its life. The only unusual thing about the Eucharist is that it is a discontinuous appropriation, whereas we are only accustomed to contiguous appropriations, such as the appropriation of nutrients into the body by digestion. But discontinuity is no longer a deep puzzle; for, as has just been explained, contiguity is not a criterion for being a unified bodily substance in Leibniz's metaphysics.

#### **Reconciliatory Vision of Eucharist**

The reception of Leibnizean metaphysics would give an elegant way not only of envisioning the possibility of the Eucharist, but would do so in a way that could dissolve some of the chief doctrinal disputes about the Eucharist among the Christian sects. In particular, the Calvinists, the Lutherans, and the Catholics could reconcile their views on the nature of Christ's presence within the consecrated elements. The Lutheran Consubstantiation would collapse into the Catholic Transubstantiation the moment it was received that the substantiality of a body is conferred solely by the dominant monad even without destroying the subordinated monads. So just as the monads governing our cells are not properly said to confer substantiality as long as they are subordinated to our dominant monad or "soul", so too the

monads present in and definitive of the substantiality of the bread and wine before consecration lose their status as substance-definers once they are made subordinate to Christ's monad. Although they are not destroyed during consecration, the substance of the bread and wine is destroyed at the moment Christ's monad appropriates the elements.

A further step toward reconciliation is made once Calvinists accept Leibniz's metaphysics. Then they will see that there is no distinction between what they call the "virtual" presence of Christ in the Eucharist and what Lutherans and Catholics (and Anglicans, etc.) call His "real" presence. In either case, it would amount to Christ's active principle appropriating the elements. Since Christ's active principle, like all active principles, is immaterial, the meaning given to the Virtualist proposition that He acts on the elements "from afar" can only be figurative. That which is immaterial has no location, properly speaking, so it cannot be distant in a literal sense. If Leibniz's metaphysics on this point is correct, then a bodily substance can be present in one sense: by its immaterial active principle dominating some extension. This being the case, there is no difference between Virtual and Real presence. In both cases the presence of Christ consists in His monad's domination of the elements.

#### **Superior Elegance in Accounting for Remanent Species**

The received account in the Roman Catholic church for how the species or appearance of the bread and wine remain

after consecration is that they remain as accidents without a subject. Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the Council of Trent, it is fairly well spelled out in its companion, The Catechism of the Council of Trent (p. 228):

"The Catholic Church firmly believes and professes that in this Sacrament the words of consecration accomplish three wondrous and admirable effects. [The first two are Real Presence and Transubstantiation.] The third, which may be deduced from the two preceding... is that the accidents which present themselves to the eyes or other senses exist in a wonderful and ineffable manner without a subject."

Putting aside whatever practical merits this teaching may have, e.g. the strengthening of faith in God's ability to defy physical law, etc., there is still some reason for holding this position. If one allows the accidents to inhere in a subject after consecration, the only available subject, assuming Transubstantiation, is Christ. But if the accidents of bread and wine inhere in Christ, that is to say that they become accidents of His body. Now there were those who opposed the Eucharist on the grounds that it would cause pain to Christ when the Eucharist was masticated and consumed. The natural response of one defending the Eucharist is to say that the accidental history of the consecrated elements is **not connected** to the accidental history of Christ's sensate body: Christ does not feel himself bitten and chewed during consumption of the Eucharist. This defense would in turn seemingly lead to the conclusion that the accidents or remaining sensible appearance of the consecrated elements do not inhere in Christ, and hence inhere in no subject at all.

If the last bit of reasoning is valid, then any believer in Real Presence and Transubstantiation would have to accept the non-inherence theory to avoid inconsistency.

There are other versions of the argument, but they are all directed toward the objective of denying that the consecrated elements are *sensate*. It appears to the proponents of non-inherence that the only rational way to assert insensateness is to assert non-inherence. The former is the more basic of the commitments, and the latter is derived from the former.

The result of all this is a theory of the Eucharist that is very difficult to accommodate in a plausible metaphysics. The accidents of the consecrated elements are miraculously sustained by God without inhering in anything. This seems to go against what it is to be an accident, and so it is unclear whether it could receive the necessary clearance as metaphysically possible. Even if it is, is it necessary for a subscriber to the Real Presence and Transubstantiation to come to this conclusion? If it is not, and if there is a more elegant explanation that just as well accommodates doctrine, shouldn't that be opted for as having the presumption of truth in its favor? For theistic thinkers usually grant that God operates on a principle of economy; if this is true it would seem, *ceteris paribus*, that the more elegant explanation is the one closer to the truth. Moreover, as a believer, shouldn't one feel motivated to avoid, if possible, to subscribe to obscure explanations,

diligently striving for the most perspicuous accommodations of doctrine?

I believe that it was this way of thinking that led Leibniz to come up with a less clumsy envisionment of the Eucharist. As he saw it, it was unnecessary and unbecoming to the credibility of the Eucharist to defend it via reference to mysteriously non-inhering accidents. For it is not necessary to admit that all that inheres in a body is sensate in the same way the body is sensate. That which begins to inhere in a substance enters into the organization of it; takes on a role determined by the active principle or "soul" of the substance. Possibly the role of something inhering in a substance is not one of the typical ones we are familiar with in our ordinary observation of things. Along these lines, it is difficult to see regarding the Eucharist why one could not say that the accidents of the elements now inhere in Christ, but in an extraordinary way that leaves them as insensate as they were before. Of course, Leibniz thought everything was sensate, or at least composed of sensate things. But this has no bearing here, where the issue is to account for how the consecrated elements can be Christ's bodily substance without having the sensateness of Christ's sensate body.

It seems pretty clear, then, that Leibniz's view of substances offers a more elegant account of the Eucharist than the non-inherence account.

## Theodicy and Original Sin

Two Puzzles - Two things have always been and remain quite difficult for Christian theologians to explain. The first is how a perfect God has allowed such despicable evil in the world He created. The second is how the sin of our first parents is justly imputed or transferred to us in the form of Original Sin. Leibniz's metaphysics offers plausible solutions to these two puzzles.

The usual theological response to the first puzzle is that God created human beings and angels with free will, in order that they be capable of loving creation, each other, and especially Him. A world containing free beings who love each other and God is the only world worthy of being created by God. The unfortunate drawback to such a world is that it contains the possibility of moral evil, of bad will. Free-willed finite creatures are capable of choosing not to love creation, each other, and God. When such occurs, then evil has come into the world. In the actual case, it was the greatest angel, Lucifer, who chose against loving. Being so great in being, he influences many weaker free-willed creatures, many of which yield to bad will themselves. In particular, Adam and Eve, the first humans, yielded to Lucifer. Their sin against God brought a distributive curse or privation, "original sin", on all of their human descendants, with the exception of Jesus, in virtue of His divinity; and, many Christians say, the Virgin Mary, in

virtue of an anticipatory grace required for her to be fit to mother the incarnate God.

Part of the divine remedy to moral evil or bad will is to permit physical evil into the world as a pruning mechanism of sorts. With the introduction of the physical evil of death, evil humans die eventually, curtailing their ability to spread an evil influence; suffering and death sometimes breaks stubborn hearts; those who see the physical evil theologically as a (perhaps remote) consequence of moral evil (bad will) are likely to strive more against moral evil. The pruning mechanism of physical evil is to hold moral evil at bay until the complete remedy for evil in the world - Christ, God incarnate - gains complete domination over the world after having lived, died, risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and had His presence firmly established, through the loving work of His disciples, among all free-willed creatures in creation. The remedy of Christ insures a glorious outcome for creation, a divine kingdom of love for all creation and the Creator, especially between free-willed creatures and God.

So in traditional Christian theology, the justification for God's allowing evil in the world is twofold: first, it is the result of free will, which is prerequisite of a world worthy of God's creation; second, God provides a remedy for all evil - Christ - such that the world is insured a glorious outcome.



This explanation remains unsatisfactory for many people aghast at the evils of this world. Isn't God able to prevent any particular evil without offending the free will of a creature? Catholics maintain that although a pope may be personally wicked, his official pronouncements on Church teaching are guaranteed not to be false. This guarantee would have to depend on divine intervention; even if the pope makes the pronouncement with evil intention, still, God insures the its veracity. Could God not in similar wise prevent all evil? Couldn't he give the would-be assassin a stroke, causing him to forget his dastardly mission? Couldn't He have prevented the WWII holocaust by causing Hitler's death before the atrocities were conceived? Couldn't he let me die just before I develop the adulterous intention that leads to my moral corruption? In any case of evil, it seems that God could preventively intervene without disrupting the integrity of free-willed creatures. After all, if I die at 70 years instead of 80, my earlier death is sure to prevent some would-be later instance of bad will. But this doesn't infringe on my moral freedom.

The point is that hanging evil on free will and making the latter out to be a necessary condition of a world worthy to be created does not get God off the hook. For within these constraints there is still plenty of room for preventive intervention on God's part. In light of this, one is still left to wonder why God chooses sometimes to allow atrocious evils to occur.

As to the second problem with the traditional "theodicy", the justice and possibility of the transmission of original sin from the first parents to us, the doctrine precedes explanations of its possibility, and the explanations provided traditionally were not such as to quell the debate. The closest to being the "official" traditional explanation was, not surprisingly, the Thomistic one.

According to Aquinas, original sin is transmitted to each of us because we were all "present in Adam... not in act, but... as in an original principle.... [Human] nature's origin [in Adam] passes along the defects mentioned [constituting original sin] because the nature has been stripped of that help of grace which had been bestowed upon it in the first parent to pass on to his descendants along with the nature" (Summa Against the Gentiles, IV, Ch. 52, replies to objections 7, 10). In other words, Adam and Eve's disobedience brought about a privation in the graces with which God had embellished human nature, graces which were to have accompanied human nature in each actualization. It is unclear whether or to what extent this privation is supposed to occur as a punitive divine intervention or is a direct consequence of the sin itself. At any rate although it is supposed to be a just privation, yet it remains unclear just why the rest of us are **guilty** i.e. deserve to be deprived of graces because of Adam and Eve; indeed the extra graces might have served as a shield against sin.

What moral defect did we inherit from our original parents in virtue of which it was proper for us to be deprived of graces, and how did we inherit it? St. Thomas doesn't distinctly address this aspect of the question. He only goes so far as to make it clear that we are now so liable to sin because of the graces original sin has deprived us of.

Leibniz's metaphysics should be credited with giving plausible responses to these two puzzles, the problem of evil and the problem of the justice and possibility of the transmission of original sin. In deliberating on whether Leibniz's was more or less a Christian metaphysics, this may be seen as weighing toward the "more" side; unless of course his views turned out to contradict Christian doctrine.

**Leibniz on the Problem of Evil** - The problem of evil is a much addressed issue in Leibniz, perhaps the most addressed among all the philosophical issues he treated. The Theodicy the Confessio Philosophi, the Vindication, and significant parts of the Discourse, especially the beginning, all were written to defend God's justice in the face of evil in the world. An inability to defend God on this point would have jeopardized his whole theocentric metaphysics, a metaphysics based on the premise that God, the perfect being, exists. It should be noted that a negative response to the problem of evil would be as far as concerns the Judeo-Christian conception of God an atheistic response. Those who gave a negative response were clearly then the most potentially

dangerous of Leibniz's opponents. Accordingly, more effort had to be exerted to surely defeat them, if Leibniz was to securely plant his philosophy in the mind of humanity.

Maybe it was because he saw atheism as a real threat of his time that Leibniz was motivated to work out a more careful and comprehensive defense of God's justice than indeed had been offered within the Church itself up to his time. The age of great academic feats in the Church had already eclipsed during a time when an atheist could be summarily dismissed as a fool, in accordance with the Psalmist:

"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God!'"  
(Psalm 14:1. The Jerusalem Bible, 1968)

At any rate, Leibniz saw that if God, the perfect being truly does exist, then we can reason from that fact to conclude that whatever evils that do exist could not have been prevented without worsening creation! This argument is far from original to Leibniz; he himself attributed it to Augustine (Theodicy, Summary, Objection 1, Answer to Prosylllogism. Farrer, p. 378). What distinguishes Leibniz's rendering of the position is something we will come to shortly.

Another element of Leibniz's theodicy is, again, borrowed, this time from St. Thomas. The latter had long ago written that:

"one could say that defects of this kind [those tending to sin], both bodily and spiritual, are not penalties, but natural defects necessarily consequent upon matter. For, necessarily, the human body, composed of contraries, must be

corruptible" (Summa Against the Gentiles, IV, Ch. 52, reply to second objection. Emphasis mine.).

To be sure, this comment is shortly thereafter balanced against the conviction that God's grace could supply the natural shortcomings. Still, Aquinas does present here the notion of metaphysical evil, that any finite thing considered as such is inherently liable to corruption. Leibniz's use of this notion again distinguishes his defense of God from a Thomistic one.

In short, Leibniz culled two premises from Christian academic tradition to form the basis of his theodicy:

- i. No actual evil is preventable *salva* the optimality of the actual world; or, perhaps more familiarly, any actual evil exists only in order that a greater good may be brought into the world than could have been otherwise.
- ii. The ultimate roots of moral evil lie in metaphysical evil, i.e. in the metaphysically unavoidable corruptibility of finite being.

What he did with them is what distinguishes his theodicy from traditional Christian thought. We will come to this momentarily.

Three preliminary observations are in order. First, it is important to note that i and ii are not necessarily Christian teaching. It is also important to note secondly that the negative and affirmative renderings of i are equivalent. This is so in spite of the fact that the negative rendering is likely to be less favorably received by Christians. If we are to defend God by saying He only permits evils so that he might bring about a greater good, we must

admit also that to prevent any actual evil would curtail a greater good. The latter would not be the case only if there were some superfluous evils in the world, evils that could be prevented without harm to the goodness to the world. If this were the case, then the former could not be true: the existence of superfluous evils contradicts the premise that God only permits evil so that He might obtain a greater good. A third point is that it is difficult to maintain within a stable system of thought that is not determinist. The presence of this *felix culpa* sort of reasoning in Christian scholarly tradition makes it difficult in fact to consistently deny determinism. Indeed, some, including Leibniz, took it as a sign that the underlying metaphysics suggested by Christian scholarly tradition is determinist.

In fact, Leibniz formed from i and ii a determinist theodicy. Because of ii, it is metaphysically impossible for God to create a worthwhile world that has no evil in it. But according to i, God makes use of every evil in the world to bring about a greater good. According to Leibniz's elaboration, this entails that not only every case of physical evil but also every morally evil act by any person is indispensable to the existence of the best possible world.

If his reasoning from these two not poorly received premises of Christian scholarly tradition is valid, then Leibniz has a good case for saying his theodicy is the one the Church had been in need of. It is rather elegant, certainly more so than the defenses of God's justice

previously available. It is stable, embracing determinism rather than wavering between an Augustinian necessary-fault line and the line that God does not determine moral evil. Whether Leibniz's reasoning is in fact valid is a major question which I will save for the end of this chapter.

Leibniz on the Justice and Possibility of the Transmission of Original Sin - Leibniz's accommodation of the justice and possibility of the transmission of original sin is another point which might favor the hypothesis that his was a Christian metaphysics. In comparison with the perennial obscurity of Christian theologians on this point, Leibniz's proposed solution is again more elegant and more complete. Again its difference with traditional explanations is subtle yet leads to quite a different picture.

Leibniz departs subtly from the Thomistic account of the transmission of original sin in his interpretation of how we are present in Adam.

Aquinas argues we are virtually present in Adam: the same originally grace-embellished nature of which Adam was the instantiation was to be passed to us; and the privation it received was also eventually passed to us. Adam's instantiation was a privileged one, in the sense that the nature-plus-grace human mold that was to be the standard for all humans, was yet alterable by his action, whereas it is not claimed that any other human can alter that mold. Even Christ did not return the mold to its pristine state; original sin is still present in the unbaptized soul, and

some of the defects incurred by original sin remain even in the baptized soul. The metaphysics required to back this explanation has always remained obscure. Moreover, as discussed above, the Thomistic explanation leaves as an insufficiently examined puzzle the question of desert of original-sin privation. Although these things do not make Original Sin incredible or absurd, they still cry out for a more elegant, easily comprehensible defense against those who ridicule it. That's where Leibniz comes in.

Leibniz argues we are actually present in Adam. Thus when God deprives Adam, we as present in him are also immediately subject to the same privation. Moreover, our actual presence makes us accessory to Adam's sin, thus we deserve the same privation.

This sounds at first even less likely than the Thomistic explanation. How can we be actually present in Adam? This is really not difficult to imagine in Leibniz's metaphysics: our monads are under the domination of Adam's monad; they lie within the organized aggregate of his body. As such we cannot be considered substantially present, since the only thing substantially present within a monad-organized body is the substance corresponding to the dominant organizing monad itself: in this case, Adam. Yet, we are actually present, participants in Adam's substantiality. In that sense we were "all in it together" from the start.

As might have been suspected, there is an interesting twist, one that complicates both the question of desert and



the question of the possibility of transmission. The twist is that we are all present in Adam in **pre-rational form!**

Leibniz preferred not to argue that we would come to be rational by a separate miracle; he preferred to argue that whatever internal monadic process that was eventually to turn us out to be rational had not yet worked itself out. The problems this causes to arise are **two**. First, it can hardly be denied that moral culpability is contingent upon being rational. In light of this, how can our having been pre-rational accessories to Adam's sin inculcate us? **Second**, sustainers of Original Sin can hardly argue otherwise than that original sin is a privation capable of being borne only by rational creatures. How then can our pre-rational presence in Adam explain the transmission of original sin?

**Pre-Rational Participation in Sin - The Leibnizean** response to the first problem is that although we were monadically pre-rational, yet we were participants in Adam's rationality and that makes us culpable if we should ever be able to bear culpability, which we are obviously now able to do. In virtue of our participation in Adam and our now independent substantiality, we can say that our selfhood historically overlaps with Adam's selfhood. We ourselves participated in Adam's rational life, and his sin was part of that. Therefore we are culpable for original sin if we are culpable at all.

Of course, if we are to be culpable at all we must be able to bear culpability and the privations it warrants. We

normally would say that non-rational or pre-rational beings are not capable of bearing culpability. A dominated monad in Adam, say, governing a cell in his liver, which is not to ever become human or another rational substance, can hardly be said in any meaningful way to participate in Adam's sin. Moreover, during Adam's sinning there is hardly seem to be any significant differences between that monad and another inner-liver-monad which was destined to become human. If it is absurd to attribute culpability to the one, why isn't it absurd to attribute culpability to the other? Alternately, when a woken infant screams out chillingly in the night, giving his mother a heart attack, we can hardly give any blame at all to the infant, since at its stage it is not blame-bearing. Of course, if an adult not completely out of his mind did the same thing, it would be another story.

Pre-Rational Reception of Original Sin - If we are to go along with Leibniz we shall have to explain how our pre-rational presence in Adam is different both from the pre-rationality of an infant and from the non-rational presence of other monads in Adam, such that we now can bear culpability for what took place then and the privations warranted by it, and the latter two can't.

The Leibnizean response to this, the second problem, is that culpability and privations pertinent to rational natures can in fact be seminally stored in a monad-soul which is not actively rational, to become activated when the soul gains rationality. Leibniz spoke more expressly about the latter:

privations pertinent to rational natures. A not-actively-rational soul can store a defect pertinent to rationality in the form of a defect to another faculty it does have. For instance, if my healthy bodily desires become either excessively exaggerated or depressed, that is likely to distort a forthcoming or emerging faculty of reason. In the former case: the bearing of culpability, it is not difficult to imagine that something which had once participated in rational action, then ceased to, and finally has become rational again, would still bear responsibility for all his rational action, both in the remote past and presently. Most proponents of transmigration theories of the soul accept something like this.

The remaining task for defending Leibniz in my estimation is explaining how prerational monad can participate in rational action, while other non-rational monads can't. In the case of an infant, it is easy to see the difference: an infant is not subsumed under a dominant monad that has attained responsible rationality, whereas we in Adam were. But so were the monads never-to-become-rational! I think Leibniz leaves of with the oddity of having to say that in rigour, even the monads never-to-become-rational did in fact participate in Adam's rationality and may sustain defects because of doing so; but that it is improper to say they are culpable on the grounds that they never become rational subjects. However, if *per impossibile* God were to change His mind and confer rationality upon them, they would

then properly be said to have the culpability of original sin. At best they can be called potentially culpable, that potency's activation coming only with their becoming rational.

It may be contended that Leibniz's explanation of Original Sin is no model of perspicuity; he would probably have agreed. But remember, he was just trying to get the big ball of a comprehensive, clear and distinct Christian metaphysics rolling. In this context it is a rather ingenious and viable attempt.

Thus far we have discussed aspects of Leibniz's metaphysics which might weigh in favor of its really being a Christian metaphysics. Now I wish to discuss aspects which might weigh against it on the same score.

#### Difficulty of Accommodating the Trinity and the Incarnation

Background - Leibniz expended a considerable effort in his early intellectual career defending fundamental Christian doctrines against contemporary attacks. Some of these, particularly those pertaining to the Eucharist, he went on to accommodate into a metaphysical system, which, though to him was never worked out but in sketchy form, nonetheless tends to become more rigorous the more in proximity it gets with favored Christian doctrines. Two most central dogmas of Christianity which did not receive the latter pattern of treatment from Leibniz were the Trinity and the Incarnation.

To be sure, Leibniz did not neglect to defend these doctrines against attack; and this fact should clear him

against accusations of wavering commitment to the doctrines. But his metaphysics seems conspicuously insensitive to them. As noted by Pierre Burgelin (p. 16), "[f]rom a monadological perspective, the triplicity of persons in God can appear singularly embarrassing". One could say the same for the duplicity of natures in Christ (the Incarnation). All this is obvious cause for concern regarding a metaphysics claimed or at least hoped to be Christian.

Before going any further, it should be noted in defense of Leibniz that the Trinity and the Incarnation are notoriously difficult doctrines to treat philosophically, both on their own and especially in conjunction with one another. The notorious difficulty with the Trinity lies in explaining how being one rational substance does not entail having only one personal identity, and on the other hand how being three persons entails neither being three substances nor being of three natures. A big difficulty with the Incarnation is explaining how being of two natures does not entail being two substances. A puzzle involved with holding both the Incarnation and the Trinity is that while they both require a means for explaining substantial unity in the midst of a stubborn diversity, the apparent explanation of one is incompatible with the apparent explanation of the other.

According to the Trinity, God is one substance apparently in virtue of the fact that although He is three in persons, He has one nature. But according to the Incarnation, Christ is one substance apparently in virtue of

the fact that although he has two natures, he is one person. This frustrates both those who wish to explain the substantial unity of a rational being in terms of nature-exemplification - one nature, one substance - and those who wish to do so in terms of personal identity - one person, one substance.

The aforementioned difficulties notwithstanding, it arguably should be a major challenge of a metaphysics that is to be considered Christian to get around them and thus accommodate these two principal doctrines. Leibniz's metaphysics not only does not seem to offer much helpful insight in addressing this challenge, but seems to make matters even worse, with respect both to explaining the Trinity and Incarnation each on its own and in relation to one another.

**The Trinity Problem** - Leibniz's metaphysics makes God out to be something like a monad - an all-dominating one at that. The chief qualification is that unlike other monads, God is substantially autonomous from what He organizes or dominates: there is no soul of the universe; that which is organized by God does not thereby get included in His substantiality. Now God's comparison to a monad is presumably based on His being a percipient; a rational percipient, no less. Now, this creates a problem for explaining the Trinity, because as likened to a monad God ought to be one, yet the criterion for being the sort of monad God is likened to - being a rational percipient - sounds like the criterion for

being a person. God is supposed to be three persons; does this not entail having three perspectives or distinct centers of perceiving? If so, then it sounds like God is three monads, being which would according to Leibniz's metaphysics entail that "He" is not one substance but three. In other words, a thing's monad is supposed to be its nature, yet what it is to be a rational monad sounds awefully close to what it is to be a person; this puts the Trinity in jeopardy.

**The Incarnation Problem** - A spinoff of the problem just related pertains to the Incarnation. Of the three persons in the Godhead, only one, the second, is supposed to be involved in the Incarnation. If the divine nature as a whole is a "monad" of sorts, as Leibniz claims, and Christ is wholly participant in the divine nature, how can two persons be excluded from the Incarnation? This problem can only begin to be addressed when an adequate distinction between the divine nature and the divine persons has been made, something which I am claiming Leibniz's theory of monads, together with his likening of God to a monad, makes it hard to do.

**The Compatibility Problem** - A third difficulty Leibniz's metaphysics poses for the explanation of the Trinity and the Incarnation is that of simultaneously accounting for the substantial unity of the Godhead and the substantial unity of Christ. The unity of a substance is provided by its dominant monad. God's substance is simple, comprising only the "monad" of His nature; this because He (alone) is incorporeal. Presumably Christ's unity is supplied by his

dominant monad. The problem is: what can his dominant monad be? His being includes wholly the divine nature and a particular human nature (as Leibniz would put it). We have mentioned directly above that the divine nature was considered by Leibniz as a sort-of monad all by itself. It is also true that Leibniz considered particular human natures to be monads: my nature, your nature, etc., each a different monad. How then do these two separate monads come together in Christ to form a substantial unity? In Leibniz this could happen only in one of three ways:

- i. both monads are subsumed under another monad;
- ii. the human monad is subsumed under the divine "monad"; or
- iii. the divine "monad" is subsumed under the human monad.

Leibniz never suggested that the divine "monad" could be subsumed at all, but if not, then there are only two options. In any case, following Leibniz's rules for monads we can say that according to i Christ would not be substantially human and could hardly be divine; for substantiality is conferred only by the dominant monad. For similar reasons it looks like Christ under ii could not be substantially human and under iii could not be divine. So in no case does there appear to be an explanation for a single being substantially both human and divine.

iii at least has the merit of making Christ out to be truly human. Can his substantial divinity be salvaged by claiming that the divine "monad" has the privilege of being subsumed without losing its power to confer substantiality?



It wouldn't violate the spirit of Leibniz's metaphysics, since the divine nature is not exactly a monad anyway. I think this option has merit, but is not without its own inherent difficulty. For it assumes a human nature has the aperture to receive within it the divine nature; certainly it could not be that a human nature, which is finite, has a closed-systemic containment of the divine nature, which is infinite. The only option we can even consider *prima facie* for a finite nature subsuming an infinite one is by some kind of open-systemic aperture. And that's the rub: Leibniz's monads are closed systems! Sure, they have "windows" to God, but only as a machine to its energy source. Each actual monad has already been created in all its detail, and thus any "human nature" that has aperture to content supplied by another nature is really no human nature for Leibniz, but only the shell of one. So it seems at best that Christ can be made out to be a God-man hybrid: perhaps wholly God, but not wholly human, in the sense of being endowed with a complete human nature as you and I are. This closed-system or deterministic aspect to Leibniz's thought seems to present a difficulty for its being compatible with Christian doctrine. Ironically, Leibniz sees it as a consequence of God-centered philosophy. To understand how he sees this let us retrace our steps a bit.

### God and Determinism

The main feature of the metaphysics Leibniz envisioned and spent his life sketching out was theocentricity. God's

existence was to be proved and from that all else would follow by formal deduction. But he thought it important for himself, who had the vision of this metaphysics, to anticipate some of its formal conclusions by another way of reasoning which depended on Revealed truths not quite as premises, as in theology, but as it were hidden guidelines. If Revelation is true, its truths could be used as clues to metaphysical truth even before these were arrived at by strict formal deduction. Once thus used to establish the significant conclusions, one could patiently and confidently await the advance of formal deduction upon them. The end product would thus have no dependence upon Revelation in a formal sense, and the preparatory work that Revelation did to help establish the metaphysics could just as well pass out of memory as far as the metaphysical system was concerned. Yet the whole reason for conceiving this metaphysics was defense and support of the faith.

Despite Leibniz's deserved reputation as a great formal thinker, the formal structure of his "Christian" metaphysics remained sketchy. There are many scattered patches of rather rigorous formal deductions, and then there are significant areas which received little treatment. Perhaps the most significant area, despite a not uncommon perception that Leibniz took it for granted, is the conceptual connection between God's nature and a perfectly determined world.

His lack of formal rigour in this area notwithstanding, Leibniz does give hints about the connection he envisions.

The hints he gives can be lumped into three groups, without prejudice against a possible common thread: the first based on the way God thinks, the second on a version of the foreknowledge-to-preordination inference, and the third on what I call his metaphysical essentialism: that essence precedes existence in the order of being.

The general idea of the first is that God's omniscience implies that He has clear and distinct ideas of all possible things in complete detail; all actual things are created according to the idea God has of them, such that nothing actual is incompletely determined. The second is in brief that God has perfect foreknowledge of things, and divine foreknowledge entails complete preordination, since to know something ahead of time as God does entails knowing its causes. In the third case, the essences of things are already real in virtue of God's existence, and compete for existence in virtue of their degree of being; the result of this competition is that that group of essences gains existence which contains the highest degree of being among all possible groups. That being has more essence which is more determined, and completely determined beings are possible, hence the best world is completely determined. (Here we must be careful to observe a distinction between 'real' and 'being' on the one hand and 'actual' and 'existing' on the other. The former two refer to a sort of preliminary "existence" as objects of the divine mind, while the latter refer to the more ordinary sense of existing.)

The Way God Thinks - Hidden behind Leibniz's much-discussed identity-of-indiscernibles "principle" are the more fundamental convictions that

- i. things can't be in such a manner that God can't think them properly; and that
- ii. God creates in things the same precision of detail that he is aware of in them.

Since no one doubts that an omniscient being is supposed to be aware of all details in everything, it should follow both that things cannot exist in such a way as to render impossible this fully detailed awareness, and that things are created replete with the minutest detail God sees in them past, present, and future.

With this in mind, perhaps it is understandable why Leibniz would oppose any theory of creation by "incomplete blueprint" or "open nature", whereby God creates many things according to the exact same nature, blueprint, or idea, allowing them to differ only by accidents of context. In such a case, all things sharing the same nature would be indistinguishable in essence, yet different in number. God, considering the idea of each, would have no way of telling one from the other, since their distinguishing accidents of context are not included in their nature/blueprint/idea. This would challenge His omniscience. But even if it could be explained how God is omniscient even though he can't distinguish all things by the ideas He creates them by, the problem would still remain why God doesn't create according to the knowledge He has of things. It would seem that since His knowledge of things is complete in all their details, His

creation of each thing should also be complete in all its details.

Or perhaps it is not all that understandable. Firstly, it is not clear that God creating things according to incomplete blueprints entails that His knowledge is incomplete. He may well know the whole history and intricate details of each substance although He didn't create them according to such detail, nor calculate things to arrive at such a state. Only if foreknowledge entails preordination would we have to concede this point - which we will be discussing shortly. Otherwise, there is nothing to prevent the possibility that God knows things according to one set of complete ideas and creates them according to another set of incomplete ideas or natures. Perhaps being the "best world" requires being created thus; perhaps His creating thus displays even more eminently God's wisdom and power.

Secondly, although if God exists, it must be conceded, i.e. that the manner of being of things can't be incompatible with God's omniscience, the fact that two things have the same nature does not preclude God's omniscience, as long as He has some way of thinking, not limited to their nature, that allows Him to distinguish any two such objects. And surely He does, or at least one would think: for He can think of them in their respective distinguishing contexts. By this reasoning the problem of indiscernibles that even God can't distinguish is not of metaphysical consequence, since any candidate for existence has a context God can know it by,

even if He doesn't or wouldn't create it having that context in its nature. In Leibniz's defense it might be replied that to admit that God thinks this way when He deliberates over what to create is a tacit admission that accidental contexts are contained within the blueprint of creation, thus precluding open-blueprint creation. But again, what necessitates God to create something exactly according to His knowledge? He may create me **knowing** I would write this dissertation without creating me to write it. More on this in the final section of this Chapter.

It is rather puzzling that Leibniz would refuse to God this multiplicity of ways of thinking. Yet in the Theodicy, § 38, he seemingly does, apparently agreeing with his imagined incompatibilist determinist opponent - Leibniz being a compatibilist - that "it must be that the foreknowledge of God has its foundation in the nature of things... this foundation, making the truth predeterminate". Perhaps some insight into his motivation for placing this restriction on how God thinks may be found in his reasoning for favoring the foreknowledge-to-preordination inference. See in particular discussion of the **foreknowledge-of-why preordination inference**, below.

**The Foreknowledge-to-Preordination Inference** - It may come as a surprise to some that Leibniz subscribed to the inference, by some concerned fallacious, that God's foreknowledge of things entails His preordination of them.

To discover exactly why he held this is a challenge I want to address here. But first let us consider the issue in general.

It is not uncommon to think that if an almighty being has foreknowledge of some event, He has preordained it. After all, he is capable of preventing anything from happening or making anything happen, and if He foresees an event, that indicates a decision not to prevent it. That which He has decided to prevent doesn't happen, so foresight of an event that is in fact prevented would be fallacious.

Yet the view that foreknowledge implies preordination has its problems. Normally knowing a fact is not thought to have any influence on the fact's realization in act. Knowing something is not causing it to be so; rather to the contrary it is a thing's being such which has an influence on someone's knowledge that it is such. Unless we are to apply the term 'knows' to God disanalogously to how we normally use it, we would have to say as well that God's knowing something does not itself cause it to be.

The best arguments for proponents of this kind of inference have therefore to be a bit more sophisticated. One more sophisticated attempt is that God's foreknowing something entails, as said above, that He allows it to happen; God's allowing something to happen implies responsibility for it; since God is morally perfect anything He is responsible for contributes to things working out for the best; and whatever under God's watchful eye contributes

to things working out for the best is a preordained part of God's Master Plan.

This view is deducible from Leibniz's metaphysics. God created the best possible world, so anything He permits, no matter how evil, is a component of the best possible world. We can therefore be assured that any actual evil is permitted in order ultimately to usher in a greater good. So whatever He permits is a preordained part of His plan; and admitted that He foresees whatever He permits, whatever He foresees is preordained.

I think there are two errors in this reasoning. First, God's moral perfection entails only that whatever He permits not hinder things working out for the best. Perhaps He allows some events that are extraneous to His plan. Lest this appear as a violation of the divine economy, consider the possibility that some things are the case which neither help nor hinder things working out for the best, whereas God's preventing them would be a hindrance. In such a case it would be imperfection on God's part to prevent them, though their non-occurrence would not hinder His plan. A Leibnizean might call this double-talk, but I don't think it is. There are many ways for a thing not to happen, and unless divine determinism is true not all of them can be construed as divine preventions. It is up to a determinist therefore to establish determinism independently of this argument in order to discount the present criticism. For since argument itself



is intended to establish determinism, it would be begging the question to presuppose determinism in the proof of the same.

Secondly, it is not necessarily the case that whatever contributes to the best outcome of things is a preordained part of God's plan. Perhaps God has a plan which makes prudent allowances for things He knows will happen though He didn't preordain them. In such a case, He might turn an evil occurrence to His advantage, such that it winds up as an integral part of His plan, and in that sense "contributes" to the greater good. Again, this possibility can only be discounted when divine determinism has been established on other grounds.

#### Three Arguments in Leibniz Supporting the Inference -

In fact Leibniz did either present or at least suggest other arguments in favor of the divine-foreknowledge-to-preordination inference. I count three of them, which I shall discuss in what I see as their ascending order of compellingness.

**The Perfect-Order Argument** - The first argument is hinted at in the following excerpt from a letter to Remond de Montmort, 1715 (Wiener, pp. 188-9):

"[T]he order of things... requires everything to be distinctly explicable.... Now it is impossible that the entire Universe should not be well regulated, the prevailing perfection being the reason for the existence of this sytem of things in preference to any other possible system."

I see this as expressing the following:

1. God chooses to create that world with the "prevailing perfection" of order; perfection of order is the *raison d'etre* of the actual world.

2. The prevailing perfection of order is one in which every detail is "distinctly explicable".
3. An order in which every detail is distinctly explicable is one in which every detail is integral to that order.
4. The blueprint by which God creates something includes its *raison d'etre*.
5. Everything in the blueprint of creation is preordained.
- C6. Every detail of the actual world is preordained (1-5).

To this we can safely add:

7. God eternally foresees every detail of His creation, the actual world.

This allows us to conclude:

- 
- C. All that God foresees is preordained (C6, 7).

One thing this argument highlights is the trivial fact that any argument for universal preordination by a Perfect God is also an argument for the foreknowledge-to-preordination inference.

The argument is valid, since if every detail of the actual world is entailed by the *raison d'etre* of the world, the latter is contained in the blueprint of creation, and everything in the blueprint is prordained, then every detail is also preordained by being entailed by something preordained. Moreover, God being omniscient sees all the details eternally, therefore all that he foresees is preordained. This satisfies the foreknowledge-to-preordination inference.

The crux of the argument lies in what makes the best world best. If we allow that the best world is the one with the maximum of interdeducible order, then the argument goes through. But again, this is tantamount to admitting

determinism, which the argument is intended to establish. Given that fact, it would be illegitimate to concede what amounts to determinism unless provided the proof of another argument.

In Leibniz's defense, he hints at the above argument in the context of his metaphysics, taking for granted his monadology, which is at stake here. As such we can't blame him for circularity, since he is not attempting to pass the argument off as foundational. Circular arguments can be valid, sound, and perhaps even useful for instructive purposes within a system. The only knock on them is that they are of no use in an adversarial situation.

The following two arguments, however, Leibniz does attempt to pass off as foundational for establishing the validity of the divine-foreknowledge-to-preordination inference and hence, determinism. The first is an argument still current in philosophy, which we might call truth-eternal determinism (TED). The second is more unique to Leibniz; call it the foreknowledge-of-why preordination inference (FOWPI).

**Truth-Eternal Determinism** - Leibniz's most clear presentation of TED is in the Theodicy, especially §§ 36-38:

"Philosophers agree to-day that the truth of contingent futurities is determinate... for it is as sure that the future will be, as it is sure that the past has been.... Thus the contingent is not, because it is future, any the less contingent; and determination, which would be called certainty if it were known, is not incompatible with contingency....

"37. This determination comes from the very nature of truth.... Now this truth which states

that I shall write tomorrow is not... necessary. Yet supposing that God foresees it, it is necessary that it come to pass....

"[Divine] foreknowledge in itself adds nothing to the determination of the truth... does not make truth more determinate; truth is foreseen because it is determinate, because it is true; but it is not true because it is foreseen." (Farrer, pp. 143-4.)

The idea is that since there is already a complete set of truths about the future, though we may not be able to know them all now, the future is already determined before it ever happens. This argument does not essentially require a theological context, but the latter is a persuasive embellishment that Leibniz opts not to neglect.

It is hard to know exactly what to say about this argument, whether it be the theological version or not. Some seasoned philosophers have indeed taken it as positive evidence of determinism or some sort of resigned fatalism. To others, it is an obvious case of a notorious fallacy of modal logic. It seems there is little dialogue possible between the two positions.

The thought in favor of this way of reasoning is that sometimes things we cannot deny, or ways we cannot help thinking, constitute conclusive evidence in favor of views that we can deny. It is not rare to hear believers in God, for example, argue that nobody is really an atheist, and that everyone's way of thinking inevitably reveals his or her latent theism. Similarly, it might be said that the very way we think about the future implies that the future is already irrevokably "fixed", including what we will think and choose.

For after all, we can have no doubt that either it will rain tomorrow or it won't. This implies, as the argument goes, that one of the disjuncts is now and has always been true. Whichever is true is fixed as such, and it is only our lack of knowledge of which is true that makes the future seem any less fixed than the past.

The theological twist Leibniz uses on it can give the additional thrust that the way we can't help but think about the future is positive proof that the future is already determined by God. Leibniz feels we have evidence on other fronts that creation is fully determined, so he doesn't press the theology here. Rather, interestingly, he uses the argument as a springboard to discuss a version of incompatibilist determinism to which he, as a compatibilist, is opposed: the inference from **TED** to the conclusion that there is no freewill for creatures.

The argument against **TED** is that it abuses a logical truism, i.e. that given something is true, it is true; and twists it into the modal fallacy that if something is true, it is true necessarily (or infallibly, irrevokably, etc.). Although proponents, as does Leibniz, almost universally concede that future contingents are not **necessarily** true, the alternate qualification they choose still sounds an awful lot like necessity.

**TED** is therefore a very controversial argument, with probably the balance of contemporary philosophers against it. I think its irreconcilable controversiality disqualifies it

from being an acceptable foundational argument for the universal preordination and hence for the foreknowledge-to-preordination inference. This is one place where Leibniz the reconciler would most definitely have been mistaken to stake his fortune.

The Foreknowledge-of-Why Preordination Inference - FOWPI is perhaps Leibniz's most serious attempt at establishing the foreknowledge-to-preordination inference. Perhaps the clearest expression of it by Leibniz was on an undated, apparently private note catalogued in *Handschriften* (Ch. IV, v. VI, No. 12, Bl. 14, p. 88), reading as follows:

"From the providence of God it follows that things are determined in their causes. For to know something is to know the truth of a proposition, while to know the truth of a proposition is to know why it is to be the case. If therefore God foresees things perfectly, he will foresee not only that they are to be, but also why they are to be...."

The genius of this argument is that it turns on a rather stringent definition of knowing, by which knowing entails full determination of causes. A surprising corollary of this definition is that if determinism is false, some facts cannot be known. If there are some facts which cannot be known, then of course these facts are unknowable even to God - whether they be future or past!

At this point, we have an interesting decision to make regarding omniscience, namely: is omniscience the perfection of knowing all facts, or of knowing all that is knowable? In favor of the former, a fact is something that is the case, something true; how can we consider something omniscient

which fails to know some truth? In favor of the latter, is it not the case analogously that omnipotence is the ability to do anything that **can** be done? No good theologian expects God to do what is absolutely impossible. So we might argue along parallel lines that it is no contradiction to God's perfection that He fail to know the unknowable.

There is no doubt from the way Leibniz argues here and in advocating the identity of indiscernibles that Leibniz conceives omniscience in the former manner. If this is the true conception of omniscience, it seems harder to deny his argument for preordination or determinism based on God's omniscience and especially foreknowledge. If He doesn't know some fact, He fails to be omniscient. But the acceptance of this conception of omniscience forces us once again into a choosing situation. The bind it puts a theist in is to either accept determinism/preordination or reject the stringent definition of knowing which brought us into difficulty in the first place.

So we must consider whether the definition of knowledge Leibniz uses here is faithful to what **knowing** really is. This consideration brings us back into the age-old debate on what it is to **know**. The proposing of stringent definitions of knowledge such as the one above brings with it either a skepticism strong enough to limit God's knowledge or the requirement of a perfectly determined world. For such definitions amount to requiring that knowledge be deductive; and unless the world is perfectly determined, we can never

even in principle have sufficient evidence to deduce all facts of reality from preceding ones. Now when the Judeo-Christian notion of a Perfect Being entered the picture, the choice was made all the more difficult. The choice for a theist now seems to be either against omniscience on the one hand or free will on the other. Of course Leibniz, a compatibilist, did not perceive the thst's choice in this way; he considered free will and determinism as a compossible (and actual) pair. Nonetheless it is the former perception that made (and makes) determinism controversial in Christian circles; it seems to force the denial of either of two western theistic tenets.

At any rate, Leibniz's use of this stringent sense of 'knowledge' threatens to bring us full-circle, in the following manner. To vindicate Leibniz's thought we have been seeking a justification for determinism in an entailment of preordination by foreknowledge, which brought us to try to establish this entailment on the definition of knowledge; but whether the definition opted for is appropriate or not seems to depend on the settling of the determinism question, which indirectly it was supposed to settle. Thus we cannot hope to solve the puzzle of Leibniz's determinism based on the proposed stringent definition of knowledge - unless there be some way to ratify the definition independently of the determinism question.

One Leibnizean way to attempt to do so is via the principle of sufficient reason:



"Nothing exists for which it would be impossible for someone who had enough knowledge of things to give a reason adequate to determine why the thing is as it is and not otherwise." (Gerhardt, v. VI, p. 602. Cited in Mates, p. 155.)

This amounts to saying an omniscient being must know of every fact not only that it is but exactly why it is the case and not otherwise. The problem here is, does the principle of sufficient reason present support here, or merely a paraphrasing of the definition? I think the latter is clearly the case, and therefore that it is the principle of sufficient reason that is ultimately at issue.

The Question of Contingent Self-Causation - Indeed, it comes out from a reading of Leibniz's several formulations of the principle of sufficient reason that the principle itself is a cryptic statement of rather than evidence for determinism. For it is ultimately a denial of contingent self-causation (CSC), and the denial of CSC is determinism. If there is such a thing as CSC then some things are not deducible in principle. But first let it be understood what contingent self-causation is, and then it will become evident how the principle of sufficient reason and determinism are denials of it; how it precludes the universal deducibility in principle of actual facts.

CSC seems at first blush to be a contradiction in terms. For the usual reference to self causation is regarding necessary self-causation, which some, including Leibniz but excluding Thomas Aquinas, attribute to God. Secondly, 'contingent' means 'neither necessary nor impossible', while

that which causes itself to exist would seem to have to be either impossible or necessary. That is to say, given that nothing can bring itself into existence out of nothingness, a self-caused being would have to either be eternal or impossible. Now once a being has been granted as eternal and self-causing, it seems out of the question to deny it the status of "necessarily existent", for how could it fail to exist? This in fact is not airtight reasoning, for although being necessary entails being eternal in the sense of always existing, the converse is not true. Something can always actually exist and yet possibly not have.

At any rate, I am not using CSC to refer to something contingent causing itself to exist, but rather to something contingent causing, or better, originating a change in itself. That is, CSC occurs when something or someone contingent, say, George Washington, originates a change in himself, especially the formation of an intention, such as to cross the Delaware, without that intention being a strict function of aspects of himself or the world (or God!) that were in existence previous to the formation of the intention. Now the affirmation of CSC only entails that some contingent thing somewhere originates a change in itself. In other words, perhaps humans have the capacity of originating intentions in the manner just described, yet most of their intentions are still strict functions of previously existing aspects of themselves, the world, or even God. The affirmation of CSC especially regarding human intentions does

not commit one to attributing it directly to every intention.

The existence of some case of CSC, then, clearly precludes the universal deducibility in principle of things. This in turn would rule out determinism and Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason, which are tantamount to the latter. Thus if there is CSC in the world, not even God can have complete deductive knowledge of things. This makes CSC an absolutely deadly virus to any theology according to which omniscience entails complete deductive knowledge. Leibniz's is one such theology, so naturally its prudent creator provided the strongest defense that he could against CSC: the principle of sufficient reason.

We are still left with the question why Leibniz chose such a theology. Alas, I don't think I can answer that question, beyond the following suggestions: that the dawning scientific age tended to create the impression that there were no limits to the progress of demonstrative reason upon reality; and that the very notion of knowledge was coming in Leibniz's time to be so strongly dominated by the notion of scientific, demonstrative knowledge that Leibniz lacked an imaginative grasp of other possible kinds of knowledge - call them "intuitive" - that are just as genuine as and perhaps even superior to demonstrative knowledge, and perhaps could cover the same territory and more. Ironically, Leibniz, following traditional theology, did attribute to God a universal intuitive knowledge. The catch is that for Leibniz this just meant an all-at-once deductive grasp of all things

(Wiener, p. 285). The option Leibniz neglected is that God eternally perceives all reality directly. Choosing this option would allow one to argue that God is omniscient in that He eternally perceives all reality, and although He is able to deductively know all deducible knowledge, He does not have deductive knowledge of all reality because not all reality is deducible.

Of course, unless CSC is plausible none of this matters. And that's the rub: it's hard to see CSC the plausibility of CSC. In fact, it could be said that Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason gains its persuasive force by exploiting the apparent implausibility of CSC.

Affirming CSC is the most straightforward way of defending the doctrine of free will: we have free will in that we originate at least some of our intentions or choices. Now it is not rare to find a philosopher who clearly affirms the doctrine of free will; yet it is rare to hear any clear affirmation of the existence of CSC. Moreover, the general strategies for defending free will are not many; the choice is between CSC, compatibilism - Leibniz's choice - and the least savoury, the acceptance of uncaused contingent states or events. In light of these facts, it is hard not to avoid the impression that CSC is a "hot potato" - hot enough to drive philosophers to oppose free will or adopt a position of compatibilism, which is more than a lukewarm choice itself; hot enough also to keep the non-compatibilist advocates of free will from thoroughly explicating their views.

CSC seems to be a notion the mind just cannot sit easy with. But this does not make it implausible. It is arguably just one of a whole class of "instable" notions, some of which are widely considered as plausible; such as infinity, eternity, non-spatiotemporal existence, and non-sensory intuition. These notions are all, like CSC, incomprehensible to us; even if they refer to actual aspects of reality, we do not seem to be equipped to make distinct concepts of them. Arguably it would be narrow-minded for us to reject these or any notion in their class solely on account of our inability to "stabilize" them, render them distinct in our thought. Yet Cartesianism, or perhaps an abuse of it, ushered just this prejudiced policy into modern philosophy.

Leibniz was by no means a Cartesian, but he tended to follow with qualification (Critical Remarks Concerning Descartes' Principles, 1692, § 43. Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 35) the Cartesian epistemological policy of setting aside all but clear and distinct notions. For although he conceded that Descartes had "not given an entirely satisfactory solution" on this matter ("Reflections on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas", 1684; in Schrecker and Schrecker, p. 3), and also that this Cartesian policy was often abused (ibid., p. 8), he also eulogized those who "philosophize with their own minds" (after his own heart!) as choosing not "to accept anything except those things which can be clearly and distinctly conceived"; and also as despising "all those terms which... are unexplained" (Appendix A, p. 343). Of course this did not

lead him and many other philosophers to reject all indistinct or incomprehensible notions; there was a lot at stake in protecting some of them, particularly those associated with God. But they protected them by trying to show that they are distinct, at least in principle. Still, the Cartesian policy prompted Leibniz and other philosophers to keep this (what I am calling) "protected class" of notions to a minimum. It may have been this that resulted in compatibilism being favored over a CSC explanation of free will among philosophers who accepted free will.

The down-side of this Cartesian epistemological policy is that it is not strictly truth-oriented. Who is to say that some of these to-us incomprehensible notions, such as perhaps CSC, are not indispensable for our attaining an optimum true understanding of things? This drawback reveals the prejudice of the Cartesian policy, with which Leibniz, I think, was to some degree afflicted.

In the final section of this chapter an attempt will be made to show the plausibility of CSC.

**Metaphysical Essentialism** - A final motivation for Leibniz to be a determinist may be found in what I call his metaphysical essentialism: the view that essence precedes existence in the order of being. (I say "metaphysical" to distinguish it from other theories labeled "essentialism". See also pp. 46 ff. and 205 ff.) Perhaps the most clear statement of it, albeit still a bit disguised, is found in his essay, "On the Ultimate Origin of Things" (1697):

"[A]s the ultimate origin must be in something which is metaphysically necessary, and as the reason of the existing can only be from the existing, there must exist some one being metaphysically necessary, or whose essence is existence....

"But in order to explain a little more clearly how, from eternal or essential metaphysical truths, temporary, contingent or physical truths arise, we ought first to recognize that from the very fact that something exists rather than nothing, there is in possible things, that is, in the very possibility or essence, a certain exigent need of existence, and, so to speak, some claim to existence; in a word, that essence tends of itself towards existence.... [A]ll possible things... tend by equal right toward existence, according to their quantity of essence or reality, or according to the degree of perfection which they contain, for perfection is nothing else than quantity of essence.

"Hence it is most clearly understood that among the infinite combinations of possibles and possible series, that one actually exists by which the most of essence or of possibility is brought into existence....

"Whence... it is evident that the author of the world... makes all things determinately; for he acts according to a principle of wisdom or of perfection. Indeed indifference arises from ignorance, and the wiser one is, the more determined one is to the highest degree of perfection." (Wiener, pp. 347-9)

I say that the essentialism in this passage is disguised because of the phrases: "the existing can only be from the existing" and "from the very fact that something exists, etc."; these are references to God, whose reality is the founding source of all reality. Because of these phrases, one might be led to interpret the entire passage as expressing that essence precedes existence in the order of being except for in God. These phrases notwithstanding, I think Jalabert argues well that Leibniz's essentialism extends even to the divine reality. Jalabert concludes from Leibnizean passages

such as the following that Leibniz is a "positive aseitist", i.e. that he held that the divinity is not **uncaused**, as Aquinas had it (negative aseity), but so-to-speak self-caused, in the sense that His existence is accounted for by His essence:

"For, regarding eternal things, even if there be no cause, a reason [for existence] must be understood, which for immutable things is their necessity itself, that is their essence..." ("On the Ultimate Origination of Things", 1697. Gerhardt, v. 7, p. 302. See also Jalabert, p. 127. emphasis mine).

Even if Jalabert is wrong and Leibniz does in fact make an exception for God, it remains that he was an essentialist regarding all contingent things. Actual things gain existence by their essences outcompeting other essences. As argued in Chapter 3 this competition amounts to a team-sport, where the participants are compossible sets of essences; the one with the greatest perfection or "quantity of essence" wins, gains existence. It seems that in rigour, God really does nothing; His mere existence sets things in motion in that it makes essences real possibilities and not just "chimeras". The reality of essences gives them a claim or "push" toward existence. Creation follows as a result of the competition among essences, won by the greatest or best possible world.

Leibniz goes on to argue that this process entails that the actual world is predetermined in all its details. The reason is that detail is quantity of essence, which in turn is perfection; the more detail, the more essence, the more perfection. The best possible thing is the most perfect, *ergo*



the most detailed. Moreover, the most detailed possible thing is completely filled out in detail, since if it were not completely filled out in detail, something more detailed would be conceivable, namely something just like it but whose open variables were filled in. Thus essentialism, it seems, entails determinism.

In brief, the two major points that need to be evaluated are first, that God's existence entails essentialism at least with respect to contingent being, and secondly, that essentialism entails determinism.

God to Essentialism? The question might alternately be posed as: what compelled Leibniz to develop his vision of indirect creation, whereby God's existence gives an existence-push to all possibilities and creation results from a competition of essences not all of which can exist together? One guess is that this view is the result of an attempt to conceive God as simple act, whereas direct creation accounts separate God's creative act from His simple act of existence and thus seem to preclude divine simplicity. This is not a bad motivation; though it is not a foregone conclusion that direct creation does in fact preclude God's simplicity, it does seem to. For the sake of argument I will concede that indirect creation is a fact.

His indirect creationism aside, another aspect of the claim that God's existence entails essentialism is that being compatible with the best possible creation is a sufficient reason for the existence of a contingent thing. For

essentialism maintains that all and only such things exist in actual creation. As a result of the competition among essences, the greatest compossible amount of essence pushes its way into actuality. Nothing that could have made it in fails to, and of course nothing that couldn't because of incompatibility succeeded. I would like to see if God's existence really entails this.

It may readily be conceded to Leibniz that if God, the perfect being, exists, then any state of affairs that does not entail contradiction can be actualized. This follows from God's omnipotence.

Now let us call any state of affairs which does not entail contradiction a "possibility". In this wide sense possibilities are autonomous, do not depend on God's existence. Leibniz labelled a possibility in this sense a "chimera", that is to say an entity of the imagination, a "fancy". Something may be a chimera even though it has no real chance of existing, as long as it contains no internal inconsistency. Only "things" such as square circle fail even to be a chimera. On the other hand, Leibniz considered as a "real possibility" that possibility which can be actual.

The point is that, supposing that no creator exists, all possibilities are chimeras; nothing has a chance to be actual, for nothing has a candidate for being its efficient cause. On the other hand, if God does exist, then all possibilities are real, since each has a candidate - God -for

being its efficient cause. So from the fact that God exists it follows that every possibility can exist.

One might also readily concede that if God, the perfect being, exists, then His creation is the best possible; for He can never fail to do the best, and that presumably includes creating the best. Now if the actual creation is the best possible, then every actual thing must be compatible with the best possible creation.

From these things it follows that given God's existence, all possibilities, albeit real, fail to exist if they fail to be compatible with the best possible creation. For their existence would entail that God did not create the best. So only things compatible with the best creation exist. That brings us halfway. What needs to be determined further in judging whether God's existence entails essentialism is whether the converse is also true, namely: that all things compatible with the best possible creation exist. With the risk of sounding a *leitmotif* one too many times, I don't think this can be established unless it is first established that essentialism entails determinism. If such is determined, then the answer would be "yes"; otherwise, the evaluation of both sides of the God-to-essentialism-to-determinism inference will be "*non sequitur*".

**Essentialism to Determinism?** The question is whether the maximum (in perfection) compossible arrangement of essences is in fact "fixed from the start", complete in detail. Let us concede for the sake of argument that perfection is

equivalent to quantity of essence; what it comes down to then is whether quantity of essence is equivalent to quantity of detail. If so, an indeterminist essentialist is a dead duck, for reasons given just above. In the next section I will attempt to show the plausibility of denying the latter equivalence, and hence, of denying Leibniz's inference of determinism from God's existence.

### Christian Determinism? Testing the God-to-Determinism Inference with the Open-World Option

Leibniz was convinced that the existence of God entails determinism, and hence that a Christian metaphysics must be determinist. Against this view are two possible counterpositions: the contradictory thesis and the contrary thesis. The contradictory is that the existence of God is compatible with an indeterminist metaphysics. The contrary is that that the existence of God is incompatible with determinism. If either of these two counterpositions are correctly sustainable, then the inference we are testing is invalid.

Of course, the evidence required to make a definitive decision on this matter *ex sola ratione* is lacking to us mortals. At best we can hope to put the God-to-determinism inference in doubt by illustrating the plausibility of at least one of its two counterpositions. In what follows I hope to show that the contradictory thesis is plausible, and give some indications why even the contrary thesis is not entirely out of the question.

Leibniz begins his metaphysics with the existence of God, the perfect being, who on account of His perfection, creates the best possible world. He goes on to conclude that the world is completely determined by God in His creating it. But what if determinism itself is a disvalue in that a deterministic world is incompatible with the existence of some eminently greater value? In such a case it would be inconsistent with His own nature to create the kind of world Leibniz said He does. So we ought to consider the plausibility of there being a preeminent value that is incompatible with determinism.

Leibniz's belief that a deterministic world is better than a world not completely preordained has an obvious appeal that can be expressed by a warehouse analogy. If I own a warehouse with the intention of making a profit by having things stored in it, it would be most profitable for me to have it always be filled to capacity. In a similar sense, supposing God to be working within set limits, he would achieve the best creation by filling those limits to capacity. This seems a reasonable analogy, since, after all, God is presumed to be working within the limits of finiteness.

Thus it seems that determinism is maximizing of value. But is it really? Deterministic creating can be likened, and is by Leibniz, to choosing from among a set of things each of which is prefixed in value. Now in such a situation, if the set of things contains a "best" or "greatest", then choosing

that item would be maximizing value. If I am house-hunting and money is indeed no object, then of all the available houses I would hope to choose the best. Many choosing-situations are like this. But it should be clear that not all of them are, and in this respect I think Leibniz was surprisingly ingenuous.

The point is that some choosing-situations do not have a best or greatest item. I am not speaking of situations where there is more than one best, the possibility of which was recognized by Leibniz and dismissed (in such situations God would not have chosen, i.e. not have created!). Nor am I speaking of situations where it can't be known which is best; Leibniz has an answer for these, too, namely that such are impossible on the grounds that they contradict His omniscience. I am speaking of situations in which there is simply no greatest or best, period. For instance, not even God could make a maximizing choice among the set of finite numbers; for there is no greatest finite number! If the choosing-situation of creation is similar to this, then God would be stymied; that is if He were constrained, as determinism would have it, to choose among options of fixed value.

**The Open-World Option** - It will not do here to adapt Leibniz's argument dismissing more-than-one-best situations to no-best situations and say that there must be a best, otherwise God would not have created. For a little imagination reveals that God may still have a best creative

choice if He is not limited to options of prefixed value. That is, He may choose a candidate for creation whose value continually approaches the limit of the most open sort of infinity. This could not be a deterministic world, which, even if it allows "growth" in a sense through causation, is by definition prefixed. It has a determined value known by God, and if created would be created with all the value it would ever have already immanent in it by creation. A world of unprefixed value could only be, therefore, an incompletely determined "world" - I put 'world' in scare-quotes because Leibniz's very use of the term excludes the indeterministic possibility of an "open" world. From here on I shall use the term in a manner not exclusive of that possibility.

One initial advantage that the open-world option seems to have over a Leibnizean "best-possible-world" is that it allows us to make sense of mourning actual evil. In a Leibnizean world all that occurs, no matter how wicked, is necessary to the existence of the best possible world. With this in mind, what sense ultimately could there be in mourning actual evil? Instead, it would seem that we should celebrate it, since it, no less than the most blessed actual good, is required for ushering in the world's most glorious outcome. In fact, for that very reason I should prefer the existence of actual evil to non-actual blessedness, since the latter's existence would preclude a most glorious outcome for the world, while the former helps insure it. In contrast,

according to an open-world option, we are not forced to concede the necessity of any wickedness to a glorious outcome. For in an open world, wickedness may come to exist without having been chosen by God, that is without being a necessary condition of the world's bestness. As such the fact that we mourn wickedness is no puzzle here, as it had to be for Leibniz.

#### Problems with the Open-World Option -

The core notion of the open-world option is that of a world not prefixed in value; that is of a world not all of whose resultant values and disvalues are created or preordained by God. There is some question as to whether an omniscient being could even have such an option. Surely God, as omniscient, knows exactly what the overall value each option will turn out to produce if He creates it; doesn't this fact preclude the possibility of candidates for creation unfixed in value?

Quite plausibly it doesn't. What makes a candidate for creation unfixed in value is not that God doesn't know what value it would eventually produce, but that its "blueprint" doesn't have all those values already written into it. Arguably, God may know the outcome without creating it.

Another problem for the open-world option is identifiability. An open world is a world incomplete in detail, an incomplete concept. Might there not then be many possible open worlds that are indiscernible even to God? An affirmative answer to this question assumes that worlds



are defined by their outcomes, not their blueprints - the idea by which they are created. This is a deterministic prejudice. For in a deterministic setting, the idea corresponding to the outcome of a world is identical to its blueprint. This principle is no longer valid once we drop the determinist assumption. Truly what defines a candidate for creation is the idea according to which it would be created. In the case of an open world, this would be an incomplete idea. An incomplete idea has no identity problem as long as it is distinct. So it would be accurate to say that a possible world that is open has no identity problem even though it has many possible outcomes.

A third problem comes to mind regarding the possibility that a world God creates still has a variety of possible outcomes: how can a bad outcome be ruled out? It would be unfair to make a simple appeal to God's omniscience, i.e. that He creates only that which He knows will turn out best, even though He doesn't create it to do so. This is thinly veiled double-talk: it deceptively reintroduces the deterministic idea that God creates according to His omniscience. A creation that has no chance for going afoul must be conceded to have been predesigned not to go afoul.

The solution to this problem may lie in the following consideration. Whereas a simple unqualified appeal to God's omniscience of a good outcome can be construed as a tacit admission of determinism, a more sophisticated, qualified appeal may not have this vulnerability. That is to say, the

world God chooses may be predestined without being preordained. Indeterminism does not rule out that some things about creation are fixed by God from the outset. It is not implausible that there be a possible open world fixed in enough of its aspects to insure a perfectly glorious outcome, i.e. be predestined, yet not be fixed in all its aspects, i.e. be preordained. For instance, divine foreknowledge or "Providence" may be appealed to to account for and plan a way to accommodate and overcome all of the most pernicious evils that will eventually occur in that world and which, if not overcome by Providence, could steer the world to an infelicitous destiny. Plausibly this still leaves room for many open variables. We could use similar reasoning to exclude the possibility of chaos which is not caused by pernicious evil but just by unlucky coincidence.

A fourth problem with an open-world theory of creation comes from the consideration that the Leibnizean best possible world, though preordained or "closed", is already infinite in value; for it has an infinite number of creatures in it, each of which has some value. Now the sum of an infinite number of positive values, even if each particular value is finite, is itself an infinite value. Although Leibniz would likely say that the whole value of creation is not equal to the sum of the values of its parts, he is just as likely to argue that the sum is greater. For the order of the whole is itself a value. Moreover, it won't be easy to avert this challenge by appeal to a distinction between open

and closed infinities, the former of which presumably are superior to the latter; for indeed, it appears that the value of Leibniz's best world is also an open infinity. It appears so in the sense that it has an uncountable infinity of creatures in it: uncountable in the sense that in Leibniz's best world any creature contains within it an infinity of creatures just as great as the infinity of the set of creatures of which it is a member. Like the set of real numbers, once you have counted one creature it is impossible to count another without leaving out an infinity of creatures "in between"; it is impossible to develop a strategy whereby even in an infinite amount of time you could count them all. How can you get more infinite than that?

In ranking infinities, one plausible strategy is to discover some finite aspect of one infinity of things which is conceivably infinitizable, or at least could conceivably be made to approach infinity. In such a case you could rank as superior another infinity just like the first except with that finite aspect infinitized or made to approach infinity. Now the Leibnizean best world is an infinity, but with a finite aspect, namely that each creature within it has a fixed, finite amount of value. So we could say that a world just like the Leibnizean best world but at least some of whose creatures are not fixed in value but rather have values continuously tending to infinity would be superior. Therefore despite the fact that the Leibnizean best world is valuewise

a high-order infinity, it is plausible to say God yet has a superior choice.

A final problem I can foresee for the open-world theory of creation is the increased likelihood it seems to give to the more-than-one-best dilemma. Leibniz had discounted this possibility on the evidence that a world was in fact created, whereas had there been more than one best world God, being perfectly rational and thus incapable of an arbitrary choice, would be stumped and never create. It all may sound silly, but it is really a formidable problem that needs to be addressed. Such is especially true for supporters of an open-world view, since it looks like the dilemma is more likely to occur if we allow open-world choices. This is because open-world theory, as seen above, expressly allows for different world-outcomes resulting from the same open world to be equally glorious. This requires some explanation.

A world-outcome is an open world all of whose "open variables" have been filled in by the churning out of the world's history. Now world-outcomes are extensionally equivalent to Leibnizean worlds, the sole difference being that in the latter case none of the variables now in the "filled-in" state were ever open. With that equivalence in mind we can see that open-world theory in allowing for equally glorious world-outcomes is implicitly denying Leibniz's point that there cannot be two completely filled in worlds both of which are best. Having made that allowance, it now seems all the more difficult to imagine how they can

disallow the same for different open worlds; more difficult because some open worlds, like Leibnizean worlds, differ only in what we would normally consider trivial aspects. But whereas Leibniz could credibly insist that these differences were not really trivial, an open-world theorist can not do the same, since for her God is not called upon to create every detail. So now the dreadful possibility seems to emerge that creation might have never occurred because God had no rational way of deciding whether He should create that open world in which Fred Feldman is created to choose to wear a bow-tie to his first lecture as a college professor, or instead that world where the choice is left up to Fred. There is arguably no difference value-wise.

In fact there is a plausible solution to this problem, one offered by traditional theology no less than by Leibniz himself: the principle of divine economy. God creates the greatest value, and among the ways He could do this He chooses the most efficient, i.e. the one requiring the least amount of creative effort. By this principle, Fred's decision to wear a bow-tie or not would be his own, unless it just happened to be essential to creation's glorious outcome that he did.

Regarding the possibility of open worlds which differ but yet are equally and eminently glorious in outcome and equally and eminently efficient to create, we are left in the same boat as Leibniz. If the argument he used is good, then it would be good here, too. If it is not good, then the

rationalistic conception of God is placed in jeopardy. In one sense it is arguably not good, namely in that it only gives us knowledge of a disjunction: either the rationalistic conception of God is inaccurate, or there is only one possible creation eminent in value and eminently efficient to create. I don't think it is possible for us to go any further than this.

In short, I think the indeterministic open-world theory of creation is quite plausible, in fact at least as plausible as the deterministic closed-world theory. If this is so, then it is also plausible to say that the existence of God is compatible with indeterminism. Moreover, if the open-world theory is indeed plausible, then it is just as plausible to argue that the existence of God is incompatible with determinism. For the gist of open-world theory is that open worlds are superior, and, following Leibniz, it is incompatible with God's perfection to create an inferior world.

#### Final Note to Chapter 4

In closing this Chapter, it can be said that although Leibniz's metaphysics has some very desirable traits that any Christian metaphysics ought to have, such as accommodating the basic possibility of the Eucharist, providing a framework for a reconciliatory envisionment of the Eucharist with respect to interdenominational disputes, providing a cogent and plausible explanation for the remaining species in

the Eucharist that is arguably superior to the Scholastic explanation which has always been in crisis, and justifying God in the face of evil, it remains difficult to consider it as a Christian metaphysics or even as the healthy core of one in that it presents an obstacle to the joint envisionment of the Incarnation and the Trinity, it adopts determinism, and moreover it does so without demonstrating the necessity of doing so. His metaphysics might be excused for obfuscating the Trinity/Incarnation issue, since it has always been and will perhaps always remain foggy. But in light of the fact that he apparently never seriously explored the possibility of indeterminism whereas determinism creates serious difficulties for Christian doctrine, I think the deterministic aspect of his philosophy should weigh against his metaphysics being considered as Christian.

## CLOSING REMARKS

Although Leibniz's attempt at a Christian metaphysics ultimately, I believe, fails on the various counts mentioned, there are four key insights enveloped in the attempt that are of great value concerning the prospects of the mutual supportiveness of faith and reason.

The first insight is that a faith commitment does not necessarily bias one's thinking; nor does the avoidance of bias require pretending or striving not to have a faith commitment. On the contrary, what is required to avoid bias and hypocritical - that is, insufficiently critical - thinking is to face up to one's commitments, and have the courage to use them as aids in developing the formally basic premises of pure reason and see where they lead. An erroneous faith commitment could only be exposed by doing so; that which entails a metaphysical inconsistency can't be true.

The second insight is that bracketing one's faith commitments when doing philosophy hinders the advance of philosophy. The subject matter of faith is also potential subject matter of philosophy, and is of utmost significance to our lives. By bracketing faith commitment we make it very difficult for so much significant potential subject matter to enter philosophy. Formal reasoning, though diligent, is cumbersome, and many things of which we become convinced by faith would only with great difficulty enter the philosophical forum unless they were permitted to enter escorted by faith conviction. From then on they would be



subject to the same scrutiny that other beliefs are subjected to by philosophers.

The third insight is that is that bracketing one's use of reason with respect to faith only hinders the advance of and deepening conviction in true faith. Nor would faith convictions even without qualification as to truth value benefit, either, if John Stuart Mill was correct in arguing that unexamined beliefs lose their significance. It is hard to maintain a strong truth-oriented conviction in things that are protected from rational critique. In such cases it is hard as well to escape the impression that confidence in those faith commitments is lacking.

Finally, the very image of reason among believers is sullied not by its association with faith, but by its separation from faith. If faith is truth denied by reason, then reason must be falsehood. On the other hand, the very image of faith among non-believers is sullied not by its association with reason, but by its separation from it. If faith is belief contrary to reason, then so much the worse for faith.

## APPENDIX A

### THE 1671 LETTER TO ARNAULD

The following is a translation of most of a letter from Leibniz to Antoine Arnauld, his first, dated 1671. Fifteen years transpired before another letter passed between them, at which time their correspondence began in earnest.

The letter in its original Latin is published in C. J. Gerhardt's Die Philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, v. 1, pp. 68-82. It can also be found in Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe, series 2, v. 1, pp. 169-81. Smaller portions of the letter have previously been rendered in English by Leroy E. Loemker in Leibniz - Philosophical Papers and Letters, University of Chicago Press, 1956, pp. 229-33). These portions are fully contained in the following and are rendered all in a piece with the rest of the composite, independently of Loemker's work.

"Although I believe that a letter from an unknown person is bound not to appear to you to be intriguing or noteworthy, you, with the customary gentleness of a great man, excusing all the egregious error lying therein, nonetheless the reason and occasion for my writing to you ought to be set forth.

"When recently, by request, I visited the Most Illustrious Baron Boineburg, a man of both public and private achievements who is surprisingly unaffected by the public acclaim concerning his renowned undertakings, and so admirable in his marvelous vastity of erudition that he incites shame even in those who have done nothing else in their whole lives; a man, then, of most confirmed judgment, by which he, if anyone, has the disposition to recognize the flavor of eloquence and sublimity of the ancients [i.e. of the Church] in the writings of more recent times - of which hardly anything escapes him; a man most ardent

with the zeal of religion and piety, not merely choosing to dedicate his leisure to the correction of public evils, but also concentrating his thoughts, counsel, and deeds toward all that by which international unity might be increased and domestic corruption eradicated; when I recently visited this man, then, your name continually came up. He had just returned from the side of the Most Serene Prince Ernst, Landgrave of Hesse, at a recent colloquium of yours. He had also just received a letter from the Most Ample Fraxineus, in which he was vehemently rejoicing over the opportunity he would soon have of being revealed a new idea of yours while in your company, and over his being on the verge of satisfying, in the near future, more fully that thirst which makes him desire to reflect on your writings whenever he catches wind of even a tenuous rumor of new works by you.

"Discussing these things, soon, as it happened, we slipped into discussing your works on the Eucharist, in which the truth of the mystery, and, may I say, its reality, is asserted, in accordance with the continuous tradition of the Holy Fathers, in opposition to the symbolists. And we rejoiced in the Church have finally obtained victory, who, with repeated replies insisted that she would concede nothing of substance to adversaries once defeated. Hitherto, in fact, rarely had a steady battle been waged. It seemed, rather, that the battle had been fought only with unsteady, light-armed troops that were bound to come up lacking.

"At that point I said: don't doubt me, but that the adversary faction defeated by you, not yet sufficiently defeated, is gathering itself to bring up the rear with their boasting about agreement with the ancients. Specifically they are putting forth arguments of impossibility which solely on account of whose failing acuity of meanings they think themselves able to sustain against all the centuries of consensus among Christian peoples, and which they claim ought to be held everywhere as common sense rather than as absurdities. In particular they are holding [first] to a thesis in itself greater, that if the same body is given in many places, then the body is given under the quantity of another smaller body, yet with all its parts conserved. They are holding to a thesis in itself weaker, although indeed it has almost been persuaded among recent thinkers, that the essence of body consists in quantity, i.e. extension. [With these in hand, they argue that the Eucharist is impossible because it entails the following absurdities. 1.] That the substance is

changed with all the host's qualities retained; even though it is seen by more acute philosophers that substantial form differs from its qualities only in relation to sense, just as the true outline of a city, viewed from a tower at its center, differs from its countlessly many variants that appear when the same area is viewed from without. [2.] That one thing is changed into another, with no matter remaining; even though this does not amount to being changed, but rather to a new thing being created at the extinction of the old. [3.] That a thing changes not only into a new appearance, but -previously unheard of in reason - into a new individual; even though change is the transit of the same individual from state to state. [4.] That a thing actually changes into a thing already existing; even though change is the end of one and the beginning of another, just as what now exists comes from other things. And finally, [5.] that the same thing is made out of many different things, a whole out of singles, and yet, many things having changed into this one whole, it is not increased, just as if it had only received one of them; that is, the same thing is made from the whole and from the part, as if the whole is equal to the part.

"Ultimately change gets rejected by them, especially substantial change. But it cannot be said by them what the act of the thing, its force, is; what effect underlies it; what reality there is in the host, in virtue of which it is called the body of Christ, rather than just another piece of bread, which indeed it resembles in all aspects, except in that it is honored with another name.

"These arguments they hold, and more challenging ones still: weapons of which it is to be hoped that these enemies of the Church may be disarmed.

"I added [in the continuing discussion] that there are two kinds of people who need to be persuaded. Some indeed, especially concerning things remote from common practical experience, are led by authority, leaving for others the more pointed inquiry into the heart of things. Among this kind of people nothing is persuaded by proofs of long duration, but by consensus of the people. Others, though, philosophize with their own minds; they don't choose to accept anything except those things which can be clearly and distinctly conceived, much less still those things which become more entangled the more they are explained. These people despise all those terms which either do not signify anything or are unexplained, terms by which inanities are protected. It has been persuaded among these people that the ancients,

most of whom were destitute of philosophy, even haters of it, indulged in rhetorical disputes in order to render the mysteries of the faith more admirable to the masses. Then little by little opinions passed over into dogma; the later scholastics, having lost the method of dialectic and given themselves over to fantastic speculations, passed down to us that frivolous philosophy by no one understood, the greater part of which is solely in defense of transubstantiation, or prepared solely for defending it. Such conclusions Bacon, Hobbes, and the author of the astonishing new book *De Libertate Philosophandi* [better known as the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, authored by Baruch Spinoza] have drawn, to the monstrous applause of the great men of their school of thought. And it is amazing how much the philosophy of Descartes confirms them - and it has been quite favorably received by them - both in that it is meticulous and in that it seems irreconcilable with the Roman Church. For will one who believes that the essence of body consists in extension ever believe that a body can take on the extension of something else, while retaining its own substance? Whence all Descartes's protests to the contrary are believed simulated and inconsistent with fact. Such is the judgment of the Society of Jesus and of many orders concerning Descartes; the philosophy of Descartes is had by these orders as a foe of their religion. This fact is exploited by opponents of their religion as an argument of its falsity. For indeed, that religion is suspect which shrinks back from the very analysis of its terms, which despises self-examination, and hates that philosophy among whose first principles is that nothing is to be admitted except that which is clearly and distinctly apprehended. The philosophical age is dawning in which a more acute interest in truth is being diffused even outside the schools, among men born in the Republic. The true propagation of religion will be hopeless unless it satisfies these men. A great portion of conversions will be through philosophy. Nothing works better at confirming Atheism or certainly at strengthening naturalism and undermining from its foundation - as it has nearly already done - the slipping faith of many important, though blameworthy people in the Christian religion, than on the one hand to advocate that the mysteries of faith are always believed by all Christians, and on the other hand to be convinced of stupidities by certain kinds of demonstrations of "right reason". There are many within the Church who are more bitter enemies of

her than the heretics themselves. It is to be feared, lest the heresy in the end be, if not Atheism, then perhaps a vulgarized naturalism, or even Mohammedism. To the latter belongs very little dogma, hardly any unless some ritual is joined to it; it is because of this that it has occupied almost all the Orient. The Socinians, who are now lifting their heads throughout Britain and central Germany, are arriving at such a doctrine, and they are meticulously occupying themselves with whatever comes from the minds of great men.

"It is set before us to do battle with these enemies, whose game is to ridicule the simplicity of the ancients, after having expounded their own philosophy.

"I virtually consider you as one - and by this we would refute Pascal - who can do battle on either side, who is equally strong both in erudition and wisdom, a rare coupling. For example, take *Ars Cogitandi*, a book of great profundity, the author of which, whoever he is, is certainly from your school.

"I remarked [in the discussion] that many things had suggested themselves to me in thought on the same subject, having especially to do with the Eucharist, which I think largely pertain to this affair of great moment. At that point, however, the Most Illustrious Boineburg, who remembered the things that had already been proposed by me several years ago in regards to explaining the mysteries of faith, especially the possibility of the Eucharist; and who recalled also that these explanations had received at that time more than mediocre acclaim, began to exhort me urgently, lest I might lose this opportunity of writing you. He accepted responsibility for the realization of this letter. I, motivated by his authority, yet sure of your good faith and virtue, have sent you this letter which you now have before you, whose vastness of breadth I hope the nature of the matters being treated will in your eyes excuse. And now, if you will permit, the motivation for my studies ought to be outlined a little more in depth.

"Amid so many distractions, I deem myself to have dwelt more persistently on hardly another issue in the course of this life of mine, however short, than on what it is that will render me secure in the life to come. I confess that surely this one issue has been for me by far the chief cause for philosophizing. Through this effort, moreover, I have obtained a reward not to despised: peace of mind, and in addition can declare that there have been proven by me some things which heretofore either were merely believed, or indeed,

even though of great importance, ignored. I saw that Geometry, or philosophy of space, constructs a stepping-stone to philosophy of motion or body, and that philosophy of motion prepares the way for science of the mind. Concerning motion, then, several propositions of great importance have been demonstrated by me, of which I shall name two: first, that there is no cohesion, or consistency, to a resting thing, contrary to seemed to Descartes to be the case; consequently, whatever is at rest can be divided and moved by any motion however small. I followed up the consequences of this proposition a long way, and found that a body at rest is nothing; it does not differ from vacuous space. Whence follows a demonstration of the Copernican hypothesis and many other new things in natural science.

"The other proposition is that every motion is in a full homocentric circle; rectilinear, spiral, elliptic, oval, or heterocentric circular motions can none of them be found in the world, unless a vacuum is admitted.

"It is not necessary here to speak concerning the other propositions. I mention these two, however, because from them follows something useful for our present purpose: from the latter, it follows that the essence of body does not consist in extension, that is, in magnitude and shape; because necessarily, vacuous space is different from body, even though it is extended. From the former of the two propositions, it follows that the essence of body, rather than in extension, consists in motion, since the notion of space is resolved into magnitude and shape, that is, into extension.

"In geometry I have demonstrated certain fundamental propositions, on which rests the geometry of indivisibles, the source of inventions and proofs: that undoubtedly, any point has less space than any given extension; that that points have parts, although these are indistant; that consequently Euclid does not err in speaking of parts of extension; that nothing is indivisible, and yet there are unextended things; that there exists some point greater than some other point, but greater to a lesser degree than can be shown, that is, still in infinitesimal proportion to any sensible extension; and finally, that angle is the quantity of point. I added then that from the analysis of indivisibles it follows that the relation of rest to motion is not like that of a point to space, but that of zero to one; that force to motion is as point to space; that there can be many forces simultaneously in one body, but not contrary motions simultaneously in the same body;

that sometimes one point of a body moved of its own impetus is, at a time, in several places, at several points of space, that is, in a part of space greater in extension than itself; that that which is moved is never in just one place, not even for a certain infinitesimal instant of time; and that, if one body exerts upon another, they are both at the start of penetration or union, that is, their extremes become one, just as Aristotle defined the continuum as "where the extremes are one". Hence all and only those bodies are one which exert upon each other. There are even certain immanent parts or "signs" [to points] and this fact can be confirmed in case of continuously accelerated motion. Since this motion is growing at any instant, including the initial instant, and since growth entails the apposition of a prior sign and a posterior sign, necessarily, at any given instant, one sign is prior to another, yet not with respect to extension, i.e. not with respect to any distance between signs whose proportion to any detectable time-span, however small, is greater than any other specifiable proportion between time-spans. That is, the ratio is that of a point to a line.

"Furthermore, from these propositions I obtained great fruit, not only regarding the laws of motion which are yet to be explained, but also concerning the theory of mind. Since it has been shown by me that the true place of our mind is a certain point or center, from this I deduced certain interesting consequences concerning: the incorruptibility of the mind, the impossibility of desisting from thought, the impossibility of forgetting, and the true and intimate difference between motion and thought. Thought consists in exertion, just as body consists in motion. Every body can be understood as momentaneous mind, lacking memory. Every exertion in bodies, with respect to its determination, is indestructible. Also, since an exertion in the mind is, with respect to its degree of velocity, like a body in the course of motions, so then mind consists in harmony of exertions. The present motion of a body originates from the composition of preceding exertions; the present exertion of mind, that is, will, originates from the composition of preceding harmonies into a new one: satisfaction. If something else charged with force disturbs the harmony of such satisfaction, this results in pain. These things and many others I hope to explain in these *Elementa de Mente* [*Elementa de Mente et Corpore*, 1672 (?)] on which I am working. In this vein I might dare shed something of light in



defense of the mysteries of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of Predestination, and, concerning which I am about to speak, of the Eucharist.

"...Besides these things, I declare and believe to have mastered in a brief booklet the *Elementa Juris Naturalis* [1671 (?)] in which everything is explained from definitions alone. A good or just man I define as one who loves everyone. Love is satisfaction derived from the happiness of others, and pain derived from the unhappiness of others. Happiness is satisfaction without pain, satisfaction is the sensing of harmony, pain the sensing of disharmony. Sense is thought together with will, and will is the exertion of acting. Harmony is diversity balanced by identity. Certainly, variety pleases us, but only once having been brought back into unity.

"From these definitions I deduce all the theorems of natural law and justice. Permissible would be that which is possible for a good man. That would be obligatory which is necessary for a good man. From all this it appears that the just man, who loves all people, just as necessarily strives to help all people even when he cannot, as a rock tries to fall, even when it is hanging. I show that every obligation is absolved by maximal effort; that it is the same to love all people and to love God, the seat of universal harmony; that indeed it is the same to truly love, that is, to be wise, and to love God above all things; which is to love all people; which is to be just. If many abstained from pleasing themselves, as is preferable, then a greater good would result in the sum total. Hence, in the case of a community, all else being equal, it is better, that is, publicly more loving, to do so. For whatever is contained in this community will be multiplied by reflection into many, just as by pleasing this community many individuals will be pleased. Indeed, that community is to preferred, all else being equal, which has the most good. It will be shown, in fact, that pleasing has the property not of addition but of multiplication. Now if two numbers, one greater than the other, are multiplied by the same number, multiplication adds more to the greater one:  $5 \times 2 = 10$ ;  $10 \times 2 = 20$ ;  $6 \times 2 = 12$ ;  $12 \times 2 = 24$ ; it is clear. But the addition of 5 to itself three times makes 15, and 6, 18. We profit more in the total result by multiplying the greater number by the same multiplicans. This difference between addition and multiplication has a great use, even in the doctrine of justice. However, the reason why to please is to multiply and to harm is to divide is that that which is pleased is the mind. The

mind, however, by enjoying all things can devote itself to all things, which, in turn, is in itself to produce or multiply. Assign 3 to someone's having wisdom and 4 to his having ability. His total estimation will be 12, not 7, for he can use his wisdom just to the degree of his ability. Even concerning things of the same kind, he who has a hundred thousand gold coins is richer than are a hundred collectively, each of whom has a thousand. For unity produces utility. The one man increases his profit even at rest. The others lose wealth even while working. Therefore, in pleasing, when the necessity is the same, the wiser person is always to be preferred; when the degree of wisdom seems the same, then the more fortunate one is to be preferred, as he is the one whom God favors. For to be born well-disposed for having wisdom is a matter of fortune, that is, it is a gift of God. From these considerations the abundance of good things that either derive from happiness or which result from hard work is explained. And the one who possesses them is to be preferred for pleasing, just as he is favored by fate. On the other hand, in the case of two who are headed together toward the same loss, to the extent that it is a case of losing out and being harmed, that one is to be preferred for helping who is penitent to the one who is deceitful. But whoever is in such a situation by chance or misfortune is to be preferred to both of the other two.

"There is hardly anything which does not admit of being deduced from these principles. Even this: that ruler is truly a hero in the end who seeks his chance for fame in the happiness of the human race. Thus I have circumscribed a doctrine of predestination of this sort by means of these brief, schematized principles, and I have taken care that it have been examined, point by point, by several distinguished theologians from all areas throughout Germany, with all of them being unaware of its author. It may surprise you that it is receiving ubiquitous consensus. Of course, most disputes are in no part resolved by recourse to certain terms whose definitions are designed to confound.

"It remains that I speak of the Eucharist. It has been four years, as was acknowledged by the Most Illustrious Boineburg, since I have been reflecting on the following problem: how to explain the possibility of the mysteries of the Eucharist, or what amounts to the same thing, how to so explicate it that we may finally arrive, by continuous, unbroken analysis, at conceded primary postulates of divine potency. Now in a certain

manner it is to be deemed that a geometer has already solved a problem, that is, he has explicated some possible manner of being for it and thus explained its possibility, at that moment when he has reduced it to other already solved problems, or to problems not requiring a solution, that is, to postulates, which are to problems as axioms are to theorems. And this, happily, I seem to myself to have finally accomplished with respect to the Eucharist. When it was first grasped by me both that the essence of body does not consist in extension, as Descartes thought - a great man otherwise, without a doubt - but in motion, and that therefore the substance of body, that is, its nature - and this agrees even with Aristotle's definition - is its principle of motion (there being no absolute resting place in bodies); and yet also that the principle of motion - the substance - of a body lacks extension; at that time it appeared most clearly why substance differed from its appearances and the method was discovered by which God can be clearly and distinctly conceived to bring it about that the substance of the same body be in many scattered places, or, what is the same, under many appearances. In fact this will also be shown - something which has not occurred to anybody: Transubstantiation and Real Multipresence do not differ in the final analysis. Nor can a body otherwise be able to be in many scattered places, but that its substance be conceived as given under various appearances. The substance of the body itself is not in fact subject to extension and not, consequently, subject to the conditions of space, as will be distinctly shown when the notion of corporeal substance, as far as it is of importance in this matter, is explicated. So therefore it is not the case that Transubstantiation, as expressed in cautious phraseology by the Council of Trent and as elucidated by me in accordance with Doctor Thomas, contradicts the Augsburg Confession. On the contrary, the former follows from the latter.

"On the surface, then, there remains but one controversy, if any, between the two parties: is the Real Presence, or Transubstantiation, either one - which I will show entail one another - instantaneous, not lasting except for the moment of use or consumption, as the Augsburg Confession teaches, or indeed, after having begun to exist from the time of consecration, does it last up until the time of the corruption of its species [appearance], as the Roman Church teaches? This controversy does not pertain to the matter at hand, for either claim is equally possible. For in fact duration of itself does not alter the nature of a

thing. Which of the two God has willed is to be ascertained by the authority of Sacred Scripture and by Church tradition. But once this question has been resolved, is it also decided whether adoration is owed to the host? This is the only practical question that remains between the Council of Trent and the Augsburg Confession concerning the Eucharist. (I don't speak now concerning the participation of many appearances under one nature, nor of the nature of these appearances; these questions do not touch upon the manner of the mystery.) For if the body of Christ is not present except in the moment of use, the host ought not be adored before having been consumed, yet once consumed it cannot be adored. As for the manner or way of the mystery, if you take away duration, those not knowing it will experience the same thing. Than this observation nothing can be thought of toward more effectively hammering back at those who jest you and your colleagues, you who are more eloquent than they in proving and defending either Real Presence or Transubstantiation.

"What, however, the substance of body is and how it differs from its physical appearances I hope will be placed by me in as clear a light as thought and motion have been. Let me submit everything to you censure. I am counting on success and approvers through you for a matter of perhaps some importance in increasing the union of souls and in defending our faith against insults which we have hitherto countenanced with a refusal to quarrel. That thunderbolt having been endured by which many great men are frightened away, a huge door for return to unity will lay open.

"Furthermore, so that you might have more faith in my promises, let me say something of the worry which I have had concerning religion. Now, I am very far from credulity; none of it for me. I might nearly say that I've not given in to it even regarding faith. I have believed in fact that any amount of rigour that was surrendered in an affair of such importance as religion amounted to evasion of the truth. I have researched studiously and read diligently whoever has been thought of either as most bitter toward our faith or most felicitous toward it. I have not wanted any negligence on my part to ever be able to pose itself as an obstacle against me. I have pursued whatever has been authored by innovators everywhere on the subject of religion, lest in the end some noteworthy objection or consideration might escape me.... I did not even avoid the subtlety of the Socinians - than whom no one is better in good, no one worse in evil - and in doing so I experienced an effect contrary to

what the censors had feared. Nothing, indeed, confirmed me more in the faith than that the dreadful names of the rabble did not considerably move me with fear; than that they restored me even more deeply and securely in the faith. Indeed,

*Et cum fata volunt, bina venena juvant.*  
[When the fates so will, even double  
poisons are healthful.]

In fact, when I was examining together the lofty thoughts of great geniuses - which on account of their loftiness were erroneous - I often marveled at the providence of God, placing one of these thoughts before another so that the judicious reader could put together out of these very thoughts a fully admirable system of excellent documents, if he would just direct his attention most steadfastly to those points that are in agreement with the traditions of the Catholic Church.

"It remains that I say something to you about other slightly more popular studies of mine which are less withdrawn from the senses....

"I have constructed a physical hypothesis... so great is its simplicity and clarity, that it even seems to some to be more certain than a hypothesis. I can but set a summary of it before your eyes.

"Before all things it is manifest that either the earth or the sun moves. Although I may seem to have proven elsewhere, in effect, the motion of the earth, on the grounds that there is no cohesion nor consistency, nor indeed corporeality, to a thing at rest, still, a light circles around our earth in a daily motion. This light, in turn, consists in the motion of a certain body more subtle than air, which one may call 'aether'. This motion of aether is twofold. For aether, on the one hand, is set in a forward direction before the light by rays of light pressing against it, and on the other hand, expands laterally. It goes before the light from east to west lined up with the equator and the parallels, whereas it moves laterally, toward the poles, along the meridians.

"From this one obvious and I might nearly say necessary assumption I deduce nearly all the phenomena of nature, which I refer to under three main headings: gravity, elasticity, and verticity. These I claim are derived from the disturbed and self-restoring motion of aether. From them are derived all phenomena. For the circulation of aether, which is, accordingly, the sufficiently forceful motion of a body in a thin liquid,

attempts to remove the disturbing body; and every motion is disturbed by interposition of a denser, more solid body. For that is a solid whose parts move in conspiring motion. A liquid is an aggregate of smaller solids. Hence if a solid is placed among less dense bodies, or what amounts to the same, if a liquid is placed among denser bodies, then the lighter portions or parts, having been excited, press toward becoming a solid, that is, into becoming not as easily divisible into small parts. The denser parts try to dissolve into smaller parts. But the solid, because of its conspiring inner motion, from which it has been forged, will resist....

"I have designed two devices, one for doing arithmetic, the other for doing geometry. The former, quite portable, works in such a way that addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of the greatest numbers are quickly carried out with almost no mental effort on the part of the operator.

"The other device will introduce a new method for mechanically solving analytic equations, proportions and and transformations of shapes with neither table nor counter nor sketches, and for perfecting geometry as much as is necessary for its practical application. For to tell the truth, we do not need the trisection of an angle or the squaring of a circle, nor for that matter the solutions of other problems of the kind. They have already been solved accurately enough for practical purposes so that it is in our power how much error we wish to allow. According to this standard, if we applied the device to all imaginable geometric objects, I don't see what could be left to be desired.

"Nothing important about my other endeavors comes to mind. Some of them may seem rash in promise unless they are observed at the same moment in which they are being worked on. I submit one of them for your consideration: I fell upon a method of compressing air at least 100 times that pressure which we had previously been able to attain. Therefore it can be estimated how much elastic force is necessary for air to be air.

"I hope some day to be given the opportunity of speaking with you in person about these and other topics. For indeed, I seriously believe, and I am not alone in so thinking, that such is your learnedness and authority that, for promoting the efforts of those who stick their necks out for the advancement of society, another person could not easily be found who is more skilled than you at recognizing them and more effective than you at commending them. I hope also to be able to propose

to you several things -several contributions to the sciences - that may lead to a somewhat more profound access to human happiness; to a significantly greater certitude in the science of medicine, of whose now deplorable state of confusion kings no less than the common folk complain; to technological success; and to the defense of religion and the knowledge of God and mind.

"Someone other than you would perhaps be angered at or ridicule the length of this letter, especially the first part. Of you, that is, a wise man who considers each thing according to its own weight and measure, I have been convinced otherwise. You know that I could in no wise have spoken excessively in this space on so many things; and that not everyone who takes up many issues at once is vain or rash. Still, I may pass over all my other speculation; I wish one thing: that it be permitted that your opinion infrom me, in several lines, at least concerning the subject of the Eucharist. You also have intimate friends of whom you may make use of in this regard.

"To anyone else whose hand might reach this letter: I suspect very little to be of value here; however, I still very strongly plead that the letter not be copied from. "I have only written these things with trust and confidence in your virtue. What remains to be said is: farewell, illustrious man, and may you remain to enjoy for a long time your own repute, which you have earned from the public on account of outstanding benevolent actions. Be favorable toward me, a most devout cultivator of your virtues, etc."

## APPENDIX B

### AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Many authors have given but well-researched sketches of Leibniz's life. Perhaps the best source of facts about Leibniz's life is Kurt Müller's *Leben und Werke von G. W. Leibniz - Eine Chronik* (1969).

Leibniz himself has left us two curious autobiographical sketches from his earlier years. They are recorded in Foucher de Careil (pp. 379-389), under the titles "*Vita Leibnitii a Se Ipso Breviter Delineata*" and "*Imago Leibnitii a Se Ipso Adumbrata*". What follows is a translation of the latter.

"His father was slender and bilious, though more sanguine, and was most greatly afflicted by stones. He passed away in one week from the extenuation of this malady, with no suffocation. His mother, with catarrh obstructing her esophagus and chest, did suffocate.

"His temperament does not appear to be straightforwardly either bilious, nor pituitous [phlegmatic], nor melancholic. It is not sanguine, on account of paleness in the face and lack of exercise. Not bilious, as evidenced by lack of thirst, straight hair, canine appetite, and propensity to sleep deeply. Not pituitous, on account of frequent change and speedy development of mental and emotional states, and slenderness of the body. Not frigid, that is, melancholy and desiccated, as shown by rapid movement of the intellect and will. It seems, however, that biliousness predominates.

"His stature is average and slender, face pale, his hands quite cold; his feet are longer than usual for his stature, just as his fingers are dryer than normal, lacking the propensity to perspire. The hair on his head is brownish, and he does not have a great deal of body hair. His eyesight from youth is not keen. His voice is soft, more high and clear than strong; ready of speech, but not sufficiently composed, for he pronounces guttural letters and "K" with difficulty. His lungs are tender, his liver desiccated and hot, and his



hands are crossed with innumerable lines. He delights in sweets, as he does in sugar itself, which he customarily mixes in wine. He also delights in the comforting aromas of the air, firmly persuaded that in rejuvenating the spirits there is much place for these aromas, provided they are not hot. He is not bothered by coughing, and rarely sneezes. Nor is he afflicted by catarrh; he rarely ejects phlegm, but often spits, especially after drinking, and in proportion to the bitterness of what he drinks. His eyes are not swimming in liquid, but are much more dry: hence the dullness of sight for things farther away; it is sharper for things positioned nearer. His nighttime sleep is uninterrupted, since he goes to bed late, greatly preferring study by lamplight to morning study.

"His lifestyle since youth has been sedentary with little physical activity. From the start he has read and reflected on many things, and in many subjects is self-taught. He goes more deeply in all matters than most people do, desiring to penetrate and discover new things.

"He hasn't a great appetite for conversation, having more of one for meditation and private reading. Once drawn into conversation, he continues it with sufficient gusto, enjoying free and good-humoured discussions more than games, or exercises of continuous movement.

"Emotionally he is quite easily stirred, but anger, once arrived, just as quickly dissipates.

"You will never see him sad or cheerful to excess. He doesn't experience pain or joy except in moderation. His laugh more frequently causes just an opening of the mouth than chest convulsions. He is timid in initiating projects, audacious in carrying them out.

"Regarding defects, He seems to lack a vivid imagination.

"Regarding faulty memory, minor omissions of the present afflict him more than major omissions of the past.

"He is given to exceptional inventiveness and judgment, for it is not difficult for him to do various things at once: read, write, speak extemporaneously, and if necessary, get to the bottom of an intellectual subject matter by meditating on it. Thus I infer that his brain is dry and spirited.

"His body-spirits are excessively agitated. For this reason I fear that he might one day break out with some sickness or radical humid consumption on account of assiduous study, excessive meditation, and physical tenuity."

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