

## Leibniz on Divine Concurrence

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### 1. The Challenge

Leibniz was a divine concurrentist. That is to say, when it came to the question of how God's causal power relates to the natural causal activity of creatures, Leibniz held that both God and the creature are directly involved in the occurrence of these effects.

A divine concurrentist, in general, intends to satisfy two theses that were held by the vast majority of theologians and theistic philosophers of the seventeenth century, not to mention the Middle Ages: (1) Creatures or finite substances have real causal powers, and (2) God's causal power is immediately and directly present in every aspect of the world, including those very effects thought to be brought about by creatures. Hence, the creature and God *concur* in bringing about the effect. The problem, as one might suspect, is that it is not obvious how, or even whether, the two requirements can be met simultaneously.

Leibniz faced this challenge in the form of Malebranche's occasionalism. Malebranche argues that a certain understanding of the directness and immediacy of God's causal involvement requires one to give up the claim that creatures have genuine causal powers. His most persuasive argument is founded on the principle that "conservation is but continuous creation."<sup>1</sup> The idea is that since God conserves the world by continuously recreating it, he not only sustains the existence of substances but also fully determines their states and properties. For instance, in his Seventh Dialogue in the *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, Malebranche argues that God cannot will, say, a chair to exist, "without at the same time willing that it exist either here or there and without His will placing it somewhere."<sup>2</sup> Just as in the initial act of creation *ex nihilo*, God alone fully caused and determined the entire state of affairs, in every subsequent "conserving" act of the world, it is God who does everything. This being the case, there is nothing left for creatures to do, hence Malebranche's denial of genuine causal powers in creatures.<sup>3</sup>

The difficulty for Leibniz arises from his agreement with Malebranche on the truth of the "conservation is but continuous creation" principle.<sup>4</sup> For he must reconcile "conservation is but continuous creation," whose acceptance looks like a key step on the road toward occa-

sionalism, with his own view that creatures are indeed possessed of real causal powers. For Leibniz, there can be no question of relinquishing the position attributing such powers to substances. In fact, for the mature Leibniz, “[t]hat which does not act does not merit the name of substance” (T 393).<sup>5</sup> The question, however, remains: how does one block Malebranche’s inference from the “conservation is but continuous creation” principle to occasionalism? How does one preserve the genuine causal activity of creatures while accommodating the pervasive, and seemingly exhaustive, causal contribution of God implied by this principle? These are the considerable, not to say overwhelming, challenges that Leibniz’s account of divine concurrence must overcome.

The challenge can be put in a slightly different manner: as a divine concurrentist, Leibniz appears to be trying to weave an account of causality from two key strands of his mature philosophy that pull in opposite directions. On the one hand, given his unwavering commitment to the genuine causal activity inherent in finite substances, we get a picture of the universe, full of substances that are intrinsically active and mutually harmonious, each bringing about a marvelous array of events, so that the world appears to run on its own power, free from intervention and influence. On the other hand, however, there is Leibniz’s deep commitment to central theological principles, which in some cases so emphasize the role of divine activity that occasionalists like Malebranche literally infer their thesis of occasionalism from them. In other words, Leibniz’s endorsement of the “conservation is but continuous creation” principle reveals the deeply theistic side of his metaphysics wherein the resulting picture appears uncomfortably close to being occasionalistic: worldly events and creatures are deeply dependent upon divine causation, so much so that the conservation of the world is none other than its continuous recreation. It is no wonder then that interpreters have struggled to provide Leibniz with a viable account of divine concurrence.<sup>6</sup>

One way of better appreciating the formidable difficulties that confront such attempts is to consider the problems that face the leading interpretation on this issue, that of Robert Sleigh.<sup>7</sup> According to Sleigh, creatures contribute by producing the imperfections in their states, while God contributes by producing the perfections. This illuminating account has considerable merits. Nonetheless, I will argue against it by presenting two major difficulties. Roughly put, the first is that, on his reading, creatures end up being reduced to mere founts of

imperfection and evil, which goes against Leibniz's explicit statements to the contrary. The second concerns what appears to be a background assumption of Sleigh's proposal, one that rests on a problematic understanding of the nature of limitations and their relation to perfections. After presenting reasons why Sleigh's interpretation naturally leads us to understand perfections and limitations as being produced from distinct dual principles, I will argue that a careful reading of the relevant texts supports instead a Neoplatonic conception of perfections and limitations.

In the next section of the paper, I will discuss what might seem to be a natural alternative to Sleigh's account, one in which the model of concurrence involves a cooperation between causes I will label "productive"—that is, causes that *bring about* actual perfections or reality in the world in the sense that they are the productive *source* of the *perfection* (or *reality*) within these natural effects.<sup>8</sup> In other words, I will consider another candidate for a Leibnizian account of divine concurrence, one that avoids the problems facing Sleigh's account by suggesting that God and the creature, both as "productive" causes, cooperate in bringing about the existent perfections. But, in the end, I will reject this dual "productive" cause model of cooperation, by arguing that it actually faces a deeper, more serious problem and, thus, is not really an alternative. My main argument against this model will be that in positing such "productive" powers in creatures, one is effectively not treating Leibniz as a concurrentist at all.

The positive element of this paper will consist in presenting a novel account of Leibniz on concurrence. I will argue, on the basis of the Neoplatonic reading of perfections and limitations discussed earlier, that Leibnizian creatures are causally active in that they are endowed with the force of *rational determination*. This power is not a "productive" one, since the creature, on my reading, is not the productive source of either the perfections or the imperfections within its effects. Rather, it is a power that determines and demands: it determines, in the sense that it completely prescribes all the actual states of the creature itself and its cohabitants; it demands, in the sense that the value or goodness of the state of affairs so prescribed is what motivates God's decision to bring it into actual existence and sustain it over other possible scenarios. So, on my proposal, creaturely powers for Leibniz will turn out to be something like a fusion of powers that have traditionally been identified as those of "formal" and "final" causes.<sup>9</sup>

This proposal will seem controversial to some interpreters in that I am not only suggesting that creaturely causes are very different from our typical understanding of what causes are like, but also arguing that Leibniz held the antiquated notions of formal and final causation to be at the core of what is causally real in creatures. A related worry will be that if creatures are said to be causally active simply because they possess the force of the reasons that determine and demand God's productive activity, this might appear to leave creatures rather forceless, perhaps too much like Malebranchean occasions. But this last step, as I shall show, is not one that Leibniz would take, since the inference from the lack of productive causal power to the lack of causal power *simpliciter* works only if one assumes that all genuine causes must be productive causes.<sup>10</sup> I grant that a productive cause that is the productive source of the reality in actual states of affairs is surely real for Leibniz, but the roster of genuine causes is not exhausted by such causes and a creature that determines and demands is also genuinely causal, or so I shall argue. In the Leibnizian scheme of things, just as the causal power of God to create and conserve our world is real, so is the power of the reasons that determine and demand of God that our world be created and sustained in a particular manner. Thus, I will in effect be arguing that Leibniz endorses distinctive types of causation as real and genuine, an endorsement that might seem foreign to those who are accustomed to reductive analyses of causation, where the objective is to provide a singular, unified account of all causation. Such attempts would not have been entirely foreign to Leibniz, since, on my reading of Malebranche, this was the kind of project that Malebranche was in part engaged in.<sup>11</sup> But sensitivity does not entail sympathy and, though Leibniz was most likely aware of this reductive approach, he was not sympathetic to it. From Leibniz's perspective, such an approach does not give due credit to a fundamental feature of this world, namely, its goodness or value, and, more importantly, it neglects the force that such value possesses and exerts in the form of determining and demanding divine productive activity. This is a causal force that cannot be accounted for by an understanding of causation that permits only productive causes in its story.<sup>12</sup>

A preliminary remark about the textual evidence. The texts for my interpretation mainly come from the last decade of Leibniz's career. In particular, I will focus on the *Theodicy* (1710) and a closely related essay published in 1712 in the *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*—commonly known as *Mémoires de Trévoux*.<sup>13</sup> Thus, I also

take myself to be arguing that the view I am attributing to Leibniz is his mature and settled view on the issue of concurrence. This claim, however, does not rule out the possibility that Leibniz held a different view of concurrence at an earlier time in his career or, for that matter, an altogether different position with regard to the relation between divine causal activity and the causal powers of a finite substance.<sup>14</sup> I want to leave open this possibility and will not argue extensively against it here. Nonetheless, I do want to suggest provisionally that there doesn't seem to be enough textual evidence to warrant the identification of an earlier position on concurrence, distinct from what I present as his mature view. In support of this provisional conclusion, I will examine two earlier texts which deal with issues related to concurrence.<sup>15</sup> In the end, I will argue that, in both cases, the views presented in these texts are at least, consistent with, if not supportive of the reading I will be proposing.

## 2. Robert Sleight's Proposal

Leibniz's way out of the puzzle of concurrence, according to one illuminating and suggestive interpretation, is to hold that "God produces whatever there is of perfection in the states of creatures; [and] creatures produce whatever there is of limitation in their own states."<sup>16</sup> Robert Sleight sees in Leibniz's theory of concurrence a version of the "divided effort" principle, according to which "there are actions of creatures in which some aspect is to be uniquely credited to the creature and some distinct aspect is to be credited to God."<sup>17</sup> A key text Sleight presents as evidence occurs in *Causa Dei*:<sup>18</sup>

In acting, things depend on God, since God concurs in the actions of things, insofar as there is something of perfection in their actions, which, at least, must emanate from God.

God's concurrence ... is both immediate and special. It is immediate, because the effect depends on God not only because its cause originates in God, but also because God concurs no less nor more remotely in producing this effect than in producing its cause.

His concurrence is special, because it is directed not only at the existence and actions of a thing, but also at the manner and qualities of this existence, in so far as there is something of perfection in them, which always proceeds from God. (G 6:440)

More evidence for this view, according to Sleight, comes from a piece originally published in the *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux*

*Arts* in 1712, under the title “Remarks of Mr. Leibniz on the Sixth Philosophical Letter printed at Trévoux in 1703”:<sup>19</sup>

the perfection that is in the action of the creature comes from God, but the limitations that are found there are a consequence of the original limitation and of the preceding limitations that have occurred in the creature.<sup>20</sup>

On Sleigh’s picture, the division of labor seems to be clear: perfections are produced by God and limitations by creatures. And this division of labor in producing the action of the creature is what seems to satisfy the desiderata of an adequate model of concurrence: on the one hand, there is genuine creaturely causation in the form of producing limitations; on the other, God’s direct causal contribution in the form of producing perfections.<sup>21</sup>

The analogy of the “division of labor,” then, seems quite literal on Sleigh’s model, since both God and the created substance appear to contribute to the outcome as *sources* of perfections and limitations, respectively, and by producing them. In other words, Sleigh’s picture seems to presume that the labor shared is the work of causes of a similar *type*, differing only with respect to what they produce, with the desirable result that the joint effect of the concurring causes secures the genuine causality of both causes.

One advantage of such a reading is that, since creatures are the independent source of the negative contributions, it gives Leibniz grounds for attributing sin and other evils to creatures, thus satisfying at least one demand of a theodicy. Sin and other evils may be attributed to creatures on the grounds that they, not God, are the source of negative contributions and, moreover, that in producing evil, they go about doing this in and of themselves. Sleigh’s proposed version of concurrence provides Leibniz with a way to deal with the “author of sin” problem.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these merits, however, Sleigh’s proposal faces some serious difficulties as well. For one, it does not appear to leave room for active forces or tendencies toward perfection in finite substances. Given Leibniz’s identification of activity with the increase in perfection and passivity with the decrease of perfection, in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* 15, if God alone is said to produce all the perfections in the states of creatures, with creatures producing only their imperfections, then, as Robert Adams has pointed out, “the conclusion is close at hand that God’s is the only *active* force and that creatures have only *passive*

force.”<sup>23</sup> But this cannot be right, since Leibnizian creatures are clearly endowed with primitive active forces, identified by Leibniz with their substantial forms and tendencies toward perfection. In other words, creatures, on Sleigh’s reading, genuinely contribute to the outcome by providing the imperfections, but this is at the price of being degraded to those things capable of contributing only the defective aspects of the outcome, a price Leibniz would not be willing to pay.

The second problem I find with Sleigh’s account has to do with how Sleigh seems to understand the “limitations” or “imperfections” of created substances, which allegedly are the effects of the creature’s negative contributions. As we have seen, on Sleigh’s picture, perfections and limitations seem to be distinctive elements originating from different sources, which combine to produce a given state of a creature. God acts as the active force producing perfections, while the creature acts as the passive force producing imperfections or limitations, counterbalancing the perfections produced by God. In my view, however, this way of viewing the relation between perfections and limitations is misleading.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Limitations as Privations

One reason for thinking that this way of interpreting limitations or imperfections is problematic is that Leibniz explicitly rejects an appeal to a principle of duality in numerous places, including a key passage in the *Dialogue on Human Freedom and the Origin of Evil* (1695).<sup>25</sup> Here, we find the following exchange between A and B, which represent Baron Dobrzensky and Leibniz respectively, concerning the origin of evil:

A. – ... [h]ow did sin come into the world, since God, the creator of the world, is infinitely good and infinitely powerful? To account for sin there must be another infinite cause capable of counterbalancing the influence of divine goodness.

B. – I can name you such a thing.

A. – You would therefore be a Manichean, since you admit two principles, one of good and the other of evil.

B. – You yourself will acquit me of this charge of Manicheanism when I name this other principle.

A. – Then please name it now, sir.

B. – It is nothingness [*le Néant*]. ...

A. – You are joking, no doubt. [This is] almost like a wise man whose book about Nothing I remember having seen. (Passentius, *de Nihilo*)

B. – No, I am not joking. The Platonists and Saint Augustine himself have already shown us that the cause of good is positive, but that evil is a defect,

that is, a privation or negation, and consequently, it arises from nothingness or nonbeing.

A. – I do not see how nothingness, which is nothing, can enter into the composition of things.

B. – But, ... you would admit that all created things are limited, and that their limits, or their *non plus ultra* if you wish, constitute something negative. For example, a circle is limited on account of the fact that the separation of the compass used to inscribe that circle was not larger. Thus the boundaries or the *non plus ultra* of this separation determine the circle. It is the same for all other things, for they are bounded or imperfect by virtue of the principle of negation or of the nothingness they contain, by virtue of the lack of any infinity of perfections in them, and which are only a nothingness with respect to them. (Grua 363–64/AG 113)

This text shows that, at least around 1695, Leibniz unequivocally resists a Manichean interpretation, which posits two distinct counterbalancing principles. Invoking the Platonists and Augustine instead, Leibniz presents an understanding of the perfection/limitation relation best described as Neoplatonic: the imperfection or limitation of a creature is not explained as arising from a separate distinct source or principle, but is seen, rather, as a lack of perfections. More evidence for this Neoplatonic conception comes from the same text:

B. – Before all sin, there was an original imperfection in all created things, an imperfection which arises from their limitation. In the same way that an infinite circle is impossible, since any circle is bounded by its circumference, an absolutely perfect created thing is also impossible; that is why it is believed that the Sacred Scriptures meant to refer even to angels when they suggested that among the ministers of God, there are none without defects. *There was no positive evil in created things at the beginning, but they always lacked many perfections.* (Grua 365/AG 114, my emphasis)

Imperfections do not arise from a distinct source and they are not “positive evils” inherent in created things, but rather are limitations in the sense of privations, since the perfections of creatures are lacking and limited when compared to the absolute perfections of God.<sup>26</sup> On this reading, the creature complete with states is not the end result of a counterbalancing process of opposing forces, but rather the result of God’s endowing the creature with some (or some degree of) but not all (or not the highest possible degree of) perfections. Thus, according to this Neoplatonic model, the extraction of all perfections from a creature would not leave us with a negative principle or source of imperfections but rather with nothing at all.

Might this text be unique and exceptional in its Neoplatonic conception of perfections and limitations? To the contrary, we see a more

striking instance of this conception in another text from this period (1698), in which God is described as the primitive unity, expressed by all others according to their capacity and creatures as varied according to the different combinations of unity with zero; or indeed of the positive with privation, for the privation is nothing but the limits (Grua 126). As Adams suggests, here Leibniz clearly seems to be thinking that “all that is positive in creatures is the extent to which they do imitate God, the extent to which they are perfect, and therefore active; their imperfection, and hence their passivity, is merely privative, nothing but the limits of their perfection or activity.”<sup>27</sup>

But this, then, brings us to the troubling question of how we are to take the texts that seemed to support Sleigh’s reading of limitations and imperfections as a distinct principle. Does the apparent inconsistency of the texts signal that Leibniz took different positions at different times—that is, holding a Neoplatonic conception in the mid to late 1690s while switching to a “dualistic” conception toward the very end of his career? This is rather unlikely in my view. For one, if we reexamine the texts allegedly supportive of Sleigh’s reading, these texts do not conclusively support a dualistic position with regard to perfections and imperfections. Furthermore, these texts seem perfectly consistent with, if not supportive of, a Neoplatonic conception of limitations and imperfections.

Consider again the text from the *Causa Dei* cited earlier, which Sleigh presents as key evidence in support of his reading. There Leibniz had said that “[i]n acting, things depend on God, since God concurs in the actions of things, insofar as there is something of perfection in their actions, which, at least, must emanate from God” (G 6:440). Rather than support a principle of duality, the claim that the perfections in the actions of creatures must *emanate* from God instead seems strongly to support a Neoplatonic reading, where creaturely perfections emanate from God as imperfect, limited versions of divine perfections. Moreover, this idea, from the *Causa Dei*, of the emanation of divine perfections resulting in limited perfections in creatures seems to be a continuation of what is implicit in the following passage, which occurs in the Grua text of 1699 cited earlier:

there are limits everywhere in creatures ... . However the creature is something more than the limits, since it has received some perfection or virtue [*vertu*] from God. (Grua 126, my translation)<sup>28</sup>

Here the creature is clearly not envisioned as a negative source or principle, simply constituted by limitations, but rather as a being that possesses perfections, albeit limited and imperfect. To be limited or imperfect just is to have limited or imperfect perfections, deprived or lacking when compared to the absolute and infinite perfections of God.

Seen in this light, the other key passage Sleigh cites in support of his reading, which occurs in the 1712 essay from the *Mémoires de Trévoux*, could also go my way and support the Neoplatonic reading. Leibniz had there stated that the perfection that is in the action of the creature comes from God, but the limitations that are found there are a consequence of the original limitation. (G 6:348) I grant that this could be read as an expression of a principle of duality. But given what Leibniz had said about “original imperfection” in the *Dialogue on Human Freedom and the Origin of Evil*—that it is an imperfection that arises from its limitation—one could as easily take this to be expressing the view that creatures *qua* creatures are necessarily imperfect, that is, possess limited perfections, despite the fact that these perfections originate and emanate from God. Thus, I believe that the texts presented by Sleigh, which initially appeared to support the dualistic reading of perfections and imperfections are, at the least, consistent with a Neoplatonic interpretation, if not outright supportive of such a reading. This being the case, I see no good textual grounds to believe that Leibniz came to change his Neoplatonic view of the mid to late 1690s—so clearly expressed in the *Dialogue on Human Freedom*—later on in his career.

So far, I have presented two main reasons why we should be reluctant to take Sleigh’s approach. But given this discussion of the problems that face Sleigh’s account, one might wonder whether Sleigh’s model might be altered in a way to avoid the pitfalls that have been raised. In the following section, I will consider such an alternative model but ultimately argue that this model fails as an adequate model of concurrence as well. Seeing exactly how it fails will be instructive in that it will help us recognize the kind of restrictions that face a viable account of divine concurrence.

#### 4. A Cooperation Model of Dual “Productive” Causes

Given that Sleigh’s interpretation was basically criticized on the grounds that, on his reading, creatures turn out to be too “negative”—that is, they only produce imperfections—one might think that a nat-

ural alternative would be to take creatures to cooperate in the production of perfections as positive contributors. In other words, why not think that the desired model of concurrence is one in which creatures too cooperate as productive causes, producing part or some of the perfections in the effect? Since I had specified the notion of productive cause earlier as causes that bring about actual perfections or reality in the sense that they are the productive *source* of the *reality* or *perfections* within these natural effects, on this model of concurrence, creatures would no longer be reduced to mere founts of imperfection, a very un-Leibnizian consequence of Sleight's original model.

Appealing as it may be, the first obstacle for the dual productive cause model (hereafter abbreviated as 'DPC' model) is the lack of textual evidence. To my knowledge, there simply aren't texts where Leibniz endorses such a cooperation model of concurrence wherein both of the causes involved, particularly the creatures, are explicitly productive causes. Furthermore, this absence, I will argue, is not surprising, since the very supposition that renders this model an appealing candidate also raises serious questions about the adequacy of this model as a genuine candidate for divine concurrence. Lastly, toward the end of this section, I will provide some textual evidence that suggests that Leibniz was well aware of this problem. But let us first discuss what problems surround the supposition that creatures themselves are the sources of the reality within natural effects.

The key question is whether such a model satisfies the central requirements of an acceptable account of concurrence.<sup>29</sup> The focal point in DPC models of concurrence is the claim that the creature itself is a productive source of some effect or reality in nature. For it is precisely because the creature is taken to have an independent productive power to bring about an actual effect that the creature plays a part in the cooperation at all, thereby securing its contribution as a concurring partner.

But, as we noted at the very beginning of this paper, a crucial requirement of any account of divine concurrence is that God's causal power be immediately and directly present in every aspect of the world. This requirement creates a problem for a creature's being a productive cause in concurrence, since if the creature's power is independently productive in bringing about some actual effect, then insofar as *that* very effect is concerned, the creature appears to have powers that can do without God's cooperation. In other words, a concurrentist who attributes productive powers to creatures is in effect holding that

divine cooperation is necessary for *some* real effects—those that result from concurrence—but not all.<sup>30</sup> But this view is too weak for a committed concurrentist to hold since, according to concurrentism, there are *no* real effects to which divine causal power is not directly and immediately contributory. In other words, the immediacy and directness of divine causality applies ubiquitously, including those very productive powers of creatures. Thus, the concurrentist who wants to adopt the DPC model is in a rather uncomfortable position: the very idea of concurrence tells her that she cannot bracket off a certain independent productive causal power as distinctively that of creatures, for fear that this would entail that in the exercise of this productive power, divine causal activity is indirect or at the most mediately present.<sup>31</sup>

But one might wonder, what's so wrong with holding that the creature has a productive power, to the exercise of which divine causal activity is merely indirectly and remotely related? The answer is that this is a bullet the concurrentist should not be willing to bite, for this position, historically known as “mere conservationism” (or simply “conservationism”), was thought to be theologically suspect by the overwhelming majority of theists in our time period, not to mention the Middle Ages, in that it renders divine causal activity too remote.<sup>32</sup>

According to conservationism, because God's conserving activity is exhausted by his sustaining the existence of the substances with their powers and thus is only *mediately* or *remotely* connected to the exercise of the genuine causal powers of created substances, the actions of created substances are in some straightforward sense their own actions and not God's actions”.<sup>33</sup> The major worry about this position was that, given the *remoteness* of *divine* causal activity and the *directness* of *creaturely* causal activity in producing the natural effects of a substance, it appeared to come worryingly close to some form of deism. Suárez, for instance, set forth apparently as his best argument against conservationism the view that theistic naturalists should be antecedently disposed to countenance in nature the maximal degree of divine activity compatible with the thesis that there is genuine secondary causation.<sup>34</sup> Leibniz, as a member of this vast majority, explicitly repudiated the views of William Durandus, a major proponent of conservationism of the early fourteenth century.<sup>35</sup> In fact, Leibniz goes on to echo Suárez by claiming that it must be taken as certain that there is as much dependence of things on God as is possible without infringing divine justice (MP, 102).

So, simply put, the worry is that by envisioning a cooperation model that involves creaturely productive causes, creatures appear to have distinct, independently sufficient powers to bring about actual states of affairs. If this is the case, we end up actually attributing to Leibniz a position much closer to conservationism than to concurrentism.

An advocate of the DPC model, however, might respond in the following manner: in this charge that her model basically collapses into conservationism, there appears to be a critical premise that she is unwilling to accept. The problematic assumption, she would argue, is that her model commits her to there being an effect which the creaturely productive power is independently sufficient to produce. But why think that there are such powers in creatures, she could counter, especially when her basic motivation is to provide a viable account of *concurrere*? In other words, why not think that the productive powers of creatures are effective only when the productive power of God is present or concurrent, so that creaturely productive powers are at most causally necessary for certain effects and never causally sufficient for *any* effect in nature?

An example might be helpful at this point. Suppose that my brother and I are removing tree stumps from a large field. Most of the tree stumps are so large that neither of us alone is capable of removing them but together we are able to remove all of them.<sup>36</sup> Suppose further that my brother works only if I do. In other words, the exercise of his power is conditional upon my exercising my power—perhaps he has resolved to do so due to my utter laziness on previous endeavors. So we jointly go about removing the bigger tree stumps until we come to the smallest stump in the field, one small enough that it is clear that either of us could remove it on our own. Now given my brother's earlier resolution, it seems right to say that his power is not sufficient, in some sense, for the removal of the smallest tree stump, namely, in the sense that there are external, background conditions on which the exercise of his power is dependent and, therefore, possessing his power in itself is not enough for the removal of the tree stump. And the advocate of the DPC model might just be making a similar point with regard to divine concurrence: the actions or powers of creatures are all conditional or dependent on the concurrent actions of God, so that no effect comes about without God's concurring activity. And to capture this sense of insufficiency, we might employ the following terminology: on the DPC model, no creaturely power is "*sufficient in itself*" to bring about any actual effect.<sup>37</sup>

But there also seems to be a sense in which my brother's power is *not* insufficient to remove the smallest tree stump in that the reason why he can't move the stump on his own is *not* that he lacks the necessary physical power to do so. Rather it is that there is an external background condition that must be met for him to exercise the power. In other words, his power could have been insufficient in the following sense: even if the external background conditions are all satisfied, he still lacks the necessary power to move the smallest stump. But his power clearly isn't insufficient in this sense even if it is insufficient in itself. For he does possess a power that is, in some sense, powerful enough to move at least something, since, without this power, there would have been no point in my cooperating with him in the first place.<sup>38</sup> So the DPC model of concurrence cannot give up *this* sense of a sufficient power in creatures. In contrast to the earlier notion of sufficiency, then, we might say that my brother's power is *sufficiently powerful* to remove the smallest tree stump even though his power is not sufficient in itself to do so and, correspondingly, that the creature's productive powers are sufficiently powerful to contribute to the effect of concurrence but never sufficient in themselves to bring about an actual effect. What this means is that there are two distinct ways in which one's power could be insufficient, and, correspondingly, sufficient, and this distinction seems important for our purposes.

Recall that the issue at hand is whether the DPC model can avoid collapsing into a version of mere conservationism. The advocate of the DPC model, employing our new distinction, now seems capable of responding in the following way: the collapse can be avoided if one holds firm to the claim that, though the creature's productive power is sufficiently powerful to contribute to the joint effort, it is by no means sufficient in itself for any actual effect. The remaining question then is how convincing this response ultimately is.

I will argue that this response fails to stave off worries about collapsing into conservationism. My main point will be that, in attributing productive causal powers to creatures that are merely sufficiently powerful and not sufficient in themselves, one has already gone too far and ended up too close to conservationism.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as mentioned earlier, I will provide some textual evidence for thinking that this was Leibniz's diagnosis as well.

First of all, consider that even for the conservationist, no creaturely power is sufficient in itself to bring about an actual effect. God's causal activity is necessary in all instances, in the form of conserving the exist-

ence of the substance and, without this external requisite being satisfied, there can be no actual effect of the creature's powers. In other words, the very power of creatures posited in a conservationist's account are at most sufficiently powerful and not sufficient in themselves. One might then wonder why conservationism itself was so objectionable if conservationism maintained that divine causal input was a requisite behind all creaturely actions, so as to render the creature's power insufficient in itself. As noted earlier, for the vast majority of theistic philosophers and theologians of the seventeenth century, the objectionable feature of conservationism was that the involvement of divine causal activity as an external, background constraint or requisite was too minimal and not direct enough. In other words, concurrentism, not to mention occasionalism, objected to conservationism on the very grounds that when the creature exercises its power, divine causal activity is not directly involved in the exercise of *that* power, but only indirectly related in that God's role is limited to conserving the creature in existence—that is, as a mere background condition of the creature's independent activity.<sup>40</sup>

What might be surprising to us is that this objection was made despite the fact that the conservationist never questioned the immediacy of divine causal activity with regard to the creature's continued existence in its being conserved. The key point that I am trying to bring forth, though, is that, within the historical context, this shouldn't be surprising, since the vast majority of early modern philosophers and theologians did not think that the acknowledgements that (1) divine causal activity is directly and immediately involved in sustaining the creature in existence and (2) this divine causal activity is a necessary background condition for the exercise of the creature's power were enough to guarantee the ubiquitous directness of divine causal activity required by theological orthodoxy and, thus, to stave off worries of deism. The idea seems to have been that the role of God's causal activity as an external, albeit necessary, background requirement does not adequately capture the way in which God's causal activity is ubiquitously and directly present in the *creature's activity*.<sup>41</sup> So, in effect, the conservationist's assurance that no natural effect would come about without God's direct conserving activity didn't really provide any comfort at all.

Now whether this objection against the conservationist's position is ultimately defensible or still convincing from our contemporary perspective is a separate issue. The relevant point here is that those, like

Leibniz, who favored concurrentism over conservationism found the remoteness and indirectness of divine causal activity in conservationism to be problematic and thus were in part motivated to endorse concurrentism to avoid this theologically thorny implication.

But if this is the case, then the DPC model of concurrence seems vulnerable to the same objection, since, despite the fact that divine cooperation is necessary for the sufficiently powerful productive powers of creatures to be exercised, the way in which divine causal activity supposedly concurs with this creaturely productive power makes it similarly difficult for the desired directness to be properly captured.

This is what I mean. Returning to our earlier scenario, it is clear that my exerting my power is a necessary condition for my brother's exerting his power so that his power is not sufficient in itself to move any stump. But there is also a clear sense in which, when my brother does go about exerting his power, I am not directly involved in the exercise of *that* power at all, since the exercising of my power is merely an external background condition for his power to be exercised. Just as the creature's power in conservationism was properly the creature's own power and God's direct activity of sustaining the creature in existence was only *indirectly* and *remotely* involved with the creature's power, the sufficiently powerful productive power of the creature in the DPC model is properly the creature's own, and divine causal activity is merely *indirectly* and *remotely* involved as an external background requisite. And the assurance that no actual effect of the creature's power comes about without divine causal contribution as a cooperating productive cause does nothing to allay the original worry raised against conservationism, since the initial worry wasn't about whether actual effects can occur without divine causal input. Rather, it was directed at the externality of God's causal involvement in the creature's activity and the ensuing independency of creaturely powers.<sup>42</sup>

Might there be a chance that, though the majority of those who endorsed concurrentism over conservationism found this remote rendering of divine causal activity unacceptable, Leibniz did not? To the contrary, there is striking evidence from his early work that Leibniz actually took this positing of sufficiently powerful powers in creatures to be so problematic that he almost appears to endorse the opposite extreme of occasionalism.

Consider the following passage from the 1677 report of a conversation with Nicholas Steno, which apparently is presented to support the occasionalistic conclusion that "[p]roperly and accurately speaking,

the correct thing to say is not so much that God concurs in an action, but rather that he produces it”:<sup>43</sup>

For let us suppose that God concurs in some action in such a way that it is produced not only by God, but also in part by a man; from this supposition it follows that this particular concurrence of the man does not require the cooperation of God, which is contrary to hypothesis. For that particular concurrence is also an act; therefore, it follows in the end that all acts are produced in full by God, in the same way as are all creatures in the universe. He who produces half the thing twice over, produces the whole. Or, more accurately, he who produces half the thing, and in turn, half of the remaining half, and, in turn, half of the remaining half of the preceding half—to infinity—produces the whole. This takes place in any act whatsoever, according to God’s manner of operation. For let us suppose that God and a man concur in some act; it is necessary that God concur with this very concurrence of this man, and either it will proceed to infinity ... or, rather, it will suffice to say from the beginning that God actually produces the act, even if it is the man who acts. (Grua, 275/A 6.4.1382)

Note that the regress would not even get started unless one finds the creature’s contribution of providing part of the power worrisome enough to require that this very contribution on the part of the creature is itself a result of cooperation. What this implies is that the creature’s possessing a sufficiently powerful productive power already raises worries about divine contribution being too remote and indirect, despite the fact that the model in this passage permits one to hold steadfast to the claim that the creature’s power is not sufficient in itself to produce any real effect, given its dependency on God’s providing the other half of the needed power. If the remedy to this worry is to accept that the creature’s power is itself an act of cooperation, then thereby the infinite regress is generated and the DPC model of concurrence is effectively reduced to an occasionalistic position, or so Leibniz argues.<sup>44</sup> What is particularly striking about this passage is that Leibniz appears to opt for the other extreme of occasionalism rather than toy with the theologically dangerous implications of attributing sufficiently powerful productive powers to creatures. Whether or not Leibniz is actually endorsing occasionalism at this point in time cannot be answered here.<sup>45</sup> But, at the least, this passage provides us with a strong reason to think that Leibniz would not have later adopted as his mature view a model of concurrence with such a known defect, a problem he himself so eloquently identifies early on in his career.

Where does this leave us? I have argued at length that neither Sleight's original proposal nor the DPC model should be thought to be Leibniz's mature account of divine concurrence. In the present section of this paper, I have argued extensively against the DPC model that takes creatures to contribute as productive causes, even if these productive powers are merely sufficiently powerful and not sufficient in themselves. In the remaining half of the paper, I will present my own proposal as to how we might best understand Leibniz's mature position on divine concurrence.

### 5. Causation as Rational Determination

I begin my proposal by considering the kind of restrictions that face a viable model of Leibnizian concurrence. In examining Sleight's model, we found that creatures should not be thought to function as mere negative principles, eating away, as it were, the perfections provided by God. This way of viewing the creature's contributions not only implied the very un-Leibnizian consequence that creatures are wholly passive but also conflicted with the Neoplatonic understanding of perfections and imperfections, which I had argued to be his considered view on the matter. According to the Neoplatonic understanding, whatever perfection there is in the creature emanates from God and the creature does not contribute to the production of its perfections, simply because it has no perfections *sui generis*. This Neoplatonic aspect of Leibniz's thinking—that is, that the creature is not the productive source of its perfections—appears to mesh well with the discussion of the preceding section, where I argued that the DPC model of concurrence was plagued with the fundamental problem of collapsing into a version of conservationism. But now the challenge seems all the more pressing: if the creature does not cooperate as a productive cause in bringing about natural effects and if the perfections in the creature all emanate from God, in what sense is the creature causally active at all?

We begin with Leibniz's affirmation of the cooperation model of concurrence:

I see nothing to prevent the creature's co-operation with God for the production of any other thing: and especially might this concern its inward operation, as in the case of a thought or a volition, things really distinct from the substance. (T 391)

So the basic model of cooperation itself is not to be rejected and the thoughts and volitions of a finite substance as modifications or states of

the creature are key examples of things produced cooperatively by God and the creature. But what role does the creature play in this cooperation, since the creature isn't a productive cause, that is, cannot contribute to the production of modifications as a source of the reality or perfections in them? For if the creature did play this role, then the mode of cooperation would simply be that of dual productive causes, one we have just shown to be unacceptable. So we are still left with the rather difficult and pressing question of how to understand this cooperation.

A key to understanding a distinctive mode of cooperative production is provided in the following passage:

God produces the creature in conformity with the exigency of the preceding instants ... and the creature operates in conformity with that nature which God conveys to it in creating it always. The limitations and imperfections arise therein through the nature of the subject, which sets bounds to God's production; this is the consequence of the original imperfection of creatures. (T 388)

Here the creature is described as operating in conformity with the nature that God continuously creates. The nature of the creature is that through which the limitations and imperfections arise, but, more importantly, this nature is said to set bounds to God's production. The key, in my view, is to understand properly this idea of setting bounds to divine production.

My proposal is that the nature of a creature cooperates in the production of the modification by setting bounds to God's production in the sense that it provides the *reasons* that determine and demand which modification God is to produce among infinite possibilities. Consider the following passage from the important work mentioned earlier, the 1712 essay from the *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, where Leibniz responds to the occasionalist Lamy:<sup>46</sup>

God in willing rest wills that the body be at the place A, where it was immediately before, and for that it suffices that there be no reason to prompt God to the change. *But when God wills that afterwards the body be at the place B, there must needs be a new reason, of such a kind as to determine God to will that it be in B and not in C or in any other place ... It is upon these reasons for the volitions of God, that we must assess the force and the reality existent in things.*<sup>47</sup>

Here the contribution on the part of the nature of the creature is revealed to consist in its role as the reason for God's determination of the modification to be produced. The causality of the creature is the causality of rational determination in that it provides the reason on

which God bases his decision to produce a specific modification. Thus, in its role as rationally determining divine productive causation, we might first describe the creature's causality as that of a formal cause. Note that since the creature's contribution is that of rational determination, the creature's cooperation is not anything like the addition or reduction of perfections. And this is precisely what the Neoplatonic model requires. Moreover, since the creature does not contribute as a productive cause, it does not face the worry raised against the DPC model of cooperation. The creature's power of rational determination is fundamentally different from a productive causal power, in that a formal cause, as we have been describing it, is not a source of perfections or reality, but, rather, just determines what the productive cause is to bring about. In this sense, this power of rational determination is not even sufficiently powerful for any natural effect.

At the beginning of the paper, I described the challenge facing Leibniz as that of securing genuine causal powers in creatures, while upholding the "conservation is but continuous creation" thesis, which seemed to lead straightforwardly to occasionalism. Now, how these two requirements can be jointly satisfied becomes clearer. What I am in effect arguing is that as long as the creature's contribution is not that of a productive cause, it is not threatening to the uniqueness of God as the sole productive cause, the key idea embodied in the "conservation is but continuous creation" thesis. In other words, Leibniz, in endorsing that thesis, wants to retain the idea that God is the unique source of reality or perfections, but he does not accept the further inference from this idea to the claim that creatures therefore are not genuine causes at all, an inference I take Malebranche to be making.<sup>48</sup>

Why any given creature goes through a uniquely particular series of modifications is to be sought in the nature of the creature, and insofar as God, in producing the modifications, conforms to the reasons presented in the creature's nature, the nature of the creature functions as an essential element in the determination and subsequent production of its modifications. In fact, as will become more evident later, the reason giving of the creature has a dual character. In one sense, as already discussed, the present state of the substance, by perceiving its subsequent states,<sup>49</sup> will fully *specify* the particular future state that God is to bring about and, in this sense, *determines* the subsequent state of the substance. This is the sense in which the creature is the formal cause of its states. But the present state also provides a reason in another sense, in that the present state will also *demand* or *urge* that this partic-

ular state be brought about, by presenting the goodness or value of the state as a reason for God to bring it into existence over others. And it is in this sense that the present state *demand*s the subsequent states and is the final cause of those states. Rational determination or the force of creatures, then, on my account, turns out to be a fusion of two types of nonproductive causation, formal and final.

So God produces each state of the substance as the unique source of all the perfections within it, but this divine production is “in conformity with the exigency of the preceding instants” (T 388), an exigency or demand that the nature of the creature presents by specifying which modifications or states the creature is to possess and by presenting how good things will be when the states come to exist. It is these reasons that underwrite the force and activity of creatures, a force that does not infringe upon the prerogative of God as the unique producer of perfections but nonetheless is powerful enough to “set bounds to God’s production” (T 388). Thus, on my view, at a metaphysically fundamental level, the causal force or powers inherent in creatures all reduce to this force of reasons that determine and demand.

I have given a preliminary account of what I take to be the core features of Leibniz’s mature position on divine concurrence. I hope to elaborate this sketch by articulating and addressing some potential objections to my proposal, but first I would like to consider how my proposal fits in with an important earlier text, where Leibniz explicitly takes up the issue of divine concurrence in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686). Given that the *Discourse* is usually taken to be the first expression of Leibniz’s mature metaphysics, and given that section 8 of the *Discourse* is one of the two earlier texts that I have identified as dealing with the issue of divine concurrence prior to the texts I have been focusing on, it would strengthen my position if I could show that the account I am proposing fits well with this earlier text, or, at the least, I were able to provide some story about how to understand this account of 1686. So, the question then is, if my model of rational determination is indeed Leibniz’s settled view on divine concurrence, a view he held toward the very end of his career, how might it be related to his earlier attempt to resolve the puzzle of concurrence, presented in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* 8?<sup>50</sup>

In the *Discourse* 8, after noting the two horns of occasionalism and conservationism, Leibniz states that it is difficult to “distinguish the actions of God from those of creatures” (DM 8/AG, 40). And in his attempt to make this distinction, we are introduced to the famous

“complete concept of the individual” along with the conceptual containment theory of truth. What is not obvious, however, is how this notion of the complete individual concept helps him to furnish a viable account of divine concurrence.

At least one thing is clear. Given that the complete individual concept is an idea in God’s mind, it cannot be that the complete individual concept itself is playing some direct role in guaranteeing the creature’s causal agency. However, while the verbal emphasis clearly is on the complete individual concept, it also seems to be true that Leibniz here is pointing to something inherent in the substance itself, in virtue of which the complete individual concept holds of it. In other words, there is some concrete correlate within the substance that gives expression to or corresponds to the complete individual concept which is in God’s mind. So how does the existence of such a concrete correlate expressing the complete individual concept relate to the account of concurrence I have presented? On my account, this concrete correlate of the complete individual concept is what provides the reasons for God’s action in producing the perfections of the individual substance and it is in virtue of providing such reasons for God’s production that the creature can be said to act. Thus, creatures can be said to act, precisely because the reasons for God’s productive activity are within the creature itself and not in the complete individual concept.

What is particularly noteworthy is that it is precisely in this context that Leibniz attempts to rehabilitate the widely disdained notion of “substantial form” in DM 10. I take this reintroduction of substantial forms to be strongly supportive of my claim that the creature’s nature acts as the formal cause of its states, since the reintroduction itself seems to be motivated in part by the thought that the notion of substantial form best expresses or describes what Leibniz had in mind as the concrete correlate of the complete individual concept. In fact, the adequacy of this conception is enough for Leibniz to go against one of the paradigmatic trends of early modern philosophy and to declare that the “thoughts of the theologians and philosophers who are called Scholastics are not entirely to be disdained” (DM 11).<sup>51</sup> As a last point, I also think my account has an additional advantage in that it accounts for a certain puzzling aspect of DM 8.

As mentioned, DM 8 leaves untouched how or in what sense the creature is supposed to *act*, given the existence of the concrete correlate in the creature. In other words, in DM 8 we are told that there is something to the creature that serves as the basis for attributing genu-

ine causal efficacy to it and, in DM 10, we see Leibniz's initial move toward resurrecting substantial forms, but what this efficacy is supposed to be or how this efficacy is supposed to work was left unsaid.<sup>52</sup> In my view, it seems possible that the mature position I am attributing to Leibniz is actually complementing this preliminary picture of the *Discourse*. By explicitly explaining the role that the concrete correlate of the complete individual concept plays, Leibniz in the *Theodicy* is filling in the picture: the creature is causally efficacious in that it provides the reasons that determine and demands God's productive actions. In other words, toward the very end of his career, the full picture emerges. What was left unsaid—that is, what constitutes this causal activity of creatures—is revealed to be the causality of rational determination, a force grounded in the reason-giving nature of the creature. On my interpretation, the project that was initiated in the *Discourse* reaches maturity in the *Theodicy*.<sup>53</sup>

## 6. Some Worries

My account of divine concurrence raises various worries, both textual and philosophical. The first is a worry that there seems to be an abundance of texts that suggest a rather different account of the causal powers within creatures, an account that involves a notion of causation that is stronger or more robust than the kind of rational determination I have identified in finite substances.

According to a standard picture of Leibniz's views on creaturely causation, Leibniz held a view that some interpreters have described as his "thesis of spontaneity": "every non-initial, non-miraculous state of every created substance has as a real cause some preceding state of that very substance."<sup>54</sup> Evidence for attributing such a view, it is argued, comes from numerous sources, and some of the most prominent instances typically cited as evidence for this thesis are listed below:<sup>55</sup>

In fact, nothing can happen to us except thoughts and perceptions, and all our future thoughts and perceptions are merely consequences, though contingent, of our preceding thoughts and perceptions. (AG, 47)

Every present state of a substance occurs to it spontaneously and is only a consequence of its preceding state. (G 2:47)

On the contrary, the present state of each substance is a natural result of its preceding state. (L, 495)

But the action proper to the soul is perception, and the nexus of perceptions, according to which subsequent ones are derived from preceding ones, makes up the unity of the percipient. (L, 599)

For it is plain that every simple substance embraces the whole universe in its confused perceptions or sensations, and that the succession of these perceptions is regulated by the particular nature of this substance, but in a manner which always expresses all the nature in the universe, and every present perception leads to a new perception, just as every movement that it represents leads to another movement. (T 403)

The first thing to say in response to this objection is that I too agree with the majority of interpreters in holding that these texts do express something like the thesis of spontaneity. I think these passages clearly show something very close to the idea that, for the mature Leibniz, every non-miraculous state of a given substance has as its *real cause* a preceding state. The crucial issue, however, is what we take Leibniz to mean by ‘real cause’ here. Those who think that these passages present a problem for my account of creaturely causation appear to assume that by ‘real cause’ Leibniz had something like an efficient or productive cause in mind. But, as a close look at the quotes shows, all there is, at the most, is an endorsement of genuine causation within creatures and no specification or discussion of what type or kind of causation this is. In other words, the passages themselves explicitly do not state that by genuine cause Leibniz means a productive or efficient cause. It would beg the question simply to *assume* that by the genuine causation insinuated in these passages Leibniz means productive causation and then go on to suggest that these passages expressing the thesis of spontaneity present a problem for my interpretation. Since I am arguing for the claim that, for the mature Leibniz, there are distinct types of genuine causation, one that is unique to God—productive causation—and the others pertinent to creatures—rational determination (formal and final causation)—unless there is clear evidence that these passages on spontaneity exclusively endorse productive causal power, these passages do not present a problem for my account. For that subsequent perceptions are “consequences of,” “derived from,” and “natural results” of present perceptions/states is perfectly consistent with my account of creaturely causation as well. On my story, creatures as formal and final causes are *real causes* of their states too and the spontaneity passages in no way rule out rational determination as a type of genuine causation.

In fact, though this is not the place to engage in the topic thoroughly, I think my account of creaturely causation actually has an advantage in accounting for these passages expressing spontaneity.<sup>56</sup> As the fourth quote (from L, 599) states, Leibniz claims that the action proper to the soul is perception. How are we to understand this claim that perception is the proper action of a creature? In what sense is a perception an action?

It is one thing to say that the causal nexus of a finite substance, consisting of its primitive forces, is active in producing its states (that is, its perceptions), but it is quite another to state that the perceptions themselves are active. For the activity of the primitive forces doesn't seem to account for the relevant sense in which Leibniz here is saying that a perception itself is an action: the relevant sense, I take it, is that a perception is a real cause of a subsequent state of the substance. But how can it be that a perception is a cause of another state? How do perceptions cause?

On my account of creature causation, the present state of substance, in virtue of its perceiving or representing the future state and its value, is active as the formal and final cause of the future states by determining and demanding God to create the future states as perceived. My current perception of future states plays a critical causal role in the production of my future states because my present perception, by perceiving my future states, both specifies the determinate form that my future states are to take and presents the goodness of such states, which motivates God by demanding their existence. Thus, one might even say that understanding the causality of creatures to be the force of reasons actually provides a better way of understanding the spontaneity passages, which state that perceptions themselves are actions and causes of future perceptions. Thus, the spontaneity passages not only are not a problem for my interpretation, but seem to be better explained by my account of creaturely causation.

A second objection might concern the implications of my proposal for Leibniz's theodicy. In discussing Sleight's interpretation, we acknowledged the benefit of ascribing the source of all imperfections to creatures: the creatures themselves, not God, are the authors of whatever was imperfect in them. On my interpretation, however, God appears to be too directly involved in the production of everything, including the imperfections and limitations. I agree that on my account this direct involvement on the part of God is unavoidable. But this involvement need not imply a weakness in Leibniz's theodicy. For

on my proposal, the imperfections of creatures themselves are inevitable insofar as creatures are not perfect beings, since a creature would necessarily be imperfect due to its lack of both the quantity and quality of perfections when compared to God.<sup>57</sup> And given this inevitability of imperfections in any possible configuration of creatures, God's direct involvement in the production of imperfections would also have been inevitable insofar as he willed to actualize one of these possible configurations. And in this respect, I believe it was natural for Leibniz to have pursued the best possible world thesis as the main line of his theodicy: the existence of the evils in this world and God's causal involvement in producing them are justified in that the selection of any other world would have involved greater evils. This is not to ignore the fact that distancing God from being responsible for the production of evils is another of Leibniz's main aims in the *Theodicy*. I take it that Leibniz thought, rightly or wrongly, that by appealing to the limited features in the creatures as the source of the evils he could provide an answer to this "author of sin" problem. Moreover, it should be noted that the author of sin aspect of a theodicy is a problem on any interpretation that gives full weight to Leibniz's concurrentism and is not peculiar to my interpretation.

Perhaps the most serious cluster of worries stems from the central claim of my proposal, namely, that the creature's activity consists in its reason-giving to God's productive action as the unique productive cause. On the one hand, the proposal I am presenting appears to have the odd implication that the creature in a way *acts on* God by determining how God should act with regard to creatures and their states. For, on my proposal, it is clear that the reason-giving that underwrites the force and activity of creatures is *not* that the reasons are given to the creature *itself* so that the creature as an independent productive cause produces its own states in light of these reasons. Rather, the reasons are reasons for God, the one and only productive cause capable of producing any genuine reality or perfection. But if this is the case, the objection might go, doesn't this mean that creatures provide reasons for and thus *act on* God, which is a consequence that Leibniz most likely could not accept?<sup>58</sup>

In response, the main thing to point out would be that providing reasons for does not entail acting on. In other words, I grant it would not be acceptable to Leibniz for a creature to act on God as an efficient cause typically acts on a patient. But Leibniz himself seems comfortable in describing the creature's actions with such language as "setting

bounds to God's production" (T 388), which strongly suggests that Leibniz did not think that providing reasons for God's productive activity implies that the creature *acts on* God in some way. And denying this implication seems rather natural in that the charge that providing reasons implies acting on seems to rest on a conflation of causal models. Within a model of rational agency, it seems odd and awkward to describe the relation between the reasons on which an agent acts and the agent to be that of the reasons *acting on* the agent. This is because the model of rational agency and the model of efficient causation differ in a fundamental manner. In an efficient causation model, the active cause typically brings about changes in the patient by acting or working on it. But on a rational agency model, at least on the version I am envisioning for Leibniz, it is not the *reasons* that act on the agent but rather the *agent* that acts on the basis of the reasons provided to it. Reasons are not active efficient causes that act or work on patients but are rather the bases on which the rational agent determines to act in a particular manner.<sup>59</sup> Consider a key example of rational agency in Leibniz, God's creation of the best possible world. Each possible world provides a reason to God as to why it should come into existence, and the best possible world in the end provides the strongest reason for God to create and sustain it. The best possible world, like all other possible worlds for Leibniz, however, has a unique set of individuals, and all the individuals, in turn, have a unique set of states that determines their individuality. Thus, the goodness of the best possible world sets bounds to God's production of the world to be actual by determining which individuals are to exist with which properties; but neither we nor Leibniz would regard this as an instance of the goodness of the best possible world *acting on* God.

But this response, on the other hand, might reveal another lingering worry about the proposal I am presenting. I have made clear that the model of causation involved is that of rational agency. But, more importantly, I have made explicit that the rational agent in question is God. Doesn't this just show then, one might ask, that creatures on my proposal are not causally active at all since they are merely reasons for the unique genuine cause, God, to act? Doesn't this proposal in the end show that Leibniz was rather an occasionalist like Malebranche in that, on my reading, Leibnizian *reasons* seem a lot like Malebranchian *occasions*, which are just those states of the substance on the occurrence of which God wills to create another state in accordance with certain

general laws? For consider Malebranche's own description of occasional causes:

[a] natural cause is ... not a real and true but only an occasional cause, which determines the Author of nature to act in such and such a manner in such and such a situation. (OM 2:312/Search, 448)

Thus, the most serious worry appears to be that despite the intention to lead Leibniz away from Malebranche, the account of concurrence I have been attributing to him appears to bring him uncomfortably close to occasionalism.

This worry is legitimate, but ultimately surmountable in my view. I grant that, at some level of description, there is a similarity between the two accounts. But, as I will argue, the similarity is at most skin deep. A key difference is that Leibniz accepts the force of reasons as a genuine type of causation while Malebranche does not. Putting the main difference this way might lead to the worry that, when faced with Leibniz's account of divine concurrence as I have been describing it, Malebranche might simply say that if this is all that is meant by concurrence, then he'd be happy to be a concurrentist as well. The difference, however, is not merely terminological: it is not simply an issue of who calls the force of reasons what. There is a real and substantial disagreement here in that I believe Leibniz thinks that the force of reasons is genuinely causal and, by implication, that Malebranche is wrong to not take them as such. And the basis for this disagreement, I believe, lies in a substantial difference between how Leibniz conceived of his reasons and Malebranche of his occasions. So my basic response to this worry that my account of Leibnizian concurrence collapses into Malebranche occasionalism will be that (1) Leibniz's inclusion of formal and final, that is, "rationally determining," causes on the roster of genuine causes is the crucial difference between Malebranche and him, (2) there is an argument to be made on Leibniz's behalf to justify this inclusion, based on how Leibnizian reasons and Malebranchean occasions differ, and (3) nonetheless, Malebranche would probably reject this argument in that he would find that the Leibnizian conception of a rationally determining cause (that is, reasons that motivate but do not necessitate) somewhat lacking, and thus too problematic to be included in the pantheon of genuine causes. Thus, in the end, I will suggest that Malebranche sticks to the tidier picture that holds that only productive causes are genuine causes, even if this means that there is only one genuine cause.<sup>60</sup>

### 7. The Force of Leibnizian Reasons

My task in this section will be to argue for the claim that despite similarities, Leibnizian reasons differ enough from Malebranchean occasions to justify the claim that reasons are causally active. Let us begin by paying more attention to the second of the two senses in which Leibnizian reasons are reason-giving, that is, the demanding nature of Leibnizian reasons or their force as final causes. I will argue that this demanding nature of Leibnizian reasons will provide us with the first basis to distinguish them from Malebranchean occasions in that Leibnizian reasons demand in ways that Malebranchean occasions do not.

In T 388, Leibniz describes divine concurrence as God producing the creature in conformity with the *exigency* of the preceding instants. This language of the creature *demanding* the productive activity on the part of God is not limited to the passage in the *Theodicy*. We see the same account emerging in his letter of 1706 to Des Bosses, where Leibniz is responding to Des Bosses' request to clarify his position on the issue of divine concurrence: "I judge that in the active power there is a certain *demand* [*exigentiam*] to action, and therefore to the divine concurrence for action" (G 2:295).

How are we to understand this "demand" or "exigency"? How is it that a creature can demand at all? Moreover, why did Leibniz think that this demand was causally efficacious? Obviously, there should be something to the creatures and their modifications that explains why there are such demands to which God conforms. At the most basic level, I believe that it is because the states or modifications of a creature have an intrinsic or primitive *value* to them that the creature can have this demanding power. This goodness or excellence inherent in the states of a creature accounts for their ability to function as reasons behind God's decision to produce them, for it is because this series of states is better than others that God chooses to produce them. Their comparative goodness is the reason for God's decision. And this is the sense in which creatures are final causes.

That the states of creatures should have this force for Leibniz should not come as a surprise since it is a fundamental feature of Leibniz's mature metaphysics that things really happen for the sake of ends and values and that these ends and values are presented to the agent as reasons for action. Once again, consider the main line of Leibniz's theodicy: his "best possible world" defense holds that the best of all possible worlds is chosen and actualized by God because it is the best. This

account further reveals the fundamental place final causation holds within Leibniz's scheme. While the reality of choice signifies an act of choosing on the part of God, it also implies that the alternatives to be chosen are presented to the agent as reasonable possibilities to be actualized. They are all worthy of choice to some degree or in some respect and as such have features which provide the basis for the choice involved. The relevant feature, of course, is that each alternative is good or worthy in that it retains a primitive value. By having this value, each of these alternatives can demand or have a pleading force, as it were, to be reckoned with when the choice is made.

Consider further the following passage in *On the Ultimate Origination of Things* (1697), where the picture of possible alternatives demanding and striving dovetails nicely with the best possible world scenario of Leibniz's theodicy:

there is a certain urge [*exigentia*] for existence or (so to speak) a straining toward existence in possible things... . Furthermore, all possibles, that is, everything that expresses essence or possible reality, strive with equal right for existence in proportion to the amount of essence or reality or the degree of perfection they contain. (AG, 150)

The value of possible alternatives, grounded in the degree of perfection they contain, is what enables the alternatives to demand or strive to be actualized.

Once actualized, the actual, present state of the creature perceives the values of the future states, and the current perception of these pre-existing values of the future states demands or urges God to actualize these future states. As noted earlier, it is not the future ends or states, which do not yet exist, that are the real causes in creatures, but rather the past and present features of the creatures.<sup>61</sup> These actual states, past and present, are the driving force behind God's continuous production of the future states, since it is in virtue of the past and current perceptions of the value or goodness of these future states that God is motivated to further actualize the future states.

In short, on the Leibnizian picture, reasons demand because they are basically perceptions of future states that possess a degree of primitive value, which motivates God to bring them about. So, simply put, it is the goodness or value inherent in the reasons that grounds their power of exigency or demand.

The crucial question, then, is whether there is something similar in Malebranchean occasions, and, if so, whether Malebranche too accepts them to be causally efficacious. The answer to the first part of question,

I think, is a qualified yes, in that the occasions which make up the world at any given instant possess some primitive value for Malebranche as well and, thus, these values are taken into consideration when God decides how to continuously create the world. Nonetheless, as I have suggested, the answer to the second part of the question is a rather straightforward no: Malebranche did not take the goodness of creatures and their states to have the status of genuine causal powers. The interesting question is why not.

The reasons behind Malebranche's neglect of final causes, I think, are complicated but very interesting. One way to account for this crucial difference between Leibniz and Malebranche would be to simply state that there is a genuine clash of intuitions here. And at some deep level, it is perhaps inevitable that we reach such a level. But I hope to say more about why I think there are such differing intuitions and at times even try to motivate each position respectively. Since this account will in part depend on how we understand the demands of Malebranchian occasions in contrast to Leibnizian reasons, let us begin by discussing on what grounds we might say that Malebranchian occasions have something close to an *exigency* on God as well, that is, on what grounds we may attribute the positive answer to the first part of the question raised above.

That for Malebranche the goodness of the occasional causes and their effects have some role in God's choice of the world to bring about is evident from the following passage:

God could, no doubt, make a world more perfect than the one in which we live. He could, for example, make it such that rain, which serves to make the earth fruitful, fall more regularly on cultivated ground than in the sea, where it is unnecessary. But in order to make this a more perfect world, it would have been necessary that he have changed the simplicity of his ways, and that he have multiplied the laws of the communication of motion, through which our world exists: and then there would no longer be that proportion between the action of God and his work ... ; for our world, however imperfect one wishes to imagine it, is based on laws of motion which are simple and so natural that it is perfectly worthy of the infinite wisdom of its author.<sup>62</sup>

Malebranche here appears to be endorsing the view that God would have made a world more perfect than this one, if it had not been the case that such a world would have involved less simple laws unworthy of God's perfect wisdom. This view, in turn, suggests that for Malebranche, other things being equal, the value of the outcome definitely does play a role in God's decision about the world to bring about. So,

even for Malebranche, the occasions do have value. But note also that the perfection of the world is always secondary to the primary consideration of the simplicity of the laws: while the value of the outcome is about the goodness of the world, the simplicity of the laws concerns God and his attributes, particularly his wisdom, and the divine attributes are to be satisfied first as the primary requisites. This point is confirmed in the following passage, where Malebranche explicitly privileges the simplicity of the laws over the values of the outcomes:

God has more love for his wisdom than his work, because ... his wisdom prescribes to him means which most bear the character of his attributes."<sup>63</sup>

Making it so that rain does not fall purposelessly on the sea would involve a change in the simplicity of God's ways and this is a greater evil, despite the fact that the world with purposeful falling of rain would be better in terms of the value of the outcome.

So we see in Malebranche a tension between the perfection of the worldly states of affairs and the perfection of God's ways; Malebranche, faced with the choice, not surprisingly opts for the latter. But must there be such a tension between the worldly perfections and divine attributes? Not necessarily. For, as Leibniz makes clear in his correspondence with Malebranche, the simplicity of the laws could always be considered to constitute a part of the excellence of the world:

When I consider the work of God, I consider his ways as a part of the work, and the simplicity joined to the productivity of his ways constitutes a part of the excellence of the work. (G 1:360)<sup>64</sup>

For Leibniz, the simplicity of the laws is not pitted against the perfections of creatures, and, thus, the preference of a world with a better state of affairs but a less simple set of laws is not a case of privileging the perfections of the world over and against the perfections of God. Rather it would simply be preferring one worldly characteristic over another. So we see, at last, some room for genuine contrast: while for Leibniz the value or excellence of the outcome emerges as the sole criterion in selection of the world to be actualized and in this respect the value of the world has an unrestricted force, for Malebranche the value of the occasions only plays a secondary role, one which kicks in only after the primary consideration of the divine attributes is satisfied. Occasions do not have the full-fledged force of reasons.

Now might this have been the reason why Malebranche did not take creaturely causes as seriously as Leibniz? Because occasions are not

forceful enough on his scheme? This is likely part of the story but not all of it, in my view. In addition to the fact that occasions do not demand with the same motivational force of reasons, I believe there is a second key difference between reasons and occasions: occasions do not *determine* in the way reasons do, that is, occasions are not formal causes in the way reasons are.

I have just been emphasizing that in the Leibnizian scheme of things the laws governing the states of affairs, whether simple or complex, were part of the perfection of the state of affairs in question. In fact, for Leibniz the laws governing the sequence of states are embedded in the states of creatures as a primitive feature of these states. For Malebranche, in contrast, the laws themselves, properly speaking, are not to be viewed as features of the occasions, but rather as the ways in which God intervenes in bringing about the world.

Thus, another way to put this difference would be to say that, while Malebranche's occasions *taken with* the laws of nature determine a particular outcome as well, the occasions *themselves* do not determine anything. The occasions don't themselves determine because one needs to add the laws—the general volitions of God—to get the particular determination, and this is the case because the laws of nature for Malebranche are divorced from the occasions, that is, the occasions do not dictate which laws will govern them. According to Malebranche, genuine formal causes, if there are any, turn out to be God's volitions. Then the determining part of occasionalism obviously is not, properly speaking, part of the creaturely domain.<sup>65</sup> In contrast, Leibnizian reasons determine in themselves because the laws that govern the series of states are internal and integral to the reasons, in that the laws are part of the identity conditions of the reasons. Thus, the developmental laws generating the successive states of the creature being internal to reasons and external to occasions is another crucial difference between Leibniz and Malebranche. And based on this difference, we can get a sense of why reasons determine while occasions do not.<sup>66</sup>

Think back to Leibniz's passages on the spontaneity of the substance. On my account of these passages, future states follow from or are consequences of present perceptions because the present state perceives or represents the future states and their goodness. That those particular future states are to follow this current state is contained within the representational content of the current perception/state. If one takes this prescription or determination of the states to follow as an expression of the developmental law within the creature guiding the

generation of its subsequent states, then we can see that Leibnizian reasons, in virtue of having this developmental law within them, determine and formally cause all of their future states. Malebranchean occasions, however, have no such developmental law encoded within themselves, since the issue of which possible state is to follow the current occasion is a matter of divine discretion—how well God expresses his wisdom—and not about the occasions themselves. Each possible state based on its own goodness might demand its own creation but one occasion cannot determine the creation of another state, in that occasions, as it were, have no say in the matter. Since occasions lack not only the kind of demanding power of Leibnizian reasons but also this determining power, Malebranche’s refusal to see creatures as genuine causes is not surprising.

Now one might think that this way of interpreting Malebranche’s relation of laws and occasions is somewhat odd, insofar as the two are presented as rather radically divorced. But such a disconnection between laws and occasions is precisely what occasionalism requires. The laws governing the occasions have to be extrinsically or externally connected to the occasions they govern, in that, in principle, an occasion could have been subsumed under any general law. For instance, though a sensation of pain follows the pricking of my finger with a pin in the actual world, it could have been the case that a pricking of this sort is followed by a sensation of pleasure. The relevant general law in this case would state that the pricking of a finger is followed by the sensation of pleasure. And this possibility of the random pairing of events is precisely what is at the basis of Malebranche’s so-called “necessary connection” argument for occasionalism.<sup>67</sup> Here Malebranche in effect argues that due to the possibility of such random pairings, there are no necessary connections between two events, unless willed by divine volition. So, regardless of whether God wills to conjoin this pricking to pain or pleasure, it would remain the same pricking and we see that the general law governing the occasional causation does not alter the identity conditions of the pricking.

Against this rather odd pairing of events, one might argue that given the detrimental effects such pairings would have for us, and given God’s general interest in our well-being, Malebranche could effectively rule out such pairings of events. Note, however, that this objection actually supports my point, namely, that for Malebranche there is nothing intrinsically wrong with pairing prickings with pleasure, because were such pairings conducive to our well-being, then the general law

would have been such to connect the occasions of prickings with pleasure. There is nothing about a pricking itself that prohibits it from being conjoined with the effect of pleasure. It is only because of other considerations, considerations external to what the occasional causes and their effects actually are that such odd pairings are excluded. Thus, in principle, prior to the introduction of these external considerations, there is a limitless supply of the general laws that could have subsumed the pricking of my finger in such a way as to bring about an effect different from the actual one of pain. And this supports my point that the occasional cause itself does not in any way determine the content of the general law under which it falls as a term nor does the general law which subsumes the occasion alter its identity conditions.

But Leibnizian reasons, I have been pointing out, are each encoded with the primitive forces that constitute the laws that specify the states to follow. These laws governing the various states of creatures in Leibniz are intrinsic to the creature, in that they are constitutive of what the creatures are and in this sense constitute their identity conditions. Any given state of a creature within the series of which it is a member would no longer be the same state unless it determined *that* very series of states. And in this complete prescription of all the states of a given substance, one state of the substance for Leibniz determines the *entire* series of states constituting the creature. We therefore have a clear sense in which reasons determine in a way that occasions do not.

Up to this point, my emphasis has been to show how substantial the difference is between Leibnizian reasons and Malebranchean occasions. Reasons both demand and determine in ways occasions do not. But suppose Malebranche had been convinced of my argument on behalf of Leibniz and accepted that there was a significant difference between reasons and occasions. Would he have gone on to accept that, given its determining and demanding force, Leibnizian reasons should rightfully be viewed as genuine causes, unlike Malebranchean occasions? Not quite, in my view. And this is where the last piece to my story of why Malebranche refused to accept or endorse genuine causal powers in creatures comes in. I believe that, for Malebranche, despite its motivating force of demands (final causation) and its prescriptive force of determination (formal causation), Leibnizian reasons are in some significant sense still not forceful enough. For Malebranche, reasons are not genuine causes because they do not *necessitate* the effects for which they are putatively causes.

Perhaps a better way to make this point would be to subject the claim that Leibnizian reasons are truly forceful as demanding and determining causes to the following objection: might then the force of reasons now be *too* strong in that it would seem to commit Leibniz to a position closely resembling necessitarianism? For if the demand and determination of reasons is the sole criterion behind the selection of the creatures to be actualized and the force of the reasons depends on how good or perfect the creatures are, then given that no other considerations come into play in God's decision, the decision itself seems to be predetermined by the degree of perfection of the possible creatures constituting the possible worlds, and with such predetermination the reality of God's choice seems to be lost.

This is a real worry in many respects, since it raises the general issue of whether Leibniz's overall account concerning God's actualization of the best possible world can avoid being necessitarian. And we know that despite Leibniz's attempts to avoid such a conclusion by presenting two main theories of contingency, there have been persistent doubts as to whether such theories are successful in keeping necessitarianism at bay. But regardless of whether or not Leibniz can ultimately account for the contingency of this world being created, what is relevant here is to point out that it is not Leibnizian reasons that necessitate the actualization of this world.

Leibnizian reasons motivate but they do not necessitate. That their goodness really influences the outcome brought about by the agent and in this sense constitutes genuine causation for Leibniz is undeniable. This is what I have been arguing for all along, in claiming that for Leibniz rational determination is real. But that reasons have such a crucial and real role in the occurrence of the agent's actions in no way implies that reasons necessitate the action. Reasons are only reasons. Not only does there have to be the divine step of actually producing the perfections or realities but even prior to this production, there has to be the crucial decision on the part of the agent—that is, God—to act on the reasons presented to him. Without such a decision, there will be no action, no outcome, despite the reasons being there.<sup>68</sup> Reasons are forceful only insofar as the agent accepts the general rational framework of acting on the cogency of reasons, and, thus, even if the reasons are compelling, there always remains the final choice on the part of the agent to acquiesce, as it were, to such reasons. And this is the sense in which I believe that reasons motivate but do not necessitate.

But, for Malebranche, that which does not necessitate is not a cause. As he explicitly states in the *Search After Truth*, “[a] true cause as I understand it is one such that the mind perceives a necessary connection between it and its effect” (OM 2:316/Search, 450). What merely motivates and does not necessitate is not a proper cause. So, from Malebranche’s perspective, Leibnizian reasons, however motivating they may be, are not forceful enough and, thus, are rather properly regarded as occasions for the unique necessitating cause to act. And this is perhaps what is at the bottom of the difference between Leibniz and Malebranche. Since what merely motivates and does not necessitate is not properly causal for Malebranche, it is rightfully downgraded to the status of occasions. For Leibniz, however, this is too austere an account of what counts as a cause. Leibniz too can accept that God is the sole necessitating cause, but he can equally ask, why dismiss the motivating powers of creatures as causes? And, at this point, I incline towards the Leibnizian view. Given the commitment to divine causality being the sole necessitating cause, which I take Leibniz to accept as a consequence of divine omnipotence, there seems to be no way to consistently affirm creaturely forces if one holds firm to the view that causes have to necessitate. But if there are independent reasons why one might want to attribute genuine causality to creatures,<sup>69</sup> and if this can be done at the price of simply widening the repertoire of causes, I feel inclined to agree that the insistence on causes being necessarily efficacious loses its initial intuitive appeal.

Some brief concluding remarks: In this paper, I have attempted to present a novel account of Leibniz’s views on divine concurrence. First, in critically examining the prominent and enlightening proposal presented by Robert Sleight, I have argued that, despite its considerable merits, it suffers from two serious problems, one being that creatures end up being reduced to mere founts of imperfection and evil, which goes against key texts, and the other being a problematic understanding of perfections and imperfections that does not fit with the Neoplatonic aspect of Leibniz’s thought on this topic. Second, I argued against an alternative model of concurrence, the dual “productive” cause (DPC) model of cooperation, by suggesting that it collapses into a version of conservationism in rendering divine causal input indirect and remote. In arguing against this alternative model, I suggested that given the textual commitments and philosophical constraints, Leibniz cannot be envisioning a model of concurrence that involves creatures

as a “productive” cause of the concurred effect and, therefore, the available options are considerably limited.

My positive contribution has been that Leibniz still can have a genuine sense in which creatures act, since for Leibniz the fact that a creature is not productive does not mean that it is not a real cause. Relying on texts mainly from the last decade of his philosophical career, I have made the somewhat surprising and, perhaps, controversial suggestion that for the mature Leibniz creatures are real causes because they are *formal* and *final* causes rather than productive causes. In fact, I have argued that the creature does not contribute to the production of its states by providing some actual perfection or imperfection but rather by providing the reasons that determine and demand the actualization of the states constitutive of the creature’s existence. On my reading, Leibniz, despite his identification of causal powers in creatures as those of rational determination, avoids collapsing into Malebranchean occasionalism, because he takes this demanding and determining feature of reasons to be genuinely causal, powerful enough to set bounds to God’s production. So, on Leibniz’s mature view, it turns out that there are distinctive types of genuine causation: one is unique to God as the sole productive cause; the other is that of rational determination, typically found in the creaturely realm. Creatures as formal and final causes act by exerting a normative force as the reasons behind God’s production of the particular modifications of each creature. The causal power of God in bringing about and sustaining a particular series of events constituting the actual world is surely real for Leibniz. But so is the force of reasons of creatures that determine and demand such a series, or so I have argued.

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#### Abbreviations of Leibniz’s works

- A        *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Darmstadt and Berlin: Berlin Academy, 1923–. Cited by series, volume, and page.
- AG       *Philosophical Essays*. Edited and translated by R. Ariew and D. Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989.
- DM       *Discours de métaphysique [Discourse on Metaphysics]*. Edited by H. Lestienne. Paris: Vrin, 1975. Cited by section number.
- G        *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*. Edited by C. I. Gerhardt. Berlin: Weidman, 1875–90. Cited by volume and page.

LEIBNIZ ON DIVINE CONCURRENCE

- GM *Leibnizens mathematische Schriften*. Edited by C. I. Gerhardt. Berlin: A. Asher. Cited by volume and page.
- Grua *Texts inédits*. Edited by Gaston Grua. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948.
- L *Philosophical Papers and Letters*. Edited and translated by Leroy Loemker. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969.
- LA Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence. Cited by page number in G, vol. 2.
- MP *Philosophical Writings*. Edited and translated by Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson. London: Dent, 1973.
- T *Theodicy* (1710). Cited from G, vol. 4 by section number. The English translation is by E. M. Huggard; referred to as “Huggard” followed by page number. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1985.

Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See Nicolas Malebranche, *Entretiens sur la métaphysique et sur la religion* (1688), Entretien 7 in *Oeuvres complètes de Malebranche*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: Vrin, 1958–84), 12:157. The *Oeuvres complètes* will hereafter be abbreviated as ‘OM’ followed by volume and page number. It should be noted that the argument from continuous recreation to occasionalism is not unique to Malebranche. It can also be found in Louis La Forge. See his *Traité de l’esprit de l’homme* (1664), in *Louis de La Forge: Oeuvres Philosophiques*, ed. Pierre Clair, 240 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> OM 12:156. The translation is from Nicholas Jolley and David Scott’s *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112.

<sup>3</sup> There is the possibility that some things in the world are causally overdetermined, but Malebranche does not appear to take this seriously. Perhaps he took overdetermination in creation to be too problematic in the following respects: (1) Overdetermination appears to imply that there is an overdetermining cause other than God, with creative powers analogous to God, and (2) The existence of such an overdetermining cause seems incompatible with the notion of creation *ex nihilo*, which implies that there is nothing metaphysically prior to creation other than God.

<sup>4</sup> That Leibniz accepts the “conservation is but continuous creation” principle is evident from numerous texts (see Grua 330; T 27, 382–85). Leibniz was not alone in endorsing “conservation is but continuous creation.” Malebranche attributes this thesis to Descartes, which seems to fit well with recent interpretations that Descartes was an occasionalist with regard to at least some cases of intersubstantial causation. See Garber, “Descartes and Occasional-

ism,” in *Descartes Embodied* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 203–20.

<sup>5</sup> For earlier expressions of this view, see *On the Correction of Metaphysics and the Concept of Substance* (1694) (G 4:468–70/L, 432–34) and *On Nature Itself* (1698) (G 7:302–8/AG 149–67). In the latter work, Leibniz claims that “the very substance of things consists in a force for acting and being acted upon” (G 4: 508/AG 159).

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Robert Sleigh describes this difficulty as a “tension between ... Leibniz’s metaphysical exposition of creaturely action and ... theological exposition of creaturely action,” and goes on to state that “on the deism-occasionalism scale, the former seems to be located near the deism end, the latter closer to the occasionalism end.” See his *Leibniz & Arnauld* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 185. Sleigh goes on to present his solution to this problem, one that I will discuss in much detail later. Robert Adams puts the challenge thus: “[h]ow did Leibniz think he could escape between the horns of this dilemma [that is, the occasionalism of Malebranche and the rather deistic position of Durand]?” See his *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 96.

<sup>7</sup> See Sleigh *Leibniz & Arnauld*, 183–85.

<sup>8</sup> I will use the term ‘productive cause’ hereafter in this qualified sense. One natural question would be whether this notion of productive cause differs significantly from the more familiar conception of “efficient” cause. The answer depends on how one understands “efficient” cause: if one’s understanding of it coincides with how I have specified my notion of productive cause above, then the two terms can be regarded as interchangeable. The reason, however, for my avoiding the term ‘efficient’ here is that Leibniz himself hardly uses this term in discussing matters of divine concurrence. In fact, when he does use the term ‘efficient cause’—for instance, at DM 22—it is usually clear that the contexts are not relevant to the topic at hand.

<sup>9</sup> An important note about how I will be using the notion of final cause is in order here. One historical understanding of final causation involves the reality of future, non-existent ends acting on the agent to bring about the action of the agent toward achieving this future end. This aspect of final causation frequently is the grounds for complaints against realism about final causes. On my account of Leibnizian concurrence, it is not the future ends that are the real causes in creatures, but past and present features of the creature that provide reasons for God to act. Leibniz persistently and profusely endorses final causes, but in most cases it is the explanatory force of *reasons* and *values* that he has in mind. Moreover, for Leibniz, as well as my interpretation of his views on concurrence, the reasons and values *pre-exist*, at least in the mind of God, and to some extent in the perceptions of the agent in general. Thus, it should be clear that by ‘final causes’ I do not speak of future ends.

<sup>10</sup> This is an assumption Leibniz cannot endorse since he accepts both (a) that conservation is but continuous creation, which I take to entail that God is the only productive cause, and (b) that creatures have some genuine causal force. Thus, what Leibniz needs to reject is the Malebranchian claim that productive causation is the only type of genuine causation.

<sup>11</sup> I will have more to say, later on, about Malebranche and his argument for occasionalism based on the claim that “a true cause ... is one such that the mind perceives a necessary connection between it and its effect,” in Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité* (1678), 6.2.3 (OM 2:316). For an English translation, see *The Search after Truth*, trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 448. Here I simply note that Hume’s later analysis of causation has a direct ancestral relation to this argument of Malebranche’s. For more on Malebranche’s influence on Hume, see Charles McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> I will later connect this view of creaturely causation with Leibniz’s explicit attempts to revive various Scholastic notions, such as “substantial forms” and “final causes” in, for instance, DM 10, 11, and 19. For now, I note that such an attempt should not be surprising, since, among the early modern philosophers, Leibniz is distinctive in resisting the trend of holding the “old philosophy” in utter disdain.

<sup>13</sup> “Remarks of Mr. Leibniz on the Sixth Philosophical Letter printed at Trévoux in 1703,” *Mémoires pour l’Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, July 1712, 1235–40. Also see G 6:347–50, which is translated in Huggard 389–92. Gerhardt cites Leibniz’s manuscript of February 1711. Sleight also relies on this piece for textual support; see *Leibniz & Arnauld*, 185.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, Robert Sleight points to a passage from an early work, a report of a conversation with Nicholas Steno in 1677 (Grua 275), as “apparent evidence of Leibniz’s occasionalism” (*Leibniz & Arnauld*, 183–84). I discuss this passage in more detail later on in the paper.

<sup>15</sup> One is from the *Conversation with Steno concerning Freedom* (1677) and the other from section 8 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686).

<sup>16</sup> Sleight, *Leibniz & Arnauld*, 185.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>18</sup> *Causa Dei asserta per iustitiam eius cum caeteris eius perfectionibus cunctisque actionibus conciliatam* (G 6:437–62), according to Huggard, was contained in the original edition of the *Theodicy* as a fourth appendix. Huggard describes it as a “formal summary of the positive doctrine expressed by the French treatise [i.e., the *Theodicy*].” But he omits it from his English translation on the grounds that “it would not, presumably, be of interest to many modern readers” (see Huggard, 443). Ravier, however, lists the first edition of *Causa Dei* as a separate work and not as an appendix to the *Theodicy* (see Émile Ravier, *Bibliographie des œuvres de Leibniz* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1937), 34–35).

<sup>19</sup> *Mémoires pour l’Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, 1712, 1235–40 / G 6:347–50 (Huggard, 389–92). As mentioned earlier, this essay will provide a key passage for my interpretation as well. The letter of 1703 is that of the occasionalist François Lamy, whom Leibniz mentions in passing in the *Theodicy* §392, while responding to Pierre Bayle. Leibniz cites Bayle as claiming that Lamy in this letter demonstrates that “God is the principle cause of pure and absolute realities, or of perfections” (T 392). In this 1712 *Mémoires* essay, Leibniz responds to and comments on Lamy’s demonstration in detail while elaborating his own account of concurrence.

<sup>20</sup> *Mémoires pour l'Histoire*, 1712, 1236/G 6:348.

<sup>21</sup> Sleigh further suggests that Leibniz's own analogy of the boat laden with weights in the *Theodicy* §30 provides additional support for the idea that there are two distinct principles at work in concurrence, one being God's positive contribution of producing perfections, the other being the creature's negative contribution of subtracting from or reducing the perfections produced by God. As Sleigh points out, the velocity of the boat appears to be a function of two distinct factors: "(a) the force acting on the boat in virtue of the velocity of the current; and (b) the inertia of the boat itself in virtue of its weight" (*Leibniz & Arnauld*, 185).

<sup>22</sup> A viable theodicy needs not only to provide an account as to how the evils in this world could be compatible with God's goodness but also to detach God from the evil so that God is in no way the cause of the sinfulness of the actions of creatures. Note that this detachment holds despite the fact that God *concur*s in bringing about all actions of the creature, including the sinful ones. Hence the "author of sin" problem.

<sup>23</sup> Adams, *Leibniz*, 96.

<sup>24</sup> I should note that Sleigh does not explicitly commit himself to a "dualistic" reading of the relation between perfections and imperfections. His proposal, nonetheless, seems to come dangerously close to having such an implication.

<sup>25</sup> Grua 361–69/AG 111–17.

<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the term 'privations' may be a bit strong here, since the word has a traditional use in which X has a privation only insofar as X lacks something X *ought* to have. Obviously, the notion of privation used here does not have this normative connotation, since the lack is not the lack of what creatures ought to have but what creatures simply do lack by virtue of being limited beings. I thank Robert Adams for this point.

<sup>27</sup> Adams, *Leibniz*, 376.

<sup>28</sup> "il y a partout des limites dans le creature ... . Cependent la creature est quelque chose de plus que les limites, car elle a receu quelque perfection ou vertu de Dieu."

<sup>29</sup> Note that the argument I present here is not against cooperative models of concurrence *simpliciter*. I will target only those cooperation models that involve creaturely productive causes. My own proposal presented later will also be a cooperation model, but one exempt from the criticism mentioned here, since, in my case, God is the only productive cause and creatures turn out to be formal and final causes.

<sup>30</sup> Those effects of which the creatures are productive causes would be exempt.

<sup>31</sup> As Alfred Freddoso points out, this line of argument was a favorite of Durandus, the chief proponent of "mere conservationism," in attacking concurrentism. See Freddoso "God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Pitfalls and Prospects," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 68 (1994): 144. More on "mere conservationism" shortly.

<sup>32</sup> Thus, with respect to the general question of how divine causal activity fits into the ordinary course of nature—what Freddoso has described as "the

general problem of divine action in nature”—there have been, historically speaking, three positions in response: conservationism, occasionalism, and concurrentism. *Ibid.*, 131–35.

<sup>33</sup>Freddoso, “God’s General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Why Conservation Is not Enough,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991): 554.

<sup>34</sup>I take this summary of Suárez’s argument from Freddoso, “Why Conservation Is not Enough,” 577. For the actual argument, see Francisco Suárez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, vol. 25, sect. 1, § 13 of Suárez, *Opera Omnia: Nova Editio*, ed. Carolo Berton (Paris, 1866; reprinted in 2 volumes at Hildesheim, 1965).

<sup>35</sup>For instance, see T 27.

<sup>36</sup>Now the analogy, obviously, will not fit perfectly with cases of divine concurrence, since a commitment to divine omnipotence would conflict with the claim in our example that neither productive cause is by itself capable of bringing about the effect in question. In other words, if one of the participants in the cooperative endeavor is God, then there would be no tree stump so large that God could not move it without the creature’s help. But, since the central issue here concerns the nature of the *creature’s* contribution and whether the *creature’s* contribution is sufficient for any effect and not *God’s*, the breakdown of the analogy at this point is inconsequential to the purpose at hand.

<sup>37</sup>If we extend this terminology to our example, my brother’s power would not be sufficient in itself to remove any tree stump in the field, even the smallest one.

<sup>38</sup>Why *cooperate* if he had nothing to contribute in the joint venture? Analogously, if creatures were insufficient in this sense of lacking the productive power to cooperate at all, then there would be no point in describing the joint venture of concurrence as a genuine *cooperation* between *productive* causes.

<sup>39</sup>In other words, I will reject the claim that in attributing merely sufficiently powerful powers to creatures, the DPC model safely avoids the pitfalls of conservationism.

<sup>40</sup>I am suggesting that the indirectness and remoteness of divine causal activity with regard to the creature’s action or power in the conservationist’s account was cashed out in terms of divine causality being an external background condition of the exercise of the creature’s power.

<sup>41</sup>This brings out the true force of Suárez’s and Leibniz’s commitments, quoted earlier, toward the maximality of divine causal activity in natural affairs.

<sup>42</sup>One further attempt to motivate this point. Imagine the following scenario along the lines of our original example: suppose that a large stump my brother and I are removing together was secretly divided unbeknownst to us. Let’s say we both exert our powers and we cooperate in moving this stump. What would in fact be happening in this case? We would each be moving separate parts of the stump independently. This scenario shows how my brother’s power is insulated and independent from my power, despite the fact that my power functions as an external background condition of his power being exercised. The same externality, I am arguing, applies to divine causal power when related to the creature’s sufficiently powerful productive power in the DPC

model, which in turn was the key problem raised against conservationism.

<sup>43</sup>The translation is from Sleigh, *Leibniz & Arnauld*, 184.

<sup>44</sup>Ascribing portions of this work accurately can be difficult. Though Grua assigns the argument to Steno, Sleigh attributes it rather to Leibniz, as being too clever for Steno. See Sleigh, *Leibniz & Arnauld*, 184. I follow Sleigh and the Academy Edition editors, who have now put forth the argument as Leibniz's (A 6.4.1382)

<sup>45</sup>This is an interesting passage in many respects and, in a separate paper, I attempt deal with its full implications. See my "Leibniz, Divine Concurrence, and Occasionalism in 1677," forthcoming.

<sup>46</sup>This is the same essay that Sleigh cites in support of his account of concurrence. As noted earlier, it was published in July 1712 under the title "Remarks of Mr. Leibniz on the Sixth Philosophical Letter printed at Trévoux in 1703."

<sup>47</sup>I follow Huggard's translation except for the last sentence and the emphasis is mine. He translates the last sentence as "It is upon these reasons, the volitions of God, that we must assess the force and the reality existent in things" (Huggard, 391). The original French in Gerhardt reads "c'est de ces raisons, des volontés de Dieu, qu'il faut tirer l'estime de la force et de la réalité qui se trouve dans les choses," and shows a comma before *des volontés*. Thus, Huggard is faithful to Gerhardt's version. The basis for my translation comes from the original 1712 publication in the *Mémoires*, which has the following: "c'est de ces raisons de volontés de Dieu qu'il faut tirer l'estime de la force & de la réalité qui se trouve dans les choses" (*Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, July 1712, 1237). Here there is no comma and the *de* before *volontés* is clearly the preposition *de*. The overall context also suggests the most natural reading of the passage is to take 'volitions of God' as modifying 'reasons', which leads us to think that the comma in Gerhardt is simply misplaced or a typographical error.

<sup>48</sup>At this point the question might be raised whether something like rational determination has genuine causal force at all. I address this important question in the next section.

<sup>49</sup>This perception of future states follows from the thesis of universal expression. For more on Leibniz on universal expression, see DM 8–9, 33; LA, 47, 57–58, 74–75, 95–96, 113–14.

<sup>50</sup>To my knowledge, the secondary literature on Leibniz's views on concurrence does not pay sufficient attention to DM 8, despite the fact that Leibniz takes up the issue explicitly here.

<sup>51</sup>This is not meant to suggest that Leibniz's attempt to rehabilitate substantial forms was wholly and solely motivated by concerns regarding divine concurrence. Other issues including his conception of *dynamics* and criticisms of the Cartesian notion of matter as extension are clearly at play as well.

<sup>52</sup>Perhaps Leibniz himself was a bit unclear. Leibniz warns us at the very beginning of this section: "it is rather difficult to distinguish the actions of God from those of creatures."

<sup>53</sup>This last suggestion is not meant to rule out definitively the possibility that Leibniz actually held a different account of concurrence in the mid 1680s.

This could have been the case, but, on the other hand, the relevant passages in the *Discourse* do not seem to say enough to warrant any conclusive interpretation of what Leibniz's account of concurrence was at this point in time.

<sup>54</sup>This statement of the thesis is Robert Sleigh's. See his "Leibniz on Malebranche on Causality," in *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Cover and Kulstad (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990), 162.

<sup>55</sup>I take this list from Mark Kulstad's "Causation and Pre-established Harmony in the Early Development of Leibniz's Philosophy," in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy: Cartesianism, Occasionalism, and Pre-established Harmony*, ed. Steven Nadler (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 111.

<sup>56</sup>For more on this topic, please see my "Leibniz on Spontaneity," forthcoming.

<sup>57</sup>In fact, in the *Dialogue on Human Freedom*, Leibniz says that the very notion of a creature entails certain specific limitations and there being such limitations in the very conception of the creatures does not depend on divine volition willing them to be so. See Grua, 365/AG, 114–15. Also see T 31.

<sup>58</sup>For Leibniz, this consequence would not be acceptable, since it would imply that God is acted upon or passive. Leibniz often describes God as "pure act," which obviously precludes the possibility of being acted upon or passive. For instance, see his 17 December 1698 letter to Bernoulli: "God doubtless is pure act [*purus actus*], since he is most perfect. But imperfect things are passive, and if you conceive of them otherwise, they are taken incompletely" (GM 3:560/AG, 169f.) I thank Eric Watkins for pressing me on this issue.

<sup>59</sup>If we understand Leibnizian formal causation along these lines, it will be clear that the traditional hylomorphism that typically accompanies accounts involving formal causation will not be part of the Leibnizian scheme. In other words, that creatures act as formal causes of their future states does not imply that there is a corresponding *material* cause within the creature that the formal cause informs, nor, alternatively, that God is the material cause on which the creature as formal cause acts.

<sup>60</sup>Thus, as I suggested earlier, those with the Humean intuition that efficient causation is the only type of causation worth investigating would find Malebranche more appealing.

<sup>61</sup>As I observed in note 9, that the past and present features of the creature are the real causes in my account of Leibnizian final causation obviates the frequent complaint against the reality of final causes, which is based on the assumption that final causes are future, non-existent ends that act on the agent.

<sup>62</sup>OM 5:29. The English translation is from Patrick Riley, *Treatise on Nature and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 116–17, hereafter abbreviated as 'TNG'.

<sup>63</sup>TNG, addition to section 39 of Discourse 1 (OM 5:47). A reason for this privileging might be that "[God's] worth is infinite; and the world, however perfect it may be, is not infinitely lovable, and cannot render to God an honor worthy of him" (TNG, 113).

<sup>64</sup>This passage is actually from Leibniz's letter to Malebranche, January

1712, which is in part a response to Malebranche's privileging of divine attributes over worldly perfections.

<sup>65</sup> As I will elaborate, this is so because any occasion in principle can be subsumed under any law, that is, general volition of God.

<sup>66</sup> I thank Steven Nadler for pressing me on this point.

<sup>67</sup> The full statement of the argument is as follows: "A true cause as I understand it is one such that the mind perceives a necessary connection between it and its effect. Now the mind perceives a necessary connection only between the will of an infinitely perfect being and its effects. Therefore, it is only God who is the true cause and who truly has the power to move bodies" (OM 2:316/Search, 450). I follow Steven Nadler in referring to this argument as the "necessary connection" argument; see his "Malebranche on Causation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, ed. Steven Nadler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112–38.

<sup>68</sup> For Leibniz the existence of the actual world involves a real choice on the part of God and the reality of this choice was a crucial element of Leibniz's account. For this is what he took to distinguish his views from Spinoza's necessitarianism, according to which all existences including this world follow of necessity without any choice being involved. For more on this issue, see Adams 1994, 20.

<sup>69</sup> For instance, one might think that a plausible solution to the "author of sin" problem will require attributing genuine causal powers to creatures. Moreover, one might also think that attributing free will and moral responsibility to agents requires attributing genuine causal powers to them. I should also note that, as mentioned earlier, Leibniz famously holds that without genuine causal powers, creatures are not substances at all. See note 5.