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MODALITY, COMPATIBILISM, AND LEIBNIZ: A CRITICAL DEFENSE

by

Seth Adam Jones

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Philosophy
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2012

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor David Cunning

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I develop an interpretation of Leibniz on modality and free will. I do so for two reasons: first, I am attempting to revitalize the notion that Leibniz is the predecessor of contemporary modal semantics; second, I am using Leibniz's philosophical system to motivate responses to contemporary philosophical issues in modality and free will.

In Chapter One, I argue that Leibniz's basic principles are plausible theoretical tools that ought to be used by contemporary philosophers in developing their philosophical systems.

In Chapter Two, I develop Leibniz's views on the nature of individuals. I argue that possible individuals are actually of the same sort as individuals in the actual world—possible individuals and actual individuals are complete creatures that do not differ ontologically from each other.

In Chapter Three, I argue that Leibniz's views on possible individuals make him a modal realist and compare his view with contemporary modal realism in order to support this claim. I also argue that counterparts avoid many of the problems set for them by contemporary thinkers; I end with the ways that Leibniz's view differs from contemporary accounts.

In Chapter Four, I argue that Leibniz provides two different analyses of modality. The first is an infinite analysis account; the second is a possible worlds account. I argue that these two accounts are compatible and amount to two different descriptions of the same theory of modality. I address objections to each account in order to show this.

In Chapter Five, I argue that Leibniz is a compatibilist about free will. Importantly, I argue that it is precisely Leibniz's account of modality that allows for this compatibilism, as against a necessitarian like Spinoza. I then use Leibniz's account to challenge contemporary libertarians about free will on the basis of the principle of sufficient reason. I also show how Leibniz can help semicompatibilism avoid a worry concerning necessitarianism.

At the end of the day, I claim that adopting elements of Leibniz's system can help us better understand modality and the freedom of the will and can be an aid in furthering contemporary philosophical theory.

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Graduate College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Seth Adam Jones

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Philosophy at the May 2012 graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____
David Cunning, Thesis Supervisor

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Richard Fumerton

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Evan Fales

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Ali Hasan

_____
James Duerlinger

To my parents

Be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man.

David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*

What arguments can be given against realism about possible worlds? I have met with few arguments—incredulous stares are more common.

David K. Lewis, *Counterfactuals*

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the area of his philosophical system for which Leibniz is most generally well known is his claim that we inhabit the best of all possible worlds. Indeed, if satire can provide evidence for the prominence of a view, then Voltaire's *Candide* should leave us with no question of Leibniz's importance in intellectual history. On the standard reading of Leibniz, before God created the world He surveyed the infinite number of possible worlds before His mind and chose the one that best met the standard of perfection. Thus, the actual world that God created is the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz's modal metaphysics, following the standard view, is one in which there is an infinite number of worlds that are possible-in-themselves but only one world that is actual; the possible worlds exist as complete sets of ideas in God's mind. It is only by allowing for God to pick between alternate possible worlds that the familiar Leibniz thinks we can save God's glory, as it allows Him rationally to decide to create the world that is best in line with His goodness. Indeed, Leibniz criticizes philosophers like Descartes for destroying God's perfection by collapsing His will and His intellect, so that there can be no sufficient reason for God's choice. Thus, the picture we have of Leibniz's modal ontology on the standard reading accounts for modal claims by appealing to possible worlds that are sets of ideas in God's mind, reserving for the actual world alone the existence of creatures and corporeal things.

By the same token, the familiar Leibniz is one who is quite determined to defend the justice of God, as he sets out in his *Theodicy* to offer an account of how humans can be free and therefore guilty of sin, despite the fact that God has perfectly certain knowledge of the entire future. Indeed, God appears to play a central role in much of Leibniz's philosophy, securing for him such elements as a reason that there is something rather than nothing, a solution to the problem of evil, a model for his theory of monads, and a way to avoid necessitarianism. In much of his correspondence and in his philosophical writings, Leibniz's tone is explicitly theistic, often times heavy-handedly so. Once again, on the standard

reading of Leibniz, we get a philosopher who is at heart a theistic thinker concerned with marrying the new mechanistic philosophy of his time with a Christian orthodoxy that would be amenable to Protestants and Catholics alike.

Despite the long history of commentators (with very few exceptions) reading Leibniz in the standard way, I propose that if we begin with the fundamental metaphysical principles at the root of Leibniz's system, the picture that develops is one of a wholly different character—we see a system that anticipated a number of important positions in contemporary philosophical discourse. More surprisingly, we see the familiar view of Leibniz fading away, to be replaced with a philosopher more concerned with formulating a coherent and consistent metaphysical understanding of the world than saving traditional theology. In particular, if we begin with the basic commitments of Leibniz's system, we can follow the entailments of those intuitive truths to a position that looks incredibly similar to the extreme modal realism of David Lewis; following those same commitments, we also discover that Leibniz offers an understanding of the nature of freedom of the will that closely matches the work of contemporary semicompatibilists like John Martin Fischer and Harry Frankfurt. While such a discovery is perhaps surprising to the point of incredulity, I offer a careful examination of Leibniz's writings, along with commentary from contemporary scholars, that makes it clear that the familiar Leibniz is not the true Leibniz—Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss is a figment of imagination in more ways than one. By the end of the work, one thing that I hope is clear is that Leibniz is an even more subtle and visionary philosopher than is often realized.

In Chapter One, I begin with an examination of the four basic principles that generate Leibniz's philosophical system: the Predicate-in-Subject Principle, the Principle of Contradiction, the Principle of Sufficient Reason, and the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles. My discussion of each principle comprises two parts. First, I explain the way Leibniz himself characterized and understood each principle, citing textual evidence in support of my reading. Second, I attempt to motivate independent reasons for accepting the

principle, making each more plausible for those readers who disagree with Leibniz concerning the obvious and *a priori* nature of the primary truths.

My task in getting clear on Leibniz's own understanding of his principles and providing additional reasons for accepting them is made crucial by the fact that so much hinges on how each ought properly be understood and motivated—it is from these fundamental commitments that Leibniz develops his views of modality and freedom, as well as other aspects of his philosophical system. Therefore, in order to understand the picture I develop in the rest of the dissertation, it is important to have a clear sense of Leibniz's basic axioms; additionally, to see the way in which Leibnizian thought is still of value to contemporary philosophy, it is helpful to consider the reasons we have for accepting his basic principles.

Another task I set out to accomplish in the first chapter is to clarify a particular muddle in Leibniz's writings. Given the fact that Leibniz has a number of basic principles at the heart of his system, it can at times be difficult to see which, if any, are the most fundamental. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that Leibniz does not always maintain a consistent view of which principle he holds most dear, as in some writings it appears to be one but in other writings another. I argue that the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of contradiction are on even footing as the well-spring of Leibnizian thought, but also that, because it is possible to derive the principle of identity of indiscernibles and the predicate-in-subject principle from the principle of sufficient reason, we should perhaps focus our attention more on the former than the latter. Indeed, as we will see, the principle of sufficient reason plays a central role in much of the dissertation, so that it is, at least in terms of theoretic worth, the more important axiom.

It is on the basis of the importance of the principle of sufficient reason for the development of Leibniz's system that I spend the final section of the first chapter emphasizing just how much Leibniz makes use of it. In particular, I begin to draw parallels between Leibniz's use of the principle of sufficient reason and contemporary figures who

arrive at the same views as Leibniz (perhaps without realizing how their arguments implicitly reference the principle of sufficient reason). The discussion at the end of the first chapter provides a set-up for the work in Chapters Three and Five, where I show how Leibniz's philosophy is actually quite similar to some contemporary views in modality and in the free-will debate. The lesson of the first chapter is that we might have some independent reasons for accepting the basic principles of Leibniz's system, which principles will be the motivating force in developing the views examined throughout the rest of the dissertation.

In Chapter Two, I begin to explore the views that Leibniz develops out of the axioms of his system. In order to present in later chapters his views on modality and freedom, in Chapter Two I develop Leibniz's account of individuals, both possible and actual. The reason having his theory of individuals on the table is so important comes from the role the individual plays in both accounts—on the one hand, one important feature of modality is the contingent nature of the actions of individuals; on the other hand, the major player in an account of freedom is the individual and her will. One exciting upshot we see here is that Leibniz's account of the individual is the same for both possible and actual individuals, which will eventually lead us to the view that Leibniz's modal metaphysics is an extreme realist position.

We begin the discussion of the chapter by examining Leibniz's account of possible individuals, both what they are and where they exist. Given his claims that possible worlds are sets of ideas in God's mind, the answer we get initially is that possible individuals, as inhabitants of those possible worlds, also exist in God's mind. As such, possible individuals are a certain sort of idea that God has before His intellect. Additionally, given the predicate-in-subject principle, the individuals in God's mind, as subjects, contain all of their predicates in them when God considers them as possibles. So, possible individuals are subjects with predicates and, because God can see everything that will ever happen to that subject, possible individuals are complete in that they contain all of their predicates in the concept of their subject. Indeed, it is perhaps unsurprising that Leibniz identifies individuals as

complete sets of concepts if we consider the principle of sufficient reason—given the starting conditions for an individual, what will be of true of that individual follows in a perfectly determinate manner from its starting conditions. Therefore, possible individuals are complete concepts in God's mind.

The next part of Chapter Two deals with the relationship between possible individuals and actual individuals. One exciting result we get when we look at Leibniz's discussion of the connection between actual and possible individuals is that there is no principled difference between the two; on Leibniz's ontology actual individuals are just the same sort of thing as possible individuals. However, given the fact that we have already identified possible individuals as ideas in God's mind, it appears that Leibniz is committed to actual individuals also being ideas, so we have to make sense of how that is supposed to go. The answer I offer in Chapter Two (and Three) is that Leibniz's modal ontology includes possible worlds that are of a sort with David Lewis' theory, so that possible individuals are like actual individuals, which simply means that possible individuals are also concrete objects. So, one of the entailments of Leibniz's basic principles is that possible individuals are just like actual individuals, which creates significant problems for the standard reading of Leibniz—I devote some time in Chapter Two to discussing why we might give up the standard reading.

In the final section, I attempt to motivate Leibniz's complete concept view of individuals, as it plays such a central role in his account of both modality and freedom. The individual is important for both of these issues, as one special sort of contingency claim about which we are interested is the individual's ability to do otherwise, and when we are discussing freedom it is most often in terms of individual agents. Therefore, it is important for understanding Leibniz's views in these two areas that we at least see the motivations for accepting his complete concept view of individuals. Additionally, I highlight some interesting results that follow from accepting the complete concept view, most particularly the *prima facie* difficulties it makes for Leibniz in his task to save both contingency and

freedom. Nevertheless, Leibniz does offer the complete concept view as the correct characterization of an individual, and he thinks he *can* save both contingency and freedom; the way in which he is able to so, as we see in later chapters, is one of great strengths of Leibniz's philosophy.

Using the discussion of Leibniz's account of individuals from Chapter Two, in Chapter Three I expand on the idea that Leibniz's modal metaphysics is of a realist bent. First, I present evidence that Leibniz is quite happy to discuss modality in terms of worlds. In understanding what Leibniz means by worlds, however, it is important to remember that possible individuals are of a kind with actual individuals, so that possible individuals inhabit their worlds in the same way that actual individuals inhabit our world. Given how strikingly similar Leibniz's view sounds to David Lewis' modal realism, I frame the discussion of the rest of the chapter in terms of the latter's views. My aim in doing so is, on the one hand, to help us better understand Leibniz's modal metaphysics by casting it in a more familiar light and, on the other hand, to help motivate Leibniz's views on modality by appealing to the contemporary literature on the subject. At the end of the day, I show that Leibniz is no worse off than any contemporary modal realist in making sense of our modal claims.

In motivating Leibniz's position, I first appeal to Lewis' defense of modal realism. In particular, I discuss why we might adopt modal realism by appealing to its ability to make sense of our intuitions concerning alternate possibilities. I argue that one of the key strengths of modal realism is that it allows us to give a single account for what makes our claims, both about actual and non-actual states of affairs, true. That is, on modal realism the truth-makers for our claims about actual states of affairs is the way something is in a world, and the truth-makers for our claims about possible states of affairs is the way something is in a world—if we adopt modal realism, we need not offer a disjointed account of truth-makers. At the same time, I show how Leibniz's account parallels Lewis' own, so that I can later make the claim that Leibniz is in just as good a position as Lewis in accounting for alternate possibilities.

Finally, I defend the modal realist's way of making sense of the contingent actions of individuals in terms of counterparts. Given the fact that both Lewis and Leibniz appeal to counterparts to help them explain alternate possibilities, showing how counterparts are supposed to work is an important part of motivating modal realism. In particular, I respond to one of the main objections to counterparts—the 'Caring Problem'—and argue that it does not actually cause any great difficulty for modal realism. I also argue that transworld identity does not fare any better than counterpart theory in explaining our intuitions about alternate ways the world could be, so objecting to counterpart theory by appeal to transworld identity is not an effective strategy. The upshot of the discussion in Chapter Three is that counterpart theory and modal realism offer a plausible and defensible way of accounting for the truth of our modal claims. I end the chapter by marking the ways in which Lewis and Leibniz differ in their modal realist accounts, despite a number of overlapping features between the two views.

Having established that Leibniz offers a modal realist understanding of possibility and necessity, in Chapter Four I attempt to handle one rather confusing aspect of Leibniz's theory of modality. Although it is clear from the discussion in Chapters Two and Three that Leibniz is a modal realist, it is notable that Leibniz also offers an account of contingency that is rooted in the notion of an infinite analysis. Even more troubling, Leibniz claims that the infinite analysis account and the possible worlds account amount to the same thing—I offer a way to make sense of his claim. In Chapter Four, I make sense of how the two accounts cohere.

Before showing how the two accounts amount to the same thing, however, I first develop the way in which Leibniz thought each made sense of contingency: the infinite analysis account does so by appealing to the impossibility of performing an analysis in a finite number of steps for a particular truth; the possible worlds account understands contingency by appeal to possible worlds. Since the two accounts look rather different on the face of it, one particularly challenging aspect of Chapter Four is to show that they both

return all of the same results, so that both accounts pick out the same list of contingent truths. One special difficulty rests in showing how Leibniz understood the contingency of the actual world in terms of his possible worlds account—given the fact that the actual world is the one that best meets the independent standard of perfection, it is difficult to see how any other world could possibly be actual, so it is difficult to see how the actual world is contingent. I offer a potential solution available to Leibniz that relativizes possibility to a closed set of worlds consisting of an actual world and those worlds possible from it. While I take it that such a solution is promising, the issue of making sense of how the actual world is both the best and nevertheless contingent is a difficult one that I would like to explore more in the future.

Chapter Four concludes with a discussion of precisely how the infinite analysis and possible worlds accounts amount to one-and-the-same understanding of the nature of contingency—I argue that, for any result of 'contingent' returned by the infinite analysis account, we are able to explain that contingency by appealing to the possible worlds account. In other words, the reason that a particular truth does not imply a contradiction is because of the existence of the infinite possible worlds and what is true in them. Nevertheless, there do remain some potential worries that Leibniz could not have offered both accounts of contingency. By way of finishing the discussion, I argue that Robert Adam's worry concerning the 'Lucky Proof' and Margaret Wilson's 'Possible Gods' objection are not insurmountable and, at the end of the day, Leibniz is perfectly justified in offering the possible worlds/infinite analysis account as the proper way to understand contingency.

In Chapter Five, I turn from the discussion of Leibniz's modal metaphysics to his views on freedom. I explore the three criteria Leibniz offers as being necessary and jointly sufficient for freedom—spontaneity, intelligence, and contingency. Given the last criterion, we can see that Leibniz's modal metaphysics has a rather large role to play in his account of freedom. As I work through each of the criteria, one thing that comes to light is that Leibniz is a compatibilist when it comes to the question of free will, and his compatibilism is

a direct result of the basic axioms I discussed in Chapter One. The task of Chapter Five is, in part, to show exactly what sort of compatibilist Leibniz is.

One particularly interesting aspect of Leibniz's compatibilism, given his account of contingency, is that it challenges the claim that "ought implies can." It does so in two ways: first, his modal realism allows for a sense of 'can' that is relevant to discussions of freedom without allowing for the suspect sense libertarians are after; second, for those not satisfied with the way he is able to account for an ability to do otherwise, I offer on Leibniz's behalf a challenge to the claim that freedom requires an ability to do otherwise, so that if we are forced to give up the relevant sense of 'can', Leibniz's account still saves freedom in a sense important for our normative claims. Nevertheless, as I also argue in Chapter Five, I do think that the ability to do otherwise is an important part of freedom, and I try to motivate the claim that Leibniz's views on contingency are the best way to make sense of that ability.

Turning from a discussion of how Leibniz conceived of freedom, I engage the contemporary debate between compatibilists and libertarians in order to show how adopting a Leibnizian position can be beneficial in advancing the issue. In particular, I show how the principle of sufficient reason is a powerful tool on the side of compatibilists, one that were they to adopt it would allow for a principled response to any libertarian position that posits a sense of freedom that is removed from prior causes. I also motivate a problem for the compatibilist who thinks she can save freedom in the face of necessitarianism and show how Leibniz's modal account is able to offer a way for compatibilism to avoid necessitarianism without falling into the libertarian sense of 'can'.

I end Chapter Five with Leibniz's suggestion for how we ought to live, considering the fact that we are free only in the compatibilist sense. Drawing parallels to the Stoics, as well as to Descartes and Spinoza, I offer the advice Leibniz gives for attaining happiness in light of the fact that we are determined: by using our reason to better understand the nature of the universe that we inhabit, by understanding that the contingency of our actions is accounted for by appeal to other possible worlds, and by removing ourselves as much as we

are able from the control of the passions, we are able to achieve more than the Stoic's patience with our lot in life—we are able to achieve happiness and a truly good life.

As a final note—one project with which Leibniz concerned himself in developing his philosophical system was to show the value of the Scholastic philosophers to the Modern mechanists who had roundly and wholly rejected them. We see him adopting this project in his acceptance of the Aristotelian views on substance in *Discourse on Metaphysics* and in adopting some aspects of the Stoic's views on the good life in *Theodicy* and *New Essays on Human Understanding*. In what follows, I take up the spirit of his project—as far as I am able, I show how contemporary philosophy would be well-served by returning to some elements of Leibnizian philosophy. While I do not think that we ought to whole-heartedly endorse all of the claims of his system, one thing I hope I have shown is that there is a great value in carefully extracting out of the philosophy of Leibniz the gold that it holds. In furthering our understanding of modality, in proposing a solution to the problem of freedom, and in offering motivation for returning to basic truths such as the principle of sufficient reason, Leibniz's role in the history of philosophy is far from over—the Leibnizian mine is a rich strike indeed.

CHAPTER I: FIRST PRINCIPLES AND PRIMARY TRUTHS

Leibniz was, like many of his contemporaries, a systematic thinker who attempted to connect the many disparate subjects of his philosophical theories into one coherent whole, beginning first with basic axioms and principles and using them to draw out his views in many different areas. In order to understand Leibniz's mature philosophy, it is not enough to simply look at one aspect of his thought; instead, one must consider the way in which the entire system holds together in order to fully understand any one part of it. Especially important in endeavoring to grasp and criticize the system of philosophy that Leibniz developed during the course of his life are the initial premises from which Leibniz developed his views on the nature of modality and on the nature of freedom. Because Leibniz was such a systematic thinker, it is worthwhile and necessary for a full understanding of Leibniz's philosophy to examine the basic principles upon which his theory rests: first, to understand how Leibniz characterizes each of the principles; second, to see how each of the principles fit together with the others; third to show how Leibniz used these principles to derive his mature views. Undertaking such a task before delving into the complexities of Leibniz's system will ensure a fuller and more charitable understanding of his accounts of possibility and freedom that depend so heavily on these basic principles.

The first principles and primary truths that Leibniz employs in his system are:

(1) The Predicate-in-Subject Principle (PSP)

(2) The Principle of Contradiction (PC)

(3) The Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR)

(4) The Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (PII)

These four tenets form the foundation that drives Leibniz to understand the nature of possibility and of freedom in the way that he does. However, despite the systematic way in which Leibniz constructs his philosophical system, it is not always clear in what order the principles should be understood; Leibniz is somewhat vague as to whether all of these

principles are on equal footing as regards their priority, or whether some are derivable from the others.[1] The task of the current chapter will be to both explicitly state how Leibniz understood each of these principles and, as much as possible, clarify Leibniz's statements concerning the connection between the basic tenets, so as to set the groundwork for a proper development and analysis of Leibniz's views concerning the nature of possibility and freedom.

The Truth is in There: Predicate-in-Subject Principle

In "Primary Truths," Leibniz writes:

> The predicate or consequent is always in the subject or antecedent, and the nature of truth in general or the connection between the terms of a statement, consists in this very thing, as Aristotle also observed. The connection and inclusion of the predicate in the subject is explicit in identities, but in all other propositions it is implicit and must be shown through the analysis of notions.[2]

Again, in *Discourse on Metaphysics*, he writes:

> Thus the subject term must always contain the predicate term, so that one who understands perfectly the notion of the subject would also know that the predicate belongs to it.[3]

From these two statements, we can see how Leibniz understands PSP: to say of a subject that some predicate applies to it is nothing more than to say that the predicate is in the subject, or that the subject contains in some way the predicate that applies to it. As an example of what Leibniz means by PSP, consider the claim that "the circle is round." Applying the predicate of roundness here to the notion of the circle, one can see that to

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[1] Indeed, the issue here gets even more confusing as Leibniz states in some places that one principle is derived from a second, and then later will claim that the second principle is actually derived from the first. In what follows below, I will attempt to clarify the order and priority of and the connection between the basic tenets of Leibniz's system.

[2] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Primary Truths," in *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and trans. by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 31. Unless otherwise noted, all Leibniz passages come from this text.

[3] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §8, 41.

understand the notion of circle is to realize that it has as the essential property of roundness contained in its notion; a circle lacking roundness simply would fail to be a circle. Thus, Leibniz takes it that PSP is what allows for there to be *a priori* demonstrations, as these are demonstrations that depend purely on the analysis of a concept (in the current case, the concept of 'circle') and not on information gained from experience.

However, given that Leibniz claims that *a priori* demonstrations rest on PSP, the strength of PSP is somewhat surprising, in that he claims that the subject term *must always* contain the predicate term in every truth. What is interesting about the strength of PSP is that, even with a claim such as, "that ball is red," the subject term ('ball') must contain the predicate term ('red') in the same way that 'circle' contains 'roundness'. However, intuitively at least, the redness of the ball seems to be something discoverable, not *a priori*, but rather *a posteriori*; yet, given PSP, Leibniz must claim that the ball's being red is knowable *a priori*.[4] Yet, on the standard understanding of *a priori*, the fact that the ball's being red is knowable *a priori* seemingly makes that fact analytic, and therefore necessary. Unfortunately, it seems as if Leibniz would have an insurmountable hurdle at the outset if he were forced to the conclusion that even such obviously contingent, *a posteriori* knowable facts are actually analytic and necessary. While a full discussion of just how Leibniz deals with the issue of PSP in relation to contingent facts will have to wait until later chapters, for now it might be helpful to see the reasons for which Leibniz would hold such a strong version of PSP.

One of the motivations Leibniz had for positing PSP is undoubtedly theological. In "On Freedom," he writes:

> I saw that it is common to every true affirmative proposition, universal and particular, necessary or contingent, that the predicate is in the subject, that is, that the notion of the predicate is involved somehow in the notion of the subject. And this is the source of

[4] As we shall see in the next chapter, PSP is intricately connected with one of Leibniz's most famous theories: that every individual already contains in it all of its properties from the moment of its creation. I will leave off the discussion of this interesting connection until then, however.

> infallibility in every sort of truth for that being who knows everything *a priori*.[5]

As the passage shows, Leibniz claims that the only way in which an omniscient God could know everything *a priori* is if every truth were knowable *a priori*.[6] In order for a truth to be knowable *a priori*, however, it must function as any analytic truth does; the subject must contain the predicate. If the predicate were not part of the subject, then one could not know that the predicate applied to the subject merely by doing an analysis of the concept of the subject and seeing that the concept of the predicate is included. Instead, one would have to seek other ways of knowing that the predicate applied to the subject, such as looking at the subject and seeing if the predicate applied. Since God is unable to look at the subject through *a posteriori* means, God would not know that the predicate applied to it, and therefore, there would be some truth (e.g. that the ball is red) that God could not know, which is absurd. Therefore, PSP.

While it is interesting to see the sort of theological underpinnings of PSP, it would be a greater advantage to the strength of his position if Leibniz also had purely philosophical reasons for holding PSP. In a letter to Arnauld, Leibniz writes that,

> Finally, I have given a decisive reason which, in my opinion, takes the place of a demonstration; this is, that always in every affirmative proposition whether veritable, necessary or contingent, universal or singular, the concept of the predicate is comprised in some sort in that of the subject. Either the predicate is in the subject or else I do not know what truth is.[7]

It is clear from the passage that Leibniz takes himself to have successfully shown Arnauld the truth of PSP. Unfortunately, it is unclear from the text precisely where such a decisive

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[5] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 95.

[6] Indeed, it seems that the only way God could know anything at all, given that God lacks a body and therefore cannot know anything on the basis of the senses or, what is the same thing, *a posteriori*, is by knowing a particular fact *a priori*.

[7] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Leibniz to Arnauld (July 14, 1686)," in *Discourse on Metaphysics; Correspondence with Arnauld; Monadology*, trans. by George Montgomery. (La Salle: Open Court, 1997), 132.

reason lies. Perhaps what Leibniz has in mind here can be seen from his discussion of alternative possibilities earlier in the same letter. Given that what is ascribed to possible things is presumably true of them, there must be something that makes it true that a possible thing has that predicate. However, it cannot be the case that what makes it true of a possible thing is that it actually has the property being ascribed to it: pure possibilities contain no actuality. Therefore, some other reason must be given for what makes it true of a possible thing that it has some feature. The only option, it seems, is that the concept of the possible thing contains in it the concept of the predicate, in much the same way that the concept of the actual thing contains in it the concept of the predicate—there is therefore a nice parity between possibles and actuals on Leibniz's account. PSP, then, allows for a theory of truth that can coherently discuss alternate possibilities in a way that other theories of truth do not seem to be able to account for.

It is important to understand PSP in the context in which Leibniz was writing. Although PSP might seem somewhat strange to our contemporary ears, at least some of Leibniz's fellow-philosophers would not have been at all shocked by the principle. For example, Spinoza held something rather similar to PSP in his metaphysical system. Leibniz had at times corresponded with Spinoza and read some of that author's works, and he saw, perhaps surprisingly, some important similarities between his own works and Spinoza's. Indeed, Leibniz wrote of Spinoza that, "[h]e would be right if there were no monads."[8] Although monads end up countenancing a fair number of differences between the two views, one of the things that Leibniz thinks Spinoza gets right is that, in order to have an adequate idea of a thing, one must conceive not merely of one or two aspects of it but rather must understand the complete concept of the thing; otherwise, one's idea is inadequate and is in some sense about a mere chimera. Notice, too, that for Spinoza, as for Leibniz, to have

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[8] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Letter to Louis Bourguet (December 1714)," in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed,, ed. and trans. by Leroy E. Loemker. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1989), 663.

a complete idea of a thing is to have an idea of it connecting with or mirroring everything else there is. That is, Spinoza would have readily accepted PSP, it seems, as he has something very much like it on his own system.

Leibniz's positing of PSP as a basic principle, then, is not nearly as surprising when seen from the context in which he was writing as it might be from today's perspective. Although we might like to have seen Leibniz do a little more to motivate the principle, we cannot really blame him for failing to do so, as PSP was certainly on the table in the philosophical landscape of the seventeenth century. While we can try to help Leibniz out by making PSP more appealing to today's philosophers by motivating it in ways that he did not, in his own time Leibniz's use of the principle was not nearly as suspect and did not seem to require much work in making it appealing to his close contemporaries. So, having placed PSP in the context in which Leibniz wrote of it, and having seen a clear exposition of what PSP is and how Leibniz might motivate it, it will now be helpful to focus on another one of Leibniz's primary tenets, PC.

It's a PC World: Principle of Contradiction

Of all of the principles that Leibniz puts forward as being a primary truth perhaps the most innocuous is PC. PC is the claim "*that whatever implies a contradiction is false.*"[9] Again, the principle of contradiction states "that a proposition cannot be true and false at the same time, and that therefore A is A and cannot be not A."[10] According to Leibniz, it is PC that is the foundation for all necessary truths, including the truths of mathematics, and is a principle, I take it, that very few philosophers would be willing to deny. To deny PC is, on Leibniz's view, to allow for demonstrations which are absurd. The very language used here is telling because the use of the word 'absurd' already seems to pick out that the proposition

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[9] Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility," 19, emphasis original.

[10] Leibniz, "Letters to Clarke: Leibniz's Second Letter," 321.

put forward is obviously false, and it seems that most philosophers would find agreement with Leibniz that a proposition or demonstration involving a contradiction is absurd. It is for the second reason that I think it safe to say the PC is the firmest of Leibniz's basic tenets. Although it will be interesting later to see exactly how Leibniz applies PC to his explanation of the nature of possibility and free will, it should be pointed out once more that PC only applies to necessary truths, or truths that can be resolved into identity statements. It is the first of two "great principles" upon which Leibniz bases his reasonings concerning the nature of truth. As PC applies only to necessary truths, it has no role to play in contingent truths; instead, what explains contingent truths is Leibniz's other great principle, PSR.

For Everything There is a Reason: Principle of Sufficient Reason

According to Leibniz PSR may be characterized in a number of ways, perhaps the most familiar of which is "that nothing happens without a reason why it should be so rather than otherwise."[11] PSR is a powerful principle that, although it has perhaps fallen out of vogue in the current philosophical landscape, was commonly accepted during the early modern period. Leibniz appeals to the power of the principle in numerous places, saying that without the principle, one must give up much of what has been put forward as true in philosophy, as PSR is what underlies such claims. In a letter to Magnus Wedderkopf, Leibniz writes:

> For it is necessary to refer everything to some reason, and we cannot stop until we have arrived at a first cause – or it must be admitted that something can exist without a sufficient reason for its existence, and this admission destroys the demonstration of the existence of God and of many philosophical theorems. [12]

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[11] Ibid. For another way in which Leibniz characterizes PSR, see "Primary Truths," 33, in which Leibniz also claims that PSR can be understood as the claim that there is no effect without a cause.

[12] Leibniz, "Letter to Magnus Wedderkopf," in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 146. Leibniz expresses a similar sentiment concerning the importance of PSR when he writes, "Unless there were such a principle [PSR], there would be no principle of truth in contingent things" (Leibniz, "On

Leibniz holds that it is by PSR that much of what is true in philosophy can be demonstrated. PSR allows for there to be an explanation of every contingent fact, including such facts as why God created the actual world as opposed to some other or why a particular human performs the actions she does, even those actions which she performs freely. The use that Leibniz makes of PSR is varied and pervasive throughout his philosophical system. Among the results that Leibniz derives from PSR are: that God creates the best possible world (i.e. the actual world), that time and space are relational and not absolute, that individual substances are monads who have their complete concept within them from the moment of creation, that possibilities are real and necessitarianism is false, and that traditional libertarian theories concerning the freedom of the will are false. As I will argue later, PSR is perhaps the principle upon which Leibniz relies most heavily for his mature philosophical views and, philosophically speaking, it has such explanatory power that it is essential to include it in any serious philosophical system, contrary to recent philosophical trends.

For now, however, it will be enough to attempt to motivate why one might accept PSR for intuitive reasons.[13] On the causal formulation of the axiom, PSR tells us that every event has a cause. It is an interesting fact that, for whatever reason, when we as humans view some event that has no apparent cause, we are unsatisfied with the result that it simply lacks any cause whatsoever. Instead, we tend to search around for a cause until we find one. Even if we are unable to find a cause, it is not usually the case that we simply give up and admit that there simply is no cause; such a claim is deeply unsettling to most people.[14] The

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Contingency," 29). Although I will not argue the point here, I think it is safe to assume that Leibniz is wrong about the fact that we can use PSR to prove that God exists; nevertheless, we ought not give it up as it does get us many other important philosophical results, as we shall see later.

[13] I want to make it clear at the outset that, in the current section, I am not providing an argument to demonstrate the truth of PSR. Indeed, such a demonstration might not be possible. I am only here attempting to pump intuitions concerning the truth of PSR and why, perhaps, we might accept it as true. Later, I will add to these motivations a defense of PSR based on its theoretical power, just as Leibniz does.

[14] Perhaps a counter-example here is quantum uncertainty, as it seems that at a certain level, the world simply is undetermined. However, I think that if pressed, one would find that most

fact that the idea of an event without a cause is so unsettling to most people is, I take it, at least *prima facie* evidence that PSR is true. Additionally, it might be possible to motivate the principle in a different way, one that formulates PSR as the principle that nothing happens without a (rational) reason that it should be that way as opposed to some other way.

Imagine I am standing in line to buy a ticket to the cinema. When I approach the ticket counter, I am faced with a number of options for which movie to see, and lo-and-behold, I pick movie A from among the available options. What, then, ought we say about my choice? That is, how might we explain how I chose movie A over movie B? If PSR were false, then the answer might very well be, "for no reason whatsoever." Indeed, if we were to ask for what reason I chose movie A, I might answer with the same response. However, when one considers the movie-going case, it seems difficult to accept that there really is *no reason whatsoever* for which I chose to see movie A. In fact, it seems that if there really were no reason for me to choose movie A over movie B, then I would not have been able to choose movie A in the first place. Given that I have chosen movie A, we begin to look around for possible reasons that led me to that choice: perhaps I have seen a movie by that director before and liked it; maybe it was the first movie on the list, and I was too lazy to read any of the other titles; maybe I simply liked the colors on the poster more than any of the others; perhaps I intended to choose movie B, but at the moment when I was going to speak, aliens zapped me with a control-ray that caused me to pick movie A instead. Whatever we want to say here, it seems that there is an intuitive push to posit some reason for my choice and not simply to accept that there was no reason whatsoever. If there really is no reason for my choice, then most of us would think that I could not have picked a

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people, if they understand quantum uncertainty at all, are not completely satisfied with such an answer (e.g. there are theories which try to explain away the apparent indeterminacy, as with Einstein).

movie. Once again, the intuitive force of the judgment that I must have a reason for performing one action over another gives at least *prima facie* evidence for the truth of PSR.[15]

Another issue that the movie-goer example highlights is the motivation Leibniz would have had for positing the requirement of a cause for an action. While some might be skeptical about the necessity of a preceding determinate cause in the realm of the mental, particularly those who are traditional libertarians concerning the freedom of the will, I take it that the claim that there must necessarily be a determinate cause in the physical realm is much less suspicious. Indeed, it seems rather unlikely that many people would accept the claim that, say, an automobile that was discovered in the dean's office simply popped into existence fully formed in that location, *ex nihilo* as it were. When it comes to physical causation, we expect to find a cause and categorically deny the claim that physical things can come into existence uncaused. That is, when PSR is understood as a causal maximum in the physical realm, I take it that it is close to universally held.

When it comes to the case of mental causation, PSR is more suspect, at least on the common view. Some, particularly traditional libertarians who hold that a free will requires that the will not be determined when one makes a choice, seem to reject PSR outright in the mental realm. Presumably one motivation for positing an uncaused will is precisely the apparent difference between the physical world and the mental: unlike the physical world, which is composed of substances whose sheer presence imposes itself on the mind, the mental world is often seen as ephemeral and lacking in the sort of hard reality of the material world. Indeed, experience here seems to play a rather significant role, as we have all had experience with physical causation and its pervasiveness in the physical world. The difference of experience in the case of the mental is stark, as the cases in which we

[15] I want to reiterate here that I am not arguing for PSR but am merely trying to motivate some initial reasons for holding to it. My full defense of PSR will develop throughout the rest of the dissertation.

experience our will as being determined[16] are certainly the exceptions that emphasize the rule. Because in the typical course of the day we do not experience the choices we make as being caused by any prior event, it strikes many of us that the will is not constrained by PSR in the normal case.

Now, it is important to remember in considering his motivation for applying PSR even to the mental realm that Leibniz is working in a broadly Cartesian framework. Following Descartes, Leibniz held that the mind, despite its apparent ephemeral quality, actually has a substantial nature, as without this it could not interact with the physical world or cause anything at all. It is because of the fact that the mind has causal power that one can say that it exists and, therefore, has substantial reality. However, in discussing the layman's typical idea of things like the mind, Descartes points out that:

> [S]ince the mind judged everything in terms of its utility to the body in which it was immersed, it assessed the amount of reality in each object by the extent to which it was affected by it. As a result, it supposed that there was more substance or corporeality in rocks and metals than in water or air, since it felt more hardness and heaviness in them. Indeed, it regarded the air as a mere nothing, so long as it felt no wind or cold or heat in it.[17]

> Many people's understanding of substance is still limited to that which is imaginable and corporeal, or even to that which is capable of being perceived by the senses… [T]hey suppose that nothing can subsist unless it is a body, and that no body can subsist unless it can be perceived by the senses.[18]

The worry that Descartes characterizes here is that typical conceptions of the nature of the mind hold that it and its ideas have no reality whatsoever, which lends itself to the notion that PSR does not apply. The view that both Descartes and Leibniz oppose is precisely the

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[16] I take it that the reader is at least familiar with some instances of psychological compulsion, where one's will is determined to a certain course, either through external or internal pressure, almost, if you will, "against one's will."

[17] René Descartes, *Principles* I:71; AT 8A:36, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol I., trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 219.

[18] Descartes, *Principles*, I:73; AT 8A:37, 220.

view of the common folk. Leibniz inherits from Descartes the worry that most people, in thinking of the mind, will either view it as a mere nothing or conceive of it in the wrong way, i.e. as being part of the physical world.[19] The philosopher, however, is able to get beyond the common person's reliance on the senses and on language to discover that the mind is a substance that has a firmer reality than is often attributed to it and is much more similar to things in the physical world than is typically thought.[20]

Descartes, and by extension Leibniz, was aware of how great a role our embodiment played in our mental activity and therefore argued that a great part of the mental life is constrained by the physical body. Given both the ontology of mind at work here and the connection between the mental and physical realms, it would be just as strange for mental things to pop into existence out of nowhere in the mind as it would be for the car to simply appear one day in the dean's office out of thin air or for my neurons to start firing one day without anything causing them to do so. On the Cartesian framework that Leibniz adopts, PSR applies just as much in the case of the mental as it does in the physical, since both are substances with reality wherein something cannot come from nothing. In the movie-goer case, we can now see why it is that Leibniz would insist that some reason must exist why I chose one movie over the other alternatives, as, given the framework in which he is working, the causal formulation of PSR applies as strongly to the actions of the will as it does to, say, the actions of billiard balls.

A Libertarian Digression

Before moving to the next of Leibniz's basic principles, I think a slight digression would be helpful, as it relates to Leibniz's views on PSR and the use he makes of the

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[19] For an interesting discussion on how and why the view of the common folk is confused and how philosophers can move beyond the folk view, see David Cunning, *Argument and Persuasion in Descartes' Metaphysics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), especially pp. 20-24.

[20] At least in the sense that it has some reality.

principle. I do want to mention here that the following discussion is by no means intended to be exhaustive; instead, I simply hope that it will further illuminate exactly how Leibniz views PSR. Taking up Leibniz's position here, once we admit that PSR applies to the mental realm, it seems that any traditional conception of libertarianism as regards free will is completely out-of-bounds. The reason for the incompatibility of PSR and libertarianism can be seen if one considers what exactly the libertarian position is positing. On the traditional version of the libertarian view of free will, what it means for the will to be free is that it be wholly unconstrained, so that one has the ability to choose whichever of the many possible options that are available for one to will. So, taking the movie-goer case again as an example here, a traditional libertarian might say that all of the movies are available options for me to choose, and my will is free in that I can perfectly well pick whichever movie I want to see. However, the libertarian position gets into trouble here (in light of PSR) when one asks for a reason why I chose movie A over movie B. It seems that there are three answers the libertarian can give here:

1) My will was randomly or non-causally driven to pick movie A

2) My will was driven by my reasons and desires to pick movie A

3) I willed that my will pick movie A.

Unfortunately for the libertarian, all three of these responses face some particularly gruesome difficulty.[21]

The first answer gets the libertarian into trouble because on the one hand it is a clear violation of PSR. If my will is not caused to pick movie A, then it looks as if there is no reason for my picking movie A. However, by PSR, there must be a reason for my willing to see movie A. Therefore, the first answer is not satisfactory. On the other hand, on the first answer it is difficult to see how my will can be considered *my* will in any important sense of

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[21] For a particular good exposition of the problems the traditional libertarian faces, see Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), Chapter 12. In Chapter Five, I will return to the solution van Inwagen offers in his response on behalf of the libertarian.

the term, as the randomness of its choice is not connected in any way to my wants or desires. Any libertarian who wants to claim that a free will involves one that is not caused in any way must face the result that she has no control over her will, which is odd for anyone purporting to give an account of freedom of the will. So, answering the question of why I picked movie A by claiming that my will was free in that it was uncaused seems a wholly unsatisfactory way to capture how *my choice* was free.

The second answer fares little better. On the claim that my willing to see movie A is a result of my desiring to see movie A, one can ask the further question about how my desires influence my will. On the traditional libertarian position, it cannot be that my desires caused my willing. If it were the case that my desires caused my willing, then my willing is constrained by my desires in a way that does not leave it open to me to choose otherwise, as choosing otherwise would run counter to my desires.[22] Therefore, while the second answer does satisfy PSR, it does so in a way that seems to simply give up the traditional libertarian position.

The third answer attempts to avoid stating that my will is uncaused, while still maintaining that my will is not constrained by anything external to it. On the third response, what allows me to will to see movie A is that I will that I will that I see movie A. In other words, what causes me to will to see movie A is that I will to do so. The fact that I will to will, then, answers PSR because it provides an answer to what causes my will to pick movie A: *I* do. It also avoids the problem of answer two because, while my will is caused to pick movie A, it is caused to do so in an unproblematic way, as I am the thing that causes my will to act as it does, which is the result the libertarians were after in the first place. While the

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[22] Some libertarians might try to account for the connection between one's will and one's desires in a non-causal way. Part of the motivation for doing so, I take it, is to leave open the opportunity for one to choose counter to (all of) one's desires. On such a view, there is still a problem of what causes one's will to act as it does and how one's desires have anything at all to do with one's will. It is unclear how any account of the connection between one's desire and one's will that is weaker than causation can appropriately map the influence one's desires and reasons have on how one acts.

third answer avoids the problems of being incompatible with PSR, being completely random, and being incompatible with the libertarian notion of freedom, it can only do so at the price of introducing an infinite regress into the libertarian notion of a free will. That a regress arises on the third answer can be seen if we merely look for a reason why the second level of willing causes the first level of willing to see movie A.

Applying the third answer once again, we get the result that it is another act of the will, wherein I once again will to have my will be a certain way.[23] Since we can continue applying PSR to each case in the third answer, the only way the third answer can satisfy the question concerning why I chose movie A over movie B is by introducing an infinite chain of wills, without there being an original will to start the whole process.[24] Therefore, answer three fails as well to provide a sufficient libertarian position in light of PSR. While I will be returning in later chapters to the issue of how PSR can create a problem for libertarians, especially on Leibniz's view, as well as how a libertarian might try to respond, for now the discussion of PSR and libertarianism helps give a clearer picture of exactly what PSR is and how Leibniz made use of it. It is now time, then, to turn to the final basic tenet of Leibniz's system, PII.

The Law of the Land: Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles

Leibniz's discusses PII (also known as Leibniz's Law) in many different places throughout his writings. Perhaps the most oft-quoted instance is in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, where Leibniz writes:

> It is not true that two substances can resemble each other completely and differ only in number, and that what Saint Thomas asserts on this point about angels or intelligences (that here every individual is a lowest species) is true of all substances, provided that

[23] That is, I will to will to see movie A.

[24] That is, I will to will to will to will to will to will to will to will…, *ad infinitum*.

> one takes the specific differences as the geometers do with respect to their figures.[25]

Here, Leibniz is claiming that if one posits that two substances exist, then adds to the claim that they share all of the same qualitative characteristics (i.e. the only difference between the two is that they are numerically distinct), one is simply seeing double, or positing an impossible set of substances. In other words, no two substances can share all of the same qualitative properties[26] and remain distinct. Put another way, PII is the claim that any two apparent substances that are indistinguishable (because they share all of the same qualitative properties) are identical. PII also has an important role to play in understanding Leibniz's characterization of the nature of possibility and freedom, as we shall see later, but I once again want to spend a brief amount of time here attempting to motivate some initial considerations for the truth of PII.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising that PII is not, in the minds of many contemporary philosophers, an obvious truth. In particular, Max Black presents a powerful counter example to PII: imagine a world in which nothing exists except for two perfectly identical, but separate, spheres:

> We might suppose that each was made of chemically pure iron, had a diameter of one mile, that they had the same temperature, colour, and so on, and that nothing else existed. Then every quality and relational characteristic of the one would also be a property of the other. Now, if what I am describing is logically possible, it is not impossible for two things to have all their properties in common. This seems to me to refute the Principle.[27]

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[25] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §9, 41-42. In "Primary Truths," Leibniz qualifies this slightly, claiming that, if one thinks abstractedly enough, one can pick out perfect similarities by only focusing on the incomplete notion of what the two substances share (e.g. by considering shape alone).

[26] It is important to note here that not all of what we might consider properties today count for distinguishing two substances. For example, spatio-temporal properties, being purely extrinsic, do not count as distinguishing properties.

[27] Max Black, "The Identity of Indiscernibles," *Mind* 61 (1952):156.

Since we can imagine such a world, according to Black, such a world is logically possible. However, if such a world is logically possible and PII is supposed to be (as Leibniz asserts) necessary, then Black's world acts as a counter-example that disproves PII. The possible existence of two numerically distinct spheres that nevertheless share all of the same qualitative properties acts as a direct refutation of PII. While there are some background assumptions here, for the purpose of motivating PII on behalf of Leibniz, only two need be stressed.

The first is that the possibility of Black's world depends on there not being anything else in the universe (i.e. that no observer exists), and the second is that properties are such that the same property can be instantiated in more than one thing. Responding on behalf of Leibniz to Black's world, we can point out some immediate concerns. The first is that, given Leibniz's metaphysical theory, such a world would not be possible, as there would never be a world in which there were not some observer. The reason that there would always be an observer is that God is a necessary being and will always be able to act as an observer of the spheres, so that they will have some property that the other lacks.[28] The second is that, on Leibniz's view of properties, there are no universals. Instead, each property is an individual trope, so that one sphere will have similar properties to the other, but not identical.[29] Without the existence of universals, the two spheres in Black's world will not *share* any properties whatsoever, so that no matter how indistinguishable they are for us, they are nevertheless not truly indistinguishable. So, while Black's world might pose a problem for certain types of PII, it does not create any issue for Leibniz.

It might also be possible here to put forward a version of PII that responds to Black's worry, if we just weaken the principle slightly. On Leibniz's version, only qualitative

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[28] For example, perhaps God names one sphere A and the other B, so that now the one sphere has the property of being sphere A and the other has the property of being sphere B.

[29] I will not argue here that reading Leibniz as a trope theorist is correct; I take it that Leibniz as a trope-nominalist is the standard reading.

monadic properties can count for the purpose of distinguishing objects from each other. Such a strong version of PII precludes relational properties such as spatial or temporal position from acting as the tools of differentiation. Altering PII to allow for relational properties would allow us to answer Black's objection with some slight modifications to how the two-sphere world is described. The weaker version of PII would, of course, not be Leibniz's own, but it would be a Leibnizian principle, one that could possibly do all of the work for which Leibniz uses his version, while also being more plausible to contemporary philosophers.

Ian Hacking proposes such a version of the principle, claiming against Black that his counterexample requires a symmetrical world in order for the two spheres to share all of the same properties.[30] Hacking's argument is that, for any adequate description of a two-sphere world, there is a plausible non-Euclidean redescription of the world that is asymmetrical and shows that what appears to be two objects on Black's description is in fact one. The move Hacking makes here is similar to Leibniz's own response to the Kantian example of the two identical rain drops: against such an example, Leibniz would argue that the case is instead one where the soul sees double.[31] So, I think that if we follow Hacking's example and weaken PII slightly, we can still maintain the spirit of Leibniz's principle while at the same time allowing it to respond to Black's counter-example world. Distinguishing between Leibniz's version of the principle and a Leibnizian version should still allow for the same results that Leibniz was able to accomplish, while avoiding the main objection to his version of PII.

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[30] Ian Hacking, "The Identity of Indiscenibles," *The Journal of Philosophy* 72 (1975): 253.

[31] Hacking mimics Leibniz here in redescribing an apparent counter-example. Hacking's redescription, however, of course differs as it relies on spatial relations, whereas Leibniz's cannot.

Connecting the Dots: Which Principle is Primary?

Now that we have seen how Leibniz understands each of the principles, it will be beneficial to see how they work together to support his philosophical system by showing how it is that each of the principles are connected. In some places, Leibniz appears to hold that PSP is most primary and entails at least PSR, despite treating each principle as in some sense a primary truth.[32] In "Primary Truths," after discussing PSP, he writes:

> Many things of great importance follow from these considerations, considerations insufficiently attended to because of their obviousness. For the received axiom that *nothing is without reason,* or *there is no effect without a cause*, directly follows from these considerations.[33]

Here we see Leibniz claiming that PSR follows from PSP because, if something could happen without a reason, then there would be some truth that could not be proved *a priori*, but according to PSP, all truths can be proved *a priori*, so if PSP is true, PSR must also be true. More formally, PSP → PSR, but □PSP, so ~◊~PSR. In the same work, Leibniz also claims that PII follows from both PSP and PSR, as it must be possible to explain why two things with all of the same properties differ, and that explanation must involve a difference that each of the two objects contain.[34] That is, one can derive PII from the fact that everything requires a reason (PSR) and, in the case of substances, that reason must be found in the thing itself (PSP). However, in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, it appears that PII follows

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[32] Louis Couturat and Bertrand Russell in particular are famous for arguing that all of Leibniz's metaphysical principles derive from his logic (i.e. PSP). See Couturat, *The Logic of Leibniz*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1901) and Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, (New York: Routledge, 1996). Such a reading has fallen out of favor among current Leibniz scholars however, who claim that both Russell and Couturat place too much emphasis on Leibniz's logic. For examples of the latter view, see Robert Merrihew Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); G.H.R. Parkinson, *Logic and Reality in Leibniz's Metaphysics*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965); R.C. Sleigh, Jr., "Leibniz on the Two Great Principles of All Our Reasoning," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 8 (1983): 193-216 and "Truth and Sufficient Reason in the Philosophy of Leibniz," in *Leibniz: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, ed. Michael Hooker (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 209-242.

[33] Leibniz, "Primary Truths," 31

[34] Ibid.

from PSP alone.[35] Even more confusing, in a letter to Arnauld, Leibniz seems to identify PSR with PSP, claiming that he posits only two primary truths, the second of which is, "that *nothing is without reason*, or that every truth has its proof *a priori*, drawn from the meaning of the terms."[36] Interestingly, PC does not seem to be derived from any of the other principles, nor does it entail any of them. Instead, PC underlies the primary truths that other truths are reduced to, such as A is A and cannot be not A. PC's apparent status here is somewhat surprising, as Leibniz often puts it on the same footing as PSR, as he does in *The Monadology*.[37] So, as is hopefully apparent, getting clear on exactly how Leibniz thinks the different basic tenets of his system are connected is somewhat difficult. I think, however, that we can help Leibniz clarify the ordering of his principles, given the way in which he argues for each.

If we start with Leibniz's claim that his two basic principles are PC and PSR, we can move from them to support both Leibniz's other principles and the rest of his philosophical system. On the one hand, PSR can be used to derive PSP, in that PSP provides an explanation for how God is able to know all truths *a priori*. Since we might very well demand a reason for God's ability to know all truths, we would then need to satisfy PSR. Given that the way in which we satisfy it is through PSP, we can see that PSR is the more fundamental principle here, which we then introduce PSP to satisfy.[38]

Another way we might show that PSP follows from PSR is through the following consideration: how could it be that a mind gets a certain perception, say of a slinky falling

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[35] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §8 – 9, 40-42.

[36] Leibniz, "Letter to Arnauld (July 14, 1686)," in *Discourse on Metaphysics; Correspondence with Arnauld; Monadology*, 141, emphasis original.

[37] Leibniz, *The Monadology* §31 – 32, 217.

[38] Interestingly, this argument changes the mode of presentation that Leibniz gives in "Primary Truths." I think, however, that the demonstration and therefore presentation are more natural this way.

down the stairs? One explanation for the perception of the slinky is that light waves bounce off of the surface of the slinky, travel through the air, hit the retina, which stimulates the brain and produces in the mind a perception of the slinky. One obvious problem with a story that involves such a physical explanation is that it is wholly unclear how it is that physical stuff can cause anything to occur in the mental arena: in other words, the traditional mind-body problem. One way to characterize the mind-body problem is that a physical explanation does not seem to be the sort of thing that could count as a reason for any sort of mental event, given that the physical and the mental are so wholly distinct. Unfortunately, if a physical event cannot produce any sort of mental event, then it cannot be the case that a physical explanation counts as the reason that the person perceives the slinky falling down the stairs

Since physical explanations cannot work here, as they violate PSR, perhaps the explanation of the perception is a mental one; perhaps the perception of the slinky is caused by some other (finite) mind. In order for me to have a perception that has as its cause some other mind, then the other mind must interact in some way with my mind; the other mind must be actively causing in me the perception. One way that it would do so is by willing that I have the perception of the slinky. Unfortunately, once again it does not seem clear how some other mind's willing could count as an explanation for the effect of the slinky-perception in *my* mind. Since the other mind could not be the cause of my perception, we are left once again with an effect without any apparent cause.

By PSR, then, it looks as if the only option left is that I have to be the cause of the perception in my mind. However, it cannot be the case that I cause the perception of the slinky on my own, as doing so would violate PSR. On the one hand, I cannot simply choose to have the perception of the slinky without any reason for giving myself that perception, as my lack of a reason would be a violation of PSR. On the other hand, I cannot give myself the perception of the slinky without having the perception of the slinky already in me, so that I am not the cause of my perception of the slinky. By PSR, it appears that the only

remaining option for an explanation of my perception of the slinky is that I already have the perception of the slinky in me beforehand, so that the claim, "I now see a slinky falling down the stairs," is true just when I already have in me the perception of the slinky falling down the stairs; in other words, PSP. Such an example helps illustrate how one can derive PSP from PSR.

Additionally, we can derive PII from PSR, as Leibniz has already shown; however, it seems that we can do so without appeal to PSP as well. In fact, Leibniz derives PII from PSR alone when he points out, as he does in numerous places, that, if there were two objects with all of the same qualitative features, God would not have any reason to create one over the other; nor, if He were to create both, would He have any reason to create one in its place as opposed to the place of the other. Leibniz points to the problem that would arise if PII were false in his correspondence with Clarke:

> I say, then, that if space were an absolute being, something would happen for which it would be impossible that there should be a sufficient reason—which is against my axiom.[39]

Leibniz then proceeds to provide a proof as to why, if space were absolute, two objects in space would be identical, so that God would have no reason to create one over the other in the place that he puts each one. Since they would be indiscernible in absolute space, Leibniz contends, God would not be able to make a rational choice concerning their respective locations. So, PII follows from PSR.

We can also derive PII from PSR without appealing to God's reasons: if there are two distinct substances, there must be some reason why they are distinct. If they share all of the same properties, however, then nothing about the substances themselves can offer a reason why they are distinct; but, neither can there be any other reason why they are distinct.

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[39] Leibniz, "Letters to Clarke: Leibniz's Third Paper" §5, 325.

Therefore, the possibility of two distinct substances that share all of the same properties violates PSR. Therefore, PII.[40]

One Final Note

Before moving on to the next chapter, I want to stress exactly how important a principle PSR is both for Leibniz and for philosophy more generally. As we shall see throughout the remaining chapters, Leibniz will again and again return to PSR to support his arguments, ranging from issues of individual substances to freedom of the will to the nature of possibility and necessity. Additionally, many current philosophers appeal to PSR or PSR-esque considerations in arguing for their particular positions, especially in the area of philosophy of mind, considerations which Leibniz himself worried about in spelling out his own theory of the mind. For example, many contemporary philosophers worry that purely physical characterizations of cognition and mental process can never fully explain the nature of the mind. The reason that a purely physical explanation of the mental will always fail to be adequate is because, given the broad gap between the physical and the mental, no purely physical process can ever provide a sufficient reason for something like consciousness. Leibniz himself held the view that the mental is impossible to explain in purely physical terms, as when he wrote:

> Moreover, we must confess that the *perception*, and what depends on it, is *inexplicable in terms of mechanical reasons*, that is, through shapes and motions. If we imagine that there is a machine whose structures make it think, sense, and have perceptions, we could conceive it enlarged, keeping the same proportions, so that we could enter into it, as one enters into a mill. Assuming that, when inspecting its interior, we will only find parts that push one another, and we will never find anything to explain a perception.[41]

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[40] Notice how similar this demonstration is to Leibniz's own. In effect, the only thing dropped here is PSP. We might then wonder what role PSP plays in Leibniz's proof. The likely answer to this is that PSP tells us exactly how the properties that are at issue in this proof allow for PSR to be satisfied. However, I take it that one can move from PSR to PII even with a different notion of how properties relate to subjects. If not, we can still admit that PSR is primary to both PSP and PII.

[41] Leibniz, *The Monadology* §17, 215, emphasis original.

Leibniz points out that there is nothing about the motions of physical bodies that can provide an explanation of mental phenomena. Such a sentiment is echoed in the works of philosophers such as Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers, both of whom argue that a purely reductive account of the mind is insufficient for explaining all aspects of mental life. In Nagel's, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" he argues:

> [I]f the facts of experience—facts about what it is like *for* the experiencing organism—are accessible only from one point of view, then it is a mystery how the true character of experiences could be revealed in the physical operation of the organism.[42]

Nagel's point here is startlingly reminiscent of Leibniz, inasmuch as they both claim that there is no full examination of the physical facts that will ever explain all of the mental ones. Chalmers' zombies are another example of why a physical explanation of the mental will never satisfy PSR, as philosophical zombies illustrate the point that there is an unbridgeable gap between the physical and the mental—one can have an exact physical duplicate of a human without copying the mental characteristics of that person.[43] In either example, the reason that the mental is not explicable in terms of the physical is because it does not satisfy the question of what the reason for the mental is; reductive physical explanations of the mental violate PSR, at least in the minds of many contemporary philosophers.

Another area to which Leibniz applies PSR that sees a similar treatment in the contemporary literature is on the question of the freedom of the will. One common argument against traditional libertarians is that their position violates PSR: no explanation of the actions of the will can posit that the will is uncaused. Leibniz makes such an argument in numerous places, for example when he writes:

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[42] Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *The Philosophical Review* 83 (1974): 442, emphasis original.

[43] Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). I realize that both Nagel's and Chalmers' arguments are contentious and hotly debated in the literature. I will not take a stand here on whether they are correct. All I am attempting to show here is that there are contemporary philosophers who appeal to PSR, even if they do not do so explicitly. Indeed, the literature abounds with such examples. See also, Frank Jackson, "What Mary didn't know."

> Every man who acts wisely considers all the circumstances and bearings of the resolve which he makes, and this in accordance with the measure of his abilities. And God, who sees everything perfectly and with a single glance, can he have failed to make his plans in conformity with everything which he saw? And can he have chosen a particular Adam without considering and having in mind all that has relations to him? Consequently it is ridiculous to say that this free resolve on God's part deprives him of his liberty. Otherwise in order to be free one must need be ever undecided.[44]

> For, above all, I hold a notion of possibility and necessity according to which there are some things that are possible, but yet not necessary, and which do not really exist. From this it follows that a reason that always forces a free mind to choose one thing over another (whether that reason derives from the perfection of a thing, as it does in God, or from our imperfection) does not eliminate our freedom.[45]

God must be in the position where His will is constrained by the considerations of all the circumstances of the universe, as otherwise His will would be such that it could never be driven in one direction or the other, as there would be a lack of a sufficient reason to push it one way over the other. Thus, Leibniz argues that the traditional libertarian conception of free will is ridiculous, as it is a clear violation of PSR. In the contemporary literature, van Inwagen realizes that there is a problem with the libertarian position, as despite his endorsement of that position, he writes:

> I believe that the outcome of our deliberations about what to do is undetermined and that we—in some way that I have no shadow of an understanding of—nevertheless have a choice about the outcome of these deliberations. (And I do not believe that the concept of agent-causation is of the least help in explaining how this could be.)[46]

Two things are notable in van Inwagen's passage: first, van Inwagen realizes that agent-causation cannot satisfy PSR in giving an explanation of how one is able to have control over one's will and, second, he admits that there is a mystery on his view that wants to be

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[44] Leibniz, "Letter to Count Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels (April 12, 1686)," in *Discourse on Metaphysics; Correspondence with Arnauld; Monadology*, 85.

[45] Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility," 20.

[46] Van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, Chapter 12.

explained on how we are able to have a choice in the outcomes of our rational deliberations. Now, it is unfortunate that van Inwagen bites the bullet here and simply accepts the mystery without searching for the explanation of how the will works, but it is important to keep in mind both that van Inwagen is aware that some people will not be satisfied with such an account because, on its own, it violates PSR and that van Inwagen does not actually himself deny the necessity of satisfying PSR. Rather, he admits that he cannot see how PSR is satisfied, not the stronger claim that there cannot be a reason that even God could see.[47]

While I will return in Chapter Five to motivate a rejection of van Inwagen's and similar positions on the grounds of PSR, for now I want to point out that the issue of the freedom of the will is another place where PSR is just as prevalent in contemporary philosophy as it was when Leibniz appealed to it to argue for his own account of freedom. Therefore, having shown that we can understand the connection between Leibniz's principles most clearly by allowing PSR first primacy and subordinating the other principles to it, as well as having looked at some contemporary appeals to PSR, we are now in a good position to move from the basic tenets of Leibniz's system into his more complex philosophical theories. It is important to keep in mind as we move forward into the discussion of complete concepts and individuals in the next chapter exactly how Leibniz understands each of the primary principles of his system, as they will play a huge role in motivating the arguments of chapter three, as well as the later chapters on the nature of possibility and freedom. It is to the proverbial deep end of Leibniz's system that we now swim.

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[47] From what he says elsewhere in the chapter, he thinks it might be possible for God to give a reason here that we simply cannot understand.

CHAPTER II: COMPLETE CONCEPTS AND INDIVIDUALS

Now that we have seen how Leibniz understood the basic principles of his system, as well as how he might motivate them so that those who do not immediately grasp their plausibility might come to accept them, it is time to examine how Leibniz's system develops out of them. Of course, given that the axioms that we addressed in the previous chapter constitute the basis of Leibniz's entire philosophical system, it would be too great a task in the current chapter to address all of the ways in which Leibniz's broader theory follows from them. Instead, I focus on the parts of Leibniz's philosophy that pertain to the issues of modality and freedom of the will. In particular, I am mostly concerned in the current chapter with developing Leibniz's view of the individual, as it is individual agents that will play the crucial role in Leibniz's account of modality and freedom.

That the individual has a critical role to play in any explanation of modality and freedom is perhaps obvious—as the source of action, the individual is a necessary component of any account of freedom of the will, as it is the individual who wills and, therefore, whose will is either free or is not. Likewise, while any account of modality will encompass more logical space than merely the actions of individuals, one key feature of any modal metaphysics is that it answers the question of whether a particular individual could have done otherwise; whether there are alternate possibilities available to an individual. In Leibniz's case, it is possible to trace a clear path from his idiosyncratic view of the individual to his account of necessity, possibility, and freedom. Therefore, in order to understand the nature of modality and freedom according to Leibniz, it will be helpful to examine his view of the individual in detail so that we can understand and examine his philosophical system in the best light possible.

A Precursor on Possible Individuals

To see how Leibniz conceives of an individual on his system, it will be helpful to move from possible individuals to actual ones—doing so will allow us to see how Leibniz

characterizes individuals in general, how he differentiates possible individuals from actual individuals, and will nicely set up the discussion of the ontological status of possible worlds in the next chapter. To that end, in the current section I will address both the ontological status of possible individuals, in particular spelling out exactly what sort of things they can be, and the relationship between possible individuals and actual individuals. Having the discussion of the nature of possible individuals at the front end will, I anticipate, make it easier to understand Leibniz's account of individuals more broadly and will make clear how his specific account of what makes an individual an *individual* ought to be understood.

On Merely Possible Individuals: Where They Exist

That possible individuals exist in some sense on Leibniz's account is an incontrovertible fact. Of course, understanding the way in which they exist is certainly a challenging task. In particular, we must get clear on the issue of what the nature of a possible thing is, as well as where it is that possible things exist. While the history of philosophy has provided many answers to these questions, Leibniz's solution to these two issues is notable in that, first, he makes possible individuals very much like their counterparts in the actual world[48] and second, he places them in a realm that seems dependent on theism but, I will argue, leaves open a way out for those who do not wish to accept the claim that God exists. That is, although Leibniz uses the notion of God in his system to house possible reality, the view he offers on the nature of possible individuals makes it the case that he could quite easily have left God out of the picture and still produced the same basic modal ontology. It is also important to note here that Leibniz's view on possible individuals and his solution to the two issues together directly impact his analyses of modality and of freedom. Keeping that in mind let us now examine what Leibniz says concerning possible individuals, what their nature is, and where they dwell.

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[48] In this sense, he presents a view very much like David Lewis' modal realism. I will, however, take up later the very important ways in which Leibniz's view differs from Lewis'.

That Leibniz asserts the existence of possible individuals (in some sense) can be seen in numerous places in his writings. For example:

> For, since there are an infinity of possible things which, nevertheless, do not exist, the reason why these exist rather than those should not be sought in their definition (for then nonexistence would imply a contradiction, and those others would not be possible, contrary to our hypothesis), but from an extrinsic source, namely, from the fact that the ones that do exist are more perfect than the others.[49]

> For things remain possible, even if God does not choose them. Indeed, even if God does not will something to exist, it is possible for it to exist, since, by its nature, it could exist if God were to will it to exist…Therefore I say: a possible thing is something with some essence or reality.[50]

> For when speaking of possibilities, I am satisfied that we can form true propositions about them. And if we wished absolutely to reject pure possibles, contingency would be destroyed; for, if nothing were possible except what God actually created, then what God created would be necessary, in the case he resolved to create anything.[51]

We can tell a number of things from these quotes. First, Leibniz holds that possible things exist and that they exist in an important and non-trivial sense; they have some essence or reality. Second, they exist somewhere other than the actual world, for God's will is the source or cause of the actual world; God is the author of the actual world, but not of the existence of possibilities, as they are eternal. Third, the existence of possible individuals is not dependent in any other way on God's will, for God does not choose those individuals that are possible in themselves. So, possible individuals exist independently of God's actions. Fourth, God chooses from among the possible things some subset to actualize, which make up the individuals in the actual world, and the choice of which possible

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[49] Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility," 19.

[50] Ibid., 21.

[51] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 75.

individuals to actualize is dependent on God's wisdom about which individuals are the best. Now, none of these passages tells us yet what possible individuals are nor where they exist; however, from them we can begin to build a full picture of the ontology of possible individuals on Leibniz's system.

One additional comment at the outset: although Leibniz himself appeals to God's existence and wisdom for any number of reasons throughout his arguments, one of the truly interesting features of Leibniz's system that the above passages highlight is, when it comes to things possible-in-themselves, Leibniz does not need to posit God to explain them. Furthermore, in drawing out the distinction between merely possible individuals and actual individuals, Leibniz need not have appealed to God either. Part of what I find so fascinating in a Leibnizian metaphysics is that, contrary to what Leibniz himself may have said, one need not have any theistic commitments to grasp the feasibility of the system. In what follows, I take two different but related tacks: first, using Leibniz's own text, I will show his view on both possible individuals and individuals simpliciter, which is at times explicitly theistic; second, I will develop a way of arriving at the same conclusions concerning individuals of all types using the spirit of Leibniz's arguments while leaving the theism aside. My aim in doing so is to show that one can adopt the arguments that Leibniz employs to arrive at a philosophically respectable position, solidifying Leibniz's place as a serious metaphysical thinker in the history of philosophy.

In developing Leibniz's account of possible individuals, the best place with which to start is where they exist, so that we may get a hint as to what they are. As we have just seen, possible individuals for Leibniz do not exist in the actual world, as Meinong's view is sometimes characterized. Instead, they exist in some non-actual but still real ontological space. To get a better grasp on the exact nature of a non-actual-but-ontologically-real realm, consider two possible alternative accounts on the nature of possibility and possible

individuals. On the one hand, David Lewis offers an account[52] of where possible individuals exist on which those individuals inhabit a possible world that differs from the actual only in that it is not spatio-temporally or causally connected with the actual world; possibility and actuality for Lewis are indexicals. On Lewis' view, the sentence, "This is the actual world," refers to the world in which the sentence is uttered and is true in the world where it is uttered, i.e. the actual world. Additionally, in the actual world, the sentence, "$World_{182}$ is a possible world," refers to $World_{182}$, which is some possible world separate from the actual world. So far, so good. For some inhabitant of $World_{182}$,[53] however, the sentence, "This is the actual world," is also true because the sentence refers to $World_{182}$ and $Turk_{182}$ utters it. On Lewis' view, the ontological status of possible worlds is on a par with the ontological status of the actual world, and the only distinction between possibility and actuality is what world the individual inhabits—for those of us in the actual world, 'actual' just means this world, but for individuals like $Turk_{182}$, 'actual' refers to the world $Turk_{182}$ inhabits, and there is no further way to distinguish between actuality and possibility.

On the other hand, Spinoza offers an account[54] of where possible individuals exist such that there are no true possible individuals. On Spinoza's view, actuality takes up all of ontological space; everything that exists (in any sense of the word) is actual. So, any claims I make about possible individuals like $Turk_{182}$ are nothing more than false assertions based in my ignorance concerning the actual state of affairs of the actual world:

> Nothing in nature is contingent, but all things are from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and to act in a definite way.[55]

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[52] I will hold off until the next chapter a full discussion of Lewis' account of possibility. For now, a brief sketch will suffice to show how Leibniz's account of possible reality apparently differs from Lewis'.

[53] Let us call him $Turk_{182}$.

[54] As in the Lewis case, I will here only be giving a brief sketch of Spinoza's view in order to contrast it with Leibniz's own.

[55] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition 29, in *The Essential Spinoza: Ethics and Related Writings*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), 19. Additionally, in the

> But a thing is termed "contingent" for no other reason than the deficiency of our knowledge.[56]

Spinoza's account of the nature of modality does not leave room for contingency of any ontologically real sort, as the necessity of God's nature entails, according to Spinoza, that everything that exists is necessary. Therefore, there is only a series of necessitating causes and effects, and all of the claims that we make concerning the contingency of things is a reflection of our ignorance of these causes and effects. In thinking of $Turk_{182}$, then, I may take myself to be thinking that there is an inhabitant of a possible world who is a fire fighter and is denied medical benefits by the city, but it is simply not the case on Spinoza's view, as there is no ontological space outside of actual reality. Instead, what I have done in thinking of $Turk_{182}$ is take some of my simple ideas that do match up with reality and combine them in such a way that they no longer correspond to the order of the world. Possibility and contingency become, on Spinoza's view, merely epistemic, and if we were in a better position with regard to our knowledge of the order of causes and effects of the universe, we would realize that our claims of possibility always come out false. So, there is no need to distinguish between actuality and possibility on Spinoza's account, as there is no possible reality, only actuality.

Leibniz's position falls into a middle ground between these two extremes. On the one hand, he wants to deny Spinoza's claim that there is no non-actual ontological space. However, he also does not want to commit himself to Lewis' claim that all possible worlds are as ontologically rich as the actual world.[57] As we shall see below, what Leibniz offers is an attempt to understand the nature of possibilities and possible individuals in such a way

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demonstration, Spinoza argues that the reason nothing in nature is contingent is because God takes up all reality; everything that exists depends on God and God, being necessary, cannot produce anything contingent. This is in direct opposition to Leibniz's own view.

[56] Ibid., Part I, Proposition 33, Scholium 1, 22.

[57] Or so it appears at first. We will return in the next chapter to discuss how much Leibniz's view really differs from Lewis'.

that allows for there to be genuine possibilities and allows for claims about possible individuals to be true, while still maintaining an important ontological distinction between the actual world and merely possible worlds. Let us call the reality that possible individuals inhabit on Leibniz's account 'possible reality'.

The first thing to be said about the nature of possible reality is that Leibniz is explicit about the fact that it does not depend on God's will for its existence. That possible reality does not depend on God's will is important for developing a non-theistic Leibnizian account, as it opens the door for the claim that possible individuals do not depend on God at all for their existence. Now, on Leibniz's own account, possible reality does depend on God in the sense that possible individuals find their existence in God. That they do can be seen when Leibniz writes:

> We must distinguish between a series of possible things and a series of actual things. From an infinite number of possibilities God chose a certain universal series, composed of an infinite number of substances, each of which exhibits an infinite series of operations. But if God had not foreknown or preordained the entire series of actual things, then it would follow that he would have made a judgment for a reason insufficiently understood by him, and that he would have chosen something insufficiently clear to him.[58]

The language here is, I think, telling. Leibniz writes that God *chooses* from an infinite number of possibilities; that he makes a *judgment of reason*; that he can have a *clear* understanding of His reasons. The story suggested by these phrases is that God at least accesses the possible individuals through His understanding; God interacts[59] with possible things through His pre-volitional ability to think and reflect on them. Given that Leibniz has God interact with possible individuals through His understanding, one option of where to house possibility reality that Leibniz considers is God's intellect. That is, a way to make sense of God's ability to interact with possible reality through His intellect is if possible individuals are ideas in His mind:

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[58] Leibniz, "Notes on Some Comments by Michel Angelo Fardella," 103.

[59] If I may use the expression.

> It is also true that God is not only the source of existences, but also that of essences insofar as they are real, that is, or the source of that which is real in possibility. This is because God's *understanding* is the realm of eternal truths or that of the ideas on which they depend; *without him there would be nothing real in possibles*, and not only would nothing exist, but also nothing would be possible.[60]

> I agree that there is no other reality in pure possibles than the reality they have in the divine understanding[.][61]

So, the reality that possible individuals have is dependent on the understanding of God; possible individuals exist in God's understanding.

As additional evidence for the claim that possible individuals are ideas in God's mind, we can appeal here to other scholars who make the same point. For example, Benson Mates argues:

> Ideas, concepts, propositions, and so forth are "in God's mind," but this does not mean that his mind is a kind of receptacle in which such entities reside or have some sort of shadowy existence. It means only that he "has" the ideas…Thus, by including one very special individual in his nominalistic ontology, Leibniz achieves some of the advantages normally thought to flow from Platonism.[62]

> Hence, the "reality" upon which statements like that about Alexander's concept are grounded is not a shadowy collection of abstract entities "subsisting" somewhere between Being and Nothing, but a particular though very specific individual, God, with all his qualities, capacities, and dispositions.[63]

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[60] Leibniz, *Monadology* §43, 218, emphasis mine. See also Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy* §20, ed. Austin Marsden Farrer, trans. E.M. Huggard (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), 135: "[The source of evil] must be sought in the ideal nature of the creature, in so far as this nature is contained in the eternal verities which are in the understanding of God, independently of his will."

[61] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 75.

[62] Benson Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz: Metaphysics and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 49-50.

[63] Ibid., 246. See also, Nicholas Rescher, "Leibniz on Possible Worlds," *Studia Leibnitiana* 28 (1996): 130. For a slightly different viewpoint, see Genevieve Lloyd, "Leibniz on Possible Individuals and Possible Worlds," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 56 (1978): 126-142. Lloyd claims in her article that only actual individuals ought to count as complete concepts (and therefore as individuals), as only actual individuals have the connections between them that makes them individuals. Mates, on the other hand, thinks that possibles exist as complete concepts in God's mind, but he hesitates to call them full-blown individuals, for reasons different from Lloyd. I will

Mates points out here that, for Leibniz, possible individuals exist in God's mind as ideas or concepts. Of course, while it will take some additional work to understand exactly what it is to say that a possible individual exists as an idea, it is a good start to see that they exist as ideas in the divine mind, as knowing that they do gives us a general guideline in developing a fuller theory of possible individuals.

However, we might here question why it need be the case that the only place for possible reality is in God's intellect. Given that whatever is true of individuals possible-in-themselves is true independent of any decision of God, it is also true that whatever reality possible individuals have comes from some other source than God's will. So, we might offer an alternative account of possible reality on which possible individuals get their reality through the mere fact that they are possible. One option for there to be possible reality without housing it in God is if possible reality were eternal; possible reality need not be created, and it might simply exist as a type of reality that has always been—a type of reality that exists prior to actual reality and then continues to exist along with actual reality. While such a view of possible reality might appear somewhat odd, it is worth noting here that it is not clear what Leibniz's claim that possible reality exists in God really adds to the picture. On either account, possible reality is uncreated,[64] and on the account where possible reality is simply an eternal existent we can avoid the appeal to God. Furthermore, there is no need to further explain how possible reality comes to be: it just is, necessarily, and therefore, such an account of possible reality would satisfy PSR, since we need only offer an explanation of why something is rather than not for contingent things. On the current view of the nature of possible reality, however, possible reality is necessarily possible; we do not get any additional explanation for the fact that there is possible reality by adding God to the

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address below the reasons I have for claiming that Mates is correct that possibles are complete concepts in God's mind, but why he is wrong to think that they are not thereby also individuals.

[64] And so need not be dependent on God's will.

picture.[65] Because possible reality does not depend on God's will, if we remove God from the picture, we can still retain possible reality and simply place it in pre-actual ontological space. Of course, it may then sound strange to say that possible individuals are ideas or concepts, given that there is no longer any mind to house them in, but as we shall see below, once we get clear on what it is that Leibniz means when he claims that possible individuals are concepts, the worry about "concepts" existing outside of a mind will seem a lot less troublesome. Indeed, understood in the correct way, possible reality and the individuals that inhabit it must be, I will argue, of a sort that does not *require* a mind at all for its existence. So, what sort of things are possible individuals?

On Merely Possible Individuals: What Sort of Entity

As we have seen in the last section, on Leibniz's account, possible individuals exist as ideas in God's mind.[66] Additionally, we have seen an option for how possible reality might exist if we accept a broadly Leibnizian account but reject Leibniz's theistic claims. Knowing that possible individuals are concepts, we can limit the types of entities we are considering in spelling out exactly what possible individuals are, which answer will be the same regardless of whether or not God is in the picture. For example, one thing possible individuals appear unable to be is a concrete, actually-existing creatures inhabiting some world.[67] It seems that if possible individuals were creatures inhabiting a world, it is unclear why we ought even

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[65] I take it that Leibniz thinks that God is required to support possible reality, as God is the only being on Leibniz's system that is necessary and eternal. This allows possible reality to piggy-back on God's eternality for the fact that it exists prior to the actual world. However, if we remove God from the picture, it is not clear why we ought not think that possible reality can function in the same way; there is no reason to think that possible reality is not eternal, and we can leave God aside.

[66] Although as we will ultimately see, what exactly this means for Leibniz is radically different from what it first appears. As I would like to keep the initial discussion as close to Leibniz's language as possible, however, I hope you will bear with me as I talk about possible individuals as concepts, even though the meaning of this claim will change as our discussion progresses.

[67] That is, it looks initially as if Leibniz is not able to accept Lewis-style possible individuals, as possible individuals of the Lewisian sort will not be ideas; indeed, they are ontologically of the same sort as actual individuals. We will return to this discussion in Chapter Three.

consider them as possible; instead (so the claim goes), they would be actual, as their ontological status would be no different from creatures in the actual world. However, we will see that once we get clear on what it means for a possible individual to be a concept, the apparent problem dissolves. To see why, consider the content of the idea that constitutes the possible individual. On Leibniz's view, the idea of the possible individual includes the concept of a subject; the possible individual in God's mind is the concept of a particular subject. That possibles exist as concepts in God's mind is partly Leibniz's point when he writes:

> For God sees from all time that there will be a certain Judas whose notion or idea (which God has) contains this free and future action. Therefore only this question remains, why does such a Judas, the traitor, who is merely possible in God's idea, actually exist?[68]

Leibniz is discussing a possible individual's relation to future contingents—the individual is a concept in God's mind that God is deciding whether or not to actualize, and it has among its predicates certain future actions. The subject, then, will have a series of features that apply to it, so that as part of the concept of the subject, there will be concepts of the predicates that apply to the subject.

> It is indeed true that when several predicates are attributed to a single subject and this subject is attributed to no other, it is called an individual substance…Thus the subject term must always contain the predicate term, so that one who understands perfectly the notion of the subject would also know that the predicate belongs to it.[69]

So, Leibniz claims that an individual substance consists of a subject and its predicates. In the case of possible individuals, in virtue of the fact that they are individuals,[70] they too will consist solely of a subject and its predicates. If a possible individual is an idea in God's mind, then, it will be so in virtue of the fact that it has some set of predicates that make it an individual.

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[68] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §30, 61.

[69] Ibid. §8, 40-41.

[70] Albeit possible individual substances.

Which predicates are relevant to picking out an individual?[71] One answer is that only some predicates count for individual-making; some subset of predicates that apply to an individual are sufficient for making it that individual. However, there appear to be certain subsets that will not do the individuating work required, as two individuals may share a certain subset of predicates. For example, if we take a certain subsets of the predicates that apply to me, such as 'has-a-beard', 'is-a-mammal', 'likes-to-eat-vegetables', then there would be a number of other subjects other than me to which the subset applies—indeed, one other ready example is a billy goat. However, if we restrict the list of predicates to a more specific set, it is still not clear that the work gets done in picking me out as an individual. Another example here is: 'is-male'; 'is-a-graduate-student-at-Iowa;'; 'drinks-an-unhealthy-amount-of-coffee'. The subset of these predicates is still not sufficient to individuate me from other subjects, as such a subset applies to many of the graduate students at Iowa. So, we can see that not every subset of predicates is sufficient for picking out an individual—it must be a specific, individuating set of the predicates that apply to an individual.[72]

J.A. Cover and John O'Leary Hawthorne take up the issue of which predicates individuate a subject in their book, *Substance & Individuation in Leibniz*. Starting at section 3.2 of Chapter One, they write:

> This style of account can take two forms: things are individuated by the totality of their components, or by some of them. Early in the *Disputatio* Leibniz says that traditionally a principle of individuation is taken to be 'either the whole-entity or less-than-whole-entity' (§3). The whole-entity thesis is, at least at first pass, the thesis that things are individuated by all of their components, the

[71] To ask the question another way, which predicates are essential to an individual: All, or some subset?

[72] It is important to note here that the question at hand is not how *we* would individuate between two subjects—that is an epistemic question. Rather, what we are wondering here is what it is for an individual to be an individual and, more specifically, what it is for an individual to be *that specific* individual.

> less-than-whole-entity thesis claiming that things are individuated by some of them.[73]

As Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne correctly point out here, Leibniz's account of individuation will be one on which the predicates that do the work of individuating a subject will be either the entire set of the predicates, or some particular subset of them. In order to show that it must be the whole-entity thesis that does the individuating, Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne argue:

> Suppose there are components *x, y* and *z* of Socrates. One seems to confront the option of including all or less-than-all of the intrinsic components in an account of what individuates Socrates. If it is all, then that is equivalent to the whole entity doctrine. Assume for *reductio* less-than-all – a less-than-whole entity doctrine. Suppose it is *z* that individuates. Presumably, the whole entity doctrine is true of *z*, it being always illegitimate to look for extrinsic individuators. But *z* cannot individuate *z* and Socrates unless Socrates is *z*: if one assumed that *z* individuates *z* and Socrates, but that Socrates is not *z*, then the putative individuator could not account for the relation of numerical difference between *z* and Socrates. So *z* must be Socrates. Hence the whole entity doctrine would be true of Socrates after all.[74]

The upshot of the argument Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne provide is (1) that either all of the predicates of the subject do the work for individuating the subject (as a set of necessary-and-jointly-sufficient conditions for individuation), or (2), that for any subset of the predicates of a subject, if that subset does the job of individuating, then the only way it can do so is if *z* and Socrates are one and the same individual—if *z* is an individual in the case stipulated, it is so by the whole entity doctrine and, being identical with Socrates, Socrates too must be individuated by the whole entity doctrine. Thus, it is not some subset of predicates that individuates a subject but rather the complete set of its predicates. Therefore,

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[73] J.A. Cover and John O'Leary-Hawthorne, *Substance and Individuation in Leibniz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 40.

[74] Ibid., 41. Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne admit to the feasibility of this argument. However, they worry that there is no evidence that Leibniz actually makes it. Instead, they offer a slightly different argument on the next few pages that line up more properly with the text. The spirit of the two arguments, however, is the same.

an individual on Leibniz's account simply is the complete concept of the subject, which will include the concepts of all of the predicates that apply to it, or, in Leibniz's own words:

> [W]e can say that the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to contain and to allow us to deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which the notion is attributed…Thus when we consider carefully the connection of things, we can say that from all time in Alexander's soul there are vestiges of everything that has happened to him and marks of everything that will happen to him and even traces of everything that happens in the universe, even though God alone could recognize them all.[75]

We may call Leibniz's account of the individual, then, the complete concept view of individuals (CIC).[76]

What is it to say of a possible individual that it is a concept in God's mind? Typically, when we speak of things like concepts and ideas, we are referring to an intentional state. Unfortunately, if possible individuals are concepts, and concepts are intentional states, then it seems to follow that possible individuals are intentional—but that certainly cannot be correct. It seems more natural to say of such a view that the possible individuals are the objects about which God has concepts, so that possible individuals are separate from the ideas in God's mind that He has of them. On such an account, if possible individuals exist in God's mind, then that simply means that things other than ideas or concepts exist in God's mind; in particular, non-intentional things. Thus, we have a problem on Leibniz's account of possible individuals, as it looks now as if creatures exist in God's mind, which is certainly an odd claim and one that many would find devastating to a view of possible individuals.[77] In responding to the problem and answering the question of what exactly

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[75] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §8, 41.

[76] Later, I will return to some of the consequences of CIC, as well as some other ways to motivate it. For now, however, it is enough to realize that, on Leibniz's view, an individual just is its complete concept.

[77] Either because it requires there to be creatures in God's mind or because it involves God in the first place.

possible individuals are, let us now turn to the issue of the connection between merely possible individuals and actual individuals, as doing so will illuminate what merely possible individuals are and show how Leibniz can consistently hold that they are ideas in God's mind, and he can do so in such a way that is consistent with God not being in the picture at all.

Possible Individuals and Their Relation to Actual Individuals

One thing that ought to be said before moving any further is that Leibniz does not offer any explicit account of how to understand the claim that possible individuals are complete concepts in God's mind in a way that avoids the problem raised above. That being the case, the task of the current section will be to offer the most charitable account of possible individuals, appealing to what Leibniz does in fact say, as well as to accounts of the mind that were on the table during the early modern period. Doing so will allow us to arrive at a coherent and accurate reconstruction of a view that Leibniz held, even if he did not explicitly state it anywhere. The best way to do so is to begin by considering what exactly happens when God chooses to actualize a possible world and, thereby, what the connection between worlds that remain merely possible and the actual world is.

Let us start by considering what happens before God actualizes the world. There are many places in which Leibniz discusses the view that God chooses the actual world from an infinity of alternate possible worlds. For example:

> [Arnauld] seems, nevertheless, to recognize that we are led to conceive that there is an infinity of possible first men, each connected to a long sequence of persons and events, and that God has chosen from them the one who, together with his sequence, pleased him.[78]

[78] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 74-75.

> From this it is obvious that of the infinite combinations of possibilities and possible series, the one that exists is the one through which the most essence or possibility is brought into existence.[79]
>
> From an infinity of possibles, God chose, in accordance with his wisdom, that which is most appropriate.[80]

In these and many other places in his writings, Leibniz repeats the claim that God examines His ideas of the infinite number of possible worlds and, after deciding which is the best, He actualizes one and only one. So, before the world we inhabit is actualized, it is no different than any of the other infinite number of possible worlds from which God chooses one to actualize; it too is the collection of the infinite number of complete concepts[81] that constitute a possible world in God's mind.

Notice here the claim that Leibniz is making: God has the same relationship to our world before it is actualized that He has to any other possible world and, the relationship He had to our world before He actualized it is the same relationship He has to any of the merely possible worlds now. For example, that He knew of my complete concept that it would include the fact that I am currently writing a dissertation is true of God when He was merely conceiving of the actual world as possible—and the way He knew it is the same way He knows truths about other possible worlds. Again, consider what it is that God does when He chooses which world to actualize: God considers each of the infinite number of possible worlds, compares them with each other to see which meets the standard of being the best, then actualizes one. In order to be able to compare between different possible worlds, all of the worlds possible-in-themselves would have to be of the same sort; the constituents of each world would have to be comparable, and therefore must be of roughly the same sort. In other words, the constituents of each world must have some relevant point in common in order to be comparable to each other.

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[79] Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," 150.

[80] Leibniz, "Letter to Johann Bernoulli (January 1699)," 170-171.

[81] Along with certain laws of nature and an ordering sequence, etc.

Another way to make the same point is that all of the possible worlds need to be, prior to the application of any normative criteria, equally possible. The way in which they would all be equally possible is if all of the inhabitants have in common the fact that they could exist in actuality. So, every possible world is of the same sort: they are actualizable. If every possible world does not consist of the same kind of thing,[82] then it is not clear what exactly God does when He compares different possible worlds. It would be like comparing democracy with a quark—it is not even clear what the criteria of comparison could possibly be. In order to make sense of the claim that God compares possible worlds before deciding which to actualize, it must be the case that the constituents of each possible world are of the same type (i.e. complete individual concepts); otherwise, He would not be able to compare them in any way that would offer equal chances for each of the possible worlds to become actual.

We might wonder here why it is important that God be able to compare different equally possible worlds in deciding which would be best to actualize. The answer, according to Leibniz, is that, if it were otherwise, God's rationality would be undermined and His goodness would be destroyed. In showing why it is important that God be able to choose between equally possible worlds, Leibniz writes:

> I call 'World' the whole succession and the whole agglomeration of all existent things, lest it be said that several worlds could have existed in different times and different places. For they must needs be reckoned all together as one world or, if you will, as one Universe. And even though one should fill all times and all places, it still remains true that one might have filled them in innumerable ways, and that there is an infinitude of possible worlds among which God *must needs have chosen the best*, *since he does nothing without acting in accordance with supreme reason*.[83]

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[82] I certainly do not intended to claim here that each world contains only one *kind* of thing (in the contemporary use of kind)—it may be the case that the world is full of many different kinds. The point I drive at here is simply that, in order to be comparable, each possible world must be roughly similar to all other possible worlds. Leibniz's account allows for this to be the case, as each world comprises the set of compossible complete individual concepts.

[83] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §8, 128, emphasis mine.

The first thing to note here is that Leibniz is using the notion of a world in much the same way that it is used in contemporary talk of possible worlds: it is simply the collection of everything that exists (or would exist if that possible world were actual).[84] The second main point that Leibniz makes here is that, in order for God to act in accordance with "supreme reason," or the reason that is consistent with God being the wisest being, He must be able to choose between an infinitude of possible worlds, one of which is the best. In order to make such a choice, however, it needs to be the case that any of them could have been the best[85] since, without the possibility that more than one world is the best, God would not have been able to make a choice. Since God can make a choice, and can thereby exercise His rationality, it must be the case that, before any world became actual, all possible worlds were of the same sort—thus, God's rationality and the goodness of His choice would not be compromised.

It is worth noting before moving away from the discussion of God's appraisal of the different possible worlds that the same story could be told without putting God into it at all. Although Leibniz does, in the previous quote, make explicit appeal to God's wisdom, it is possible to leave God out of the picture if we retain the notion that there is a standard of perfection (SP) to which God appeals in making His choice. Presumably, part of the reason that Leibniz appeals to God here is that he wants to satisfy PSR, which requires there to be a rational explanation for why the actual world is the one that wins out. Again, one might think that the way to meet the criteria set by PSR is by introducing a cognizer to make the rational decision that satisfies PSR. However, it seems that there is an alternative open to Leibniz for satisfying the demands of PSR: given that the standard by which God decides which world is the best is also independent of His will,[86] it might be possible that SP does

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[84] I will be returning to spell this point out more thoroughly in the next chapter.

[85] That is, it needs to be the case that any of them could have been actualized.

[86] As otherwise this would force Leibniz to accept the horn of the Euthyphro dilemma that he explicitly rejects.

the job on its own. To see how the SP might work here, consider what Leibniz says in "On the Ultimate Origination of Things":

> [T]here is a certain urge for existence or (so to speak) a straining toward existence in possible things or in possibility or essence itself; in a word, essence in and of itself strives for existence. Furthermore, it follows from this that 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, for perfection is nothing but the amount of essence.
>
> From this it is obvious that of the infinite combinations of possibilities and possible series, the one that exists is the one through which the *most essence or possibility* is brought into existence.[87]

On Leibniz's view, all possible reality, inasmuch as it has essence, strives for existence.[88] Now, among the class of possible worlds, only one world will best meet SP, and that world will also have the most essence. Concerning the actual world, its becoming actual satisfies PSR, since any cognizers in that world can consider why it exists as opposed to some other world. The answer to that question will concern an appeal to SP that shows that the reason the actual world is actual is because it is the best, not on the basis of the choice of some rational agent, but rather because it strived the hardest, as it were. SP is still able to satisfy the demands of PSR, as it provides a reason why one possible world was actualized over other possible worlds,[89] and it can do so without appealing to God, just so long as the actual world had sufficient power or striving to bring itself into existence.

The next point to consider is what happens when God (or the world itself) in fact actualizes a world. We know that before one world is actualized, the individuals of each

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[87] Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," 150, emphasis mine.

[88] For an interesting and thorough discussion the Striving Doctrine, see David Blumenfeld, "Leibniz's Theory of Striving Possibles," *Studia Leibnitiana* 5 (1973): 163-77. The Striving Doctrine is notoriously difficult to understand in the context of Leibniz's broader corpus, particularly as is seems to conflict with other comments Leibniz makes concerning God's role in the actualization of the world. Blumenfeld raises an additional interesting problem for the Striving Doctrine that in part turns on the assumption that it entails necessitarianism. We must wait until the next chapter to see why the Striving Doctrine need not entail necessitarianism.

[89] That is, the actual world had the most essence

possible world are of the same sort.[90] Of what sort, then, are they? The answer can be seen if we examine Leibniz's claim concerning God's moving our world from possible to actual:

> [I]t is plain to see that [God's] decree [to create the world] changes nothing in the constitution of things: God leaves them just as they were in the state of mere possibility, that is, changing nothing either in their essence or nature, or even in their accidents, which are represented perfectly already in the idea of this possible world.[91]

God adds nothing to the complete individual concept in His mind when he chooses to actualize it, therefore whatever applies to the concept in God's mind will equally apply to the individual in the actual world. In other words, the concept of an individual in God's mind is the very thing that is created and becomes a creature in the actual world: that God's power is such that He actualizes whatever exists in His mind without changing it provides an answer to the question of what sort of creatures possible individuals are. Again, the actual world considered as possible contains an infinite number of complete individual concepts, each of which is a subject with some predicates that apply to it, and it is a world that is no different in kind from any of the other possible worlds also in God's mind. So, when the actual world becomes actual, God takes the idea in His mind and places it outside of Himself, thereby making the merely possible individuals into real creaturely individuals.[92] If we want to say of the things that exist in the actual world that they are individuals, we must too say of the things that exist in the possible-but-not-yet-actual world that exists in God's mind that they are individuals; otherwise, God would have had to have changed something in moving from the idea in His mind to the actual world (i.e. he would have added 'is-an-individual' to the

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[90] From the discussion earlier in the current chapter.

[91] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §52, 151. See also Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, 75, and Curley, "The Root of Contingency," in *Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Harry G. Frankfurt (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 86-87.

[92] Or something to that effect. It is well outside the scope of this work to explain what exactly happens at the act of creation, and it is tangential to the point I am making here. It might be interesting to note here that, if my interpretation of Leibniz on the nature of modality is ultimately correct, then God's creation of the world is metaphorical at best.

complete individual concept). Yet, if the things that exist in the possible-but-not-yet-actual world are individuals, then the things that exist in other possible worlds must also be individuals.[93] Therefore, contra Mates, Lloyd, and others, if the inhabitants of the actual world are individuals, then so too are the inhabitants of merely possible worlds.

I should point out here a couple of interesting implications of the above argument. One thing to note is that, because God adds nothing to the concept in His mind when He actualizes a world, then the individuals in the actual world will be qualitatively indistinguishable from the thing in God's mind. What is striking about the qualitative indistinguishability of the two sets of individuals is that, by PII, the two sets will be identical. Because Leibniz has as a basic principle of his system the claim that there can never be two things that differ in number alone, the fact that the idea God has of our world does not differ from the world itself entails that it cannot be the case that our world and God's idea of it are non-identical. Given the fact that the idea (of the actual individual) and the thing (the actual individual itself) are qualitatively identical, they must on Leibniz's system be numerical identical as well.[94] We see, then, exactly how strong the connection between actual individuals and possible individuals is on Leibniz's system—individuals in the actual world differ only from the individuals in God's mind by being in the actual world; they do not differ in kind from the individuals in God's mind.

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[93] Because the things that exist in the possible-but-not-yet-actual world are of the same sort as the things that exist in any other possible world, if the things in the possible-but-not-yet-actual world are individuals, so too are the things in other possible worlds.

[94] It may seem a bit strange to claim that actual individuals are identical to possible individuals—in particular, it is unclear which way the reduction is supposed to go. If we keep in mind Leibniz's view that all substances are just monads, however, the claim that concepts in God's mind reduce to objects (that is, individuals) should be easier to accept, as monads are constituted by their perceptions. So, the picture that develops is one in which the individuals reduce to monads which, themselves being nothing other than perceptions, could perfectly well exist in God's mind. Because monads are a primary part of Leibniz's ontology, his identifying of possible individuals with actual individuals may be cashed out in terms of monads.

We are now in a position to provide an answer to the question of what sort of thing possible individuals are. If actual individuals are simply possible individuals existing outside of God's mind, then what can be said of actual individuals can also be said of possible individuals. Therefore, if we say of actual individuals that they are substances that contain properties, so too must we say it of possible individuals—possible individuals are substances that have properties. Of course, we might here want to make a distinction of language, so that we only use the terms 'substance' and 'property' to pick out actual individuals, reserving the terms 'subject' and 'predicate' for possible individuals.[95] Even so, the point here is that, ontologically speaking, there is no principled difference between the two.

That Leibniz does not differentiate between predicates and properties or subjects and substances is perhaps a surprising claim, given the standard philosophical distinction between the two.[96] Thus, for example, Nicholas Jolley criticizes Leibniz, saying that when he uses them:

> Terms such as 'subject' and 'predicate' are dangerously ambiguous. The word 'subject' for example is ambiguous between subject concept and the substance in the world which instantiates this concept; *mutatis mutandis* the word 'predicate' is similarly ambiguous.[97]

However, on my account it becomes clear that Leibniz was not being sloppy in using the terms 'subject' and 'substance' equivalently, as it falls out of his view on the nature of possible individuals that they are substances, while at the same time being the subjects of God's thought.[98] Of course, given that possible individuals are complete concepts in God's

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[95] We might also want to reserve the term 'creature' here to pick out only actual individuals, to avoid any problematic statements of the sort that claim that creatures exist in God.

[96] That is, that there is a difference between semantics on the one hand and ontology on the other.

[97] Nicholas Jolley, *Leibniz* (London: Routledge, 2005), 51. For a similar point, see Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, 10.

[98] Neither would it be appropriate from the standard of the contemporary distinction between predicates and properties to criticize Leibniz on his conflation of the two. On my account, Leibniz is perfectly justified in equating the two.

understanding, we are left making something of a funny claim: concepts are substances and substances exist in God's mind. However, it might be possible to tell a story here to make sense of such a claim.

When we talk of God having a concept of a possible individual, we usually mean to draw a distinction between the concept and the object of the concept, so that the possible individual is not God's concept but is rather the thing of which God has a concept. However, if we do not draw a distinction between the concept and the object, then there does not seem to be any problem with claiming that the concept in God's mind just is the individual itself. One place to get evidence that Leibniz holds such a view is in the writings of his close contemporaries. As Paul Hoffman points out, Descartes was happy to claim that substances can exist in a mind. He writes:

> In explaining what he means by 'objective being' in the *Replies to the First Objections* Descartes asserts that "the idea of the sun is *the sun itself* existing in the intellect—not of course formally, as it does in the heavens, but objectively, that is, in the way in which objects are wont to be in the intellect" (AT VII 102; CSM II 75).[99]

Hoffman takes Descartes here to be asserting that one and the same object exists both objectively and formally; the object is the same in both cases however (i.e. it is the sun in both cases).[100] Without getting caught up in the finer points of the Cartesian framework, we can at least take Descartes' claim as evidence that Leibniz would not have found it strange to claim that a substance exists in the intellect. As further evidence, in his objections to Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Caterus claims:

> Indeed, what *is* an idea? It is the thing that is thought of, in so far as it has objective being in the intellect. But what is 'objective being in the intellect'? *According to what I was taught*, this is simply the determination of an act of the intellect by means of an object. And

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[99] Paul Hoffman, "Direct Realism, Intentionality, and the Objective Being of Ideas" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 83 (2002): 167, emphasis mine.

[100] Ibid., 168.

> [objective being] is merely an extraneous label which adds nothing to the thing itself.[101]

Caterus points out here a couple of interesting things. First, citing what he had been taught, he objects to Descartes' use of objective reality. That Caterus responds by citing what he was taught, we have evidence for the claim that such a view of ideas was prevalent in the early modern period, and that Leibniz would have been aware of it. Second, it gives us an answer to the question of how God interacts with the concepts in His mind. When God thinks of an individual, His intellect is drawn to the object of His thought; God's idea of the individual is simply the determination of His intellect to focus on that individual. Caterus' objection to Descartes corresponds nicely to Leibniz's account of possible individuals, as God's perceiving an individual is simply God picking out the object in His mind:

> Caterus is heir to a traditional controversy, witnessed by Suárez, about the meaning and significance of 'objective being'. This controversy has pitted the *Thomistae* against Scotus and the *Scotistae* (and even Scotist against Scotist) over the 'objective being' which the Subtle Doctor had attributed to creatures in the divine mind, prior to their creation. Scotus had been taken to task for reputedly endowing creatures, prior to creation, with some sort of real being, intrinsic to those creatures, and distinct from divine being.[102]

We see here an understanding of the nature of an idea of which Leibniz would certainly have been aware, on which the thing in the intellect (i.e. the 'objective being') is a real creature and not a representative act of the mind. Leibniz's Scholastic upbringing would have made him quite familiar with such a conception of mental content, and his commitment to at least some elements of Scholastic philosophy[103] makes it unsurprising that he would have held such a view of the possible individuals in God's mind. Furthermore, if we consider what it is

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[101] René Descartes, *Objections and Replies*, "First Set of Objections," AT 8:92, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol. II, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 66-67, emphasis mine.

[102] Norman J. Wells, "Objective Reality of Ideas in Descartes, Caterus, and Suárez," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990): 33-34. Wells continues on, claiming that on one understanding, the objective being is a genuine actual being. Also, earlier in the same article, Wells points out that 'idea' is ambiguous between the thing representing and the thing represented.

[103] See Leibniz, *Discourse* §11, 43.

for possible reality to exist in the mind, we can see that it must mean something more than merely having an idea of possible reality, for:

> Even in the case of a merely possible being which is objectively conceived, this aptitude [for existence] is something more than its being conceived or having being in an intellect. Were it not so, that "possible" would hardly differ from a being of reason.[104]

Given that Leibniz places possible reality in God's mind, in order to distinguish it from a being of reason that lacks all reality, possible individuals must be more than simply a representation in a mind; they must have their own reality. To answer the question of how God considers the concepts before His mind, we can say that God directly perceives the concept in His mind, which perception is the method by which He picks out possible individuals that *really* exist in His mind. Thus, God's idea of the possible individual in His mind just is the individual itself, and it makes sense to say of possible individuals that they exist as substances in God's mind. The answer, then, to the question of what a possible individual is comes to the claim that it is of the same sort as an actual individual, the difference between the two being that one is found in the actual world outside of God's mind, while the other exists only as an individual in God's mind.[105]

Another consequence that comes out of the view that I have developed is that Leibniz turns out to be more akin to Spinoza than is commonly thought; Leibniz appears to admit as much in his comment in a letter to Louis Bourget that "[Spinoza] would be right if there were no monads."[106] Although it may seem an odd claim that substances exist in God (Mates certainly thought it so!), if we consider Spinoza's metaphysical system, we can see that Leibniz's having held that individuals exist in God is perhaps not so far-fetched, as

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[104] John P. Doyle, *Collected Studies on Francisco Suarez, S.J (1548-1617)*, ed. Victor M. Sales (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 30-31.

[105] We will see in the next chapter how such a view of individuals lets Leibniz offer an account on which, when we refer to possible individuals, the truth conditions for our claims are exactly the same as the truth conditions for claims we make about actual individuals.

[106] Leibniz, "Letter to Louis Bourget (August 5, 1715), in *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 663.

Spinoza certainly held that they do. Both of these seventeenth-century rationalists were attempting to provide a theistic picture that could cohere with a clear and distinct metaphysics. It is therefore notable that both Spinoza and Leibniz were led to a view on which individuals exist in God, which view is driven by the careful consideration of the consequences that follow from clear and distinct axioms in metaphysics.

Now, one key difference between Leibniz and Spinoza is in their modal metaphysics, as Leibniz held that there really are alternate possibilities, while for Spinoza all talk of possibilities was a sign of ignorance. Both Leibniz and Spinoza held that all possible reality is in God, although for Spinoza all possible reality is exhausted by the actual reality that is in God. One might ask how Leibniz's view on possibility differs from Spinoza's; one might wonder, given my claims in the previous section, how Leibniz can save alternate possibilities if possible individuals are identical with actual individuals. The answer is that in one sense his account does collapse the distinction between the two, but it is a sense that is unimportant for understanding modality. The way to get Leibniz out of trouble is to reintroduce an understanding of him as the forefather of possible world semantics and, even more so, of David Lewis-style modal realism. On my reading, one thing that seems to fall out is that the only way for Leibniz to account for alternate possibilities is by appealing to counterparts in other (equally real) worlds. So, Leibniz is able to say against Spinoza that, far from its being the case that all possibility is part of the actual world, there is an infinite number of equally real possible worlds that are causally contained and wholly separate from each other.[107] When understood properly, we see that Leibniz was not only a predecessor

[107] We see again the fact that Leibniz and Spinoza are not as different as is commonly thought, as Leibniz cashes out the notion that all possible reality is in God by making all possible reality equally real, even if the possible reality is not part of the actual world.

to contemporary work in possible worlds semantics, but he also anticipated the extreme modal realism that Lewis takes up later.[108]

Of course, not every result of my reading of Leibniz is quite so happy. In particular, one might be wondering whether for Leibniz, as for Spinoza, individuals end up simply being properties of God.[109] While Leibniz does not explicitly address the question of whether an individual is just a property of God, when he talks of monads he sometimes claims that they are atomic simple substances,[110] while at other times he claims that they are merely independent of other created things.[111] Given the way in which Leibniz discusses individual substance in *Discourse on Metaphysics*[112] as well as his denial of there being only a single substance in his letter on body to Samuel Mason, I am inclined toward the view that he thinks individuals are not properties of God, as they would then not be true substances. If individuals are truly independent of God in the sense that Leibniz's metaphysics seems to require, it becomes somewhat more difficult to make sense of the claim that they exist in God's mind.

I think we can best understand the connection between individual substances and God if we admit that Leibniz's theological doctrines do not have the primacy of place that they are normally given. If actual individuals really are identical to the possible individuals in

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[108] I will return to the connection between Lewis and Leibniz in Chapter Three; unfortunately, the discussion of how counterparts can drive a wedge between Leibniz and Spinoza will have to wait until then.

[109] This would be particularly worrisome, as Leibniz accepted the Scholastic notion that an individual substance is a subject with predicates but which is itself not predicable of anything else. Interestingly, Descartes also wrestles with this problem, although he ultimately claims that the only true substance is God, and the term 'substance' is not applied univocally to God and his creatures. See Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, I:51; AT 8A: 24, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* Vol. I, 210.

[110] E.g., Leibniz, *The Monadology* §1-6, 213; *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason* §1-2, 207.

[111] E.g. Leibniz, *Conversation of Philarète and Ariste*, 259-63.

[112] In particular, §8.

God's mind, then they would both be substances existing in God. If Leibniz is being systematic in the application of his principles, then his claim that individuals exist in God's mind must be construed at most metaphorically—what Leibniz means by God here is something more like "ontological space" than any traditional theistic version of a deity. There is some evidence that Leibniz held such a view, as when he claims that monads are derivate substances caused by God.[113] By the same token, we see that the creation story of Christian orthodoxy obviously does not make sense; Leibniz's talk of God actualizing one world from an infinity of possible ones becomes an empty claim, as God does not really create or actualize anything.[114] Again, Leibniz himself says that God leaves things just as they are when "creating" an actual from a possible. Commentators have ignored Leibniz's claim, presumably because he cannot mean what he seems to mean; I argue that we are able to take Leibniz at his word because he holds that: possibles have some reality; they are truth-makers; they are subjects with predicates; they are qualitatively, and therefore numerically, identical with actual *S*; they are substances with properties, just like actual individuals. If we follow the careful work of Leibniz in developing his metaphysics, we see that he meant exactly what he seemed to mean.

Perhaps Leibniz's treatment of God should not be that surprising. We know that Leibniz was as careful a politician as he was a philosopher, so it would make sense that in explicating his philosophical systems, he would want to do so in such a way that avoided angering too much the powers-that-be in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe.

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[113] See Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §29, 60; *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason* §8 – 9, 210; *The Monadology* §41 – 47, 218 – 219. In relation to this discussion, it is interesting that in her book *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, Christia Mercer places Leibniz in the context of the Platonist view that all reality emanates from the Supreme Being. One thing that falls out of such a view is that it becomes difficult to mark a firm difference between individual substances and God, as the reality that individual substances have emanates from God in such a way that, in some sense, they do exist in God. See Mercer, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: Its Origin and Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 184-92, 209-17, and 225-30.

[114] Instead, individuals and the worlds that comprise them already exist in the fullest way they can in ontological space, so God does not need to do any actualizing

Bertrand Russell in particular was convinced that Leibniz hid his true philosophical theory behind the façade of his public theology.[115] Additionally, we see in some places throughout his writings Leibniz offering his metaphysical theories without appealing to God at all, as he does in the case of striving possibles in "On the Ultimate Origination of Things" and in his remarks from May 1686.[116] Remember as well that Leibniz was a systematic philosopher who wanted to be able to make his theological commitments cohere with his rigorous metaphysics, and he would have understood their meaning in light of the results of his metaphysics. There is therefore at least some independent reason for thinking that Leibniz might not have been as completely wed to traditional theology as is often thought.

One fact that comes out of the reading proposed above is that the meaning of Leibniz's claim that individuals are complete concepts is somewhat different from what we today mean by concepts. The individuals that exist as complete concepts in God's mind are more akin to actual individuals than they are to ideas or other mental states: as the distinction between God's idea and the object of the idea collapses, so too does the distinction between the concept and the individual. If complete concepts in God's minds are just the possible individuals and the possible individuals are of the same sort as actual individuals, then it follows that possible individuals need not exist in God's mind after all—possible individuals would be able to exist outside of God's mind in exactly the same way

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115 See, for example, Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, "Preface to the Second Edition," xii-xviii.

116 "For even if we did not say that God, when considering Adam whom he is resolving to create, sees in him everything that will happen to him, it suffices that one can always prove that there must be a complete notion of this Adam which contains them. For all the predicates of Adam either depend upon other predicates of the same Adam or they do not. Then, setting aside all of those predicates that depend upon the others, we need only gather together all the primitive predicates in order to form Adam's complete notion, a notion sufficient for deducing everything that will ever happen to him, and this is as much as we need for us to be able to explain it," (Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 74).

that actual individuals do. Of course, we would then have to find some other ontological space to house possible individuals, as they cannot exist in the actual world.[117]

Thus, we have a reason for Leibniz's housing possible reality inside of God. Although he never explicitly discusses any arguments for why possible reality must be in God, we may speculate a little and see why Leibniz would place possible reality where he does. There are two separate ways we may approach an answer. First, if we consider the fact that we have already admitted that possible reality, being possible, cannot be in actuality, then we have to find some other place to house it. Although everything that is actual depends on God's will, not everything non-actual does,[118] and Leibniz would be hesitant to say that non-actuality does not depend on God at all.[119] Since possible reality does not depend on God's will, but must still depend on God is some way, then it must depend on His intellect;[120] otherwise, possible reality would be completely independent of God.[121] Since possible reality cannot be independent of God, and it is not dependent on His will, it must be dependent on His intellect. So, Leibniz places possible reality in God.

Second, if we consider what was the case before the actual world came into existence, we can see that there was an infinite number of possibilities waiting to be actualized. Since these possibilities had to exist somewhere, and the only thing around at that point was God, then they had to exist in God. Since God had not yet exercised his Will,

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[117] Else, they would be actual.

[118] Necessary truths, for example, are exempt from God's will.

[119] As this would conflict with Christian doctrine

[120] This seems to be Leibniz's point in *The Monadology* §43: "It is also true that God is not only the source of existences, but also that of essences insofar as they are real, that is, or the source of that which is real in possibility. This is because God's understanding is the realm of eternal truths or that of the ideas on which they depend; without him there would be nothing real in possibles, and not only would nothing exist, but also nothing would be possible" (218).

[121] Again, this would be problematic because possible reality, being a type of reality, needs to depend on God for its existence; otherwise, contrary to His essence, there would be some reality independent of God.

they could not exist as a result of that. So, they had to exist in His intellect. So, possible reality exists in God's mind. So much, then, for where possibles exist on the theistic reading of Leibniz's account of possible individuals.[122]

One upshot of the present reading of Leibniz's understanding of the nature of possible reality is that it is possible to give a full account of the view Leibniz puts forth without appealing to God. First, possible reality does not depend for its existence on God's will and, given that the individuals that inhabit possible reality are not really mental items in the sense in which we understand such things today, neither does possible reality depend on God's intellect for its existence. Additionally, God need have no part in determining which world is the best and will therefore be actualized. Given the fact that SP is not dependent on God's will for its existence and the fact that all possible reality strives for existence, we can make sense of the claim that some possible world becomes actual, without appealing to God's choice and without violating PSR. On the present account, Leibniz is able to offer an alternative that falls between Lewis' and Spinoza's views and he is able to do so without any theistic assumptions. Of course, one question that remains is where to locate possible reality. While the question about where to include possible reality in our ontology is difficult, two things can be said here: as I will discuss in Chapter Four, Leibniz is no worse off in his answer (or lack thereof) than any other modal realist;[123] more importantly, the qualms[124] we might have in admitting possible reality because of its queerness should not, I

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[122] One further thing that I hope to have shown is a way Leibniz could have avoided placing possible reality in God's mind; had he not had theistic motivations for introducing God into his metaphysics, he easily could have offered an alternate account of the location of possible reality. In the next chapter, I will take up the issue of where possible reality exists on the non-theistic reading; for now, let us simply note that the account of possible individuals that Leibniz gives is not dependent on the truth of theism, although Leibniz himself might have thought it was.

[123] That is, whatever problems Leibniz has here will also cause trouble for someone like Lewis. More on this later.

[124] Mates, for example, is suspicious of the view that possible concepts constitute possible individuals for this very reason.

think, apply here. If Leibniz is correct that in order for something to be actual it must be possible,[125] then we add nothing suspicious to our ontology by admitting possible reality, as the actual world was part of possible reality before it became actual. Actual reality presupposes possible reality, and, contrary to some intuitions, the existence of possible reality is not strange after all. With Leibniz's account of possibility in mind, we can now develop some motivations for and consequences of holding CIC.

Getting a More Complete Concept of CIC[126]

Motivating CIC: A Theistic Approach

One of the most striking features of Leibniz's conception of individuals as complete concepts is how readily it follows from the basic principles of his system, for either the theistic or the non-theistic Leibnizian. Taking the fairly straight-forward theistic route first, consider PSP.[127] According to Leibniz, part of the theoretic power of PSP is that it allows for *a priori* knowledge, especially God's *a priori* knowledge of all of the truths of the world. Now, consider what it is that is before God's mind when He is considering whether or not to create a particular world. In creating a world, God examines all of the constituents of the world in order to judge whether that world is the best of all possible. Among the things that God has before His mind is a particular person—let us call her Sarah.

When God considers Sarah, what exactly is it that He is considering? On the basis of Leibniz's principles, we can first see that God will have an understanding of Sarah on which any predicate that applies to her is already contained in the idea that God has of her, that is, in her subject. One predicate that applies to the subject Sarah, let us say, is that she is

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[125] A claim that is, I take it, fairly innocuous.

[126] Recall that CIC is the claim that everything that will happen to an individual is already contained in that individual; the concept of the subject contains all of the concepts of its predicates.

[127] Again, the claim that every predicate that applies to a subject is in the concept of that subject.

a graduate student at the University of Iowa, so that God will see in His mind that the predicate 'graduate-student-at-the-University-of-Iowa' is part of the concept 'Sarah'. By PSP, God knows that the predicate 'graduate-student-at-the-University-of-Iowa' applies to Sarah *a priori*, just as He knows all truths about Sarah purely on the basis of examining His idea of her. Since everything that is true of Sarah must be contained in the concept of her, God examines His concept of Sarah, and because He is omniscient, He sees that every predicate that applies to her is contained in her concept. Leibniz characterizes the God's-eye view in a passage from the *Discourse on Metaphysics*:

> Thus the subject term must always contain the predicate term, so that one who understands perfectly the notion of the subject would also know that the predicate belongs to it.[128]

Thus, it follows from PSP that, if one has a perfect concept of an individual (as God does), then one can know all of the predicates that apply to it. Since God knows every true thing about Sarah, or in other words, every predicate that applies to her, it follows that those predicates must already be in her when God is considering her as a possible individual, otherwise God would not be able to know all truths about her. Since God knows all truths about Sarah, which truths are contained in her concept, it follows that her concept, as an individual, contains all predicates that apply to her. Considering a God's-eye view of Sarah, then, Leibniz is able to show that CIC follows from PSP. Thus, it is through PSP that Leibniz thinks we can make sense of and justify God's omniscience, and it is God's omniscience paired with PSP that motivates CIC for a theistic Leibnizian.

Motivating CIC: A Non-Theistic Approach

In addition to motivating CIC theistically by PSP and a God's-eye perspective, it is also available to Leibniz to motivate CIC purely on the basis of PSR alone, without reference

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[128] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §8, 41.

to God. Let us first consider some things Leibniz says concerning PSR. In the case of purely possible worlds, Leibniz writes:

> I resort to my principle of an infinitude of possible worlds, represented in the region of eternal verities, that is, in the object of the divine intelligence, where all conditional futurities must be comprised. For the case of the siege of Keilah forms part of a possible world, which *differs from ours only* in all that is connected with this hypothesis, and the idea of this possible world represents that which would happen in this case. Thus we have a principle for the certain knowledge of contingent futurities, whether they happen actually or must happen in a certain case. For in the region of the possibles they are represented as they are, namely, as free contingencies.[129]

Leibniz first sets up the notion that purely possible worlds are exactly like ours, with the only difference being that they are connected with a different set of events. The connections between events, however, are exactly of the same sort; Leibniz is making the claim that what accounts for the connection between events in our world applies equally well to other possible worlds, with the only difference being in what actually happens in that possible world. The thing that accounts for the connections here is PSR, as Leibniz states shortly thereafter. That PSR is what accounts for the connection between the different events that form a possible world can be seen when Leibniz writes:

> The other principle is that of the determinant reason: it states that nothing ever comes to pass without there being a cause or at least a reason determining it, that is, something to give an a priori reason why it is existent rather than non-existent, and in this wise rather than in any other. This great principle holds for all events, and a contrary instance will never be supplied[.][130]

We see here a clear statement of PSR, as well as the fact that it applies for all events. Nevertheless, one might argue that PSR only applies to events in the actual world, so that Leibniz's claim that a contrary instance will never be supplied only applies to what actually happens, leaving open the possibility that PSR fails to obtain in some other possible world.

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[129] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §42, 146, emphasis mine.

[130] Ibid. §44, 147.

However, in the next section, Leibniz dispels the idea that PSR applies only to the actual world:

> We must therefore not imagine with some Schoolmen, whose ideas tend towards the chimerical, that free contingent futurities have the privilege of exemption from this general rule of the nature of things. There is always a prevailing reason which prompts the will to its choice[.][131]

For Leibniz, the free contingent futurities are on the same level as those worlds that are merely possible-in-themselves, as they have not yet happened in the actual world. Even though they are future events, they are not saved from the power of PSR. Future contingents will only happen the way they do for a reason, which reason can be found in the events that lead up to them, and merely possible worlds work exactly the same way. As Leibniz tells Arnauld:

> All this must be understood of the general order, of God's plans, of the course of this universe, of individual substances, and of miracles, whether they are taken in the actual state or whether they are considered *sub ratione possibilitatis*. For another possible world will also have all this in its own way, though the plans of ours have been preferred.[132]

Even merely possible worlds must follow PSR, as they will have different orderings than our world, but the ordering that they have is dependent on PSR; the ordering of a possible world is the reason for which things happen in the manner they do in that world.[133] For possible worlds as for the actual world, the things that happen in a world will always have an explanation for why they happen that way as opposed to another. Let us now look at how PSR, given that it holds across all worlds, provides a non-theistic motivation for CIC.

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[131] Ibid. §45, 148.

[132] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 72.

[133] The idea here is that another possible world may have, for example, different causal laws than the actual world. That this is so comes from God's omnipotence and His creation of the laws of nature. In a world with different causal laws, it is those laws that will give the reason for why things happen that way as opposed to another; PSR still holds in those worlds.

When Leibniz claims that it is because of PSR that things happen one way as opposed to another, perhaps the easiest way to understand the claim is through the causal maxim: everything that is has a cause.[134] When we consider what will happen to an individual, whether it be a merely possible individual or a future individual of our world, by PSR we know that whatever will happen to it must have a reason, which reason is found in the connection between the things of that world. For any possible individual, whatever happens to it will be a product of some initial conditions and a set of completely determinate causes. When we consider a particular individual, say Jones, we[135] can know on the basis of the current conditions and the casual laws of the universe that he will eventually steal Smith's car, although the event in which Smith's car is stolen has yet to happen. That is, by PSR and the initial conditions of Jones, which conditions have a beginning before the individual Jones even came to be, the entirety of what will happen to Jones is already determined. Even though it might not be available to us, all of the predicates that will come to apply to the subject Jones are already in Jones in the sense that, by PSR, they are determined to happen before they actually do. The concept of Jones is complete given an initial set of conditions.[136] If one accepts the causal maxim, then one ought also to accept CIC, and one not need be a theist to do so.

The non-theistic reading raises an interesting problem for Leibniz, one that I will address in Chapter Five: PSR, inasmuch as it leads to CIC, seems to create a significant problem for any libertarian view of free will. On the standard characterization of the libertarian view, what it is for an individual to have free will is for her will to be uncaused; if

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134 "For the received axiom that *nothing is without reason*, or *there is no effect without a cause*, directly follows from these considerations" (Leibniz, "Primary Truths," 31).

135 Or a sufficiently knowledgeable observer.

136 Jones' concept is complete in the sense that if we knew all of the initial conditions and the causal laws, we would be able to know everything that would happen to Jones throughout the course of his life. The initial conditions simply set the possible world in which the Jones we are considering exists.

her will is restricted by anything other than her choice, it cannot be free. Notice what such a claim seems to suggest—her will would be outside of the restrictions set by PSR in that her will is an event that lacks a cause. However, to say that her will lacks a cause is simply another way to say that her will is random, which is a violation of PSR as random events do not have an explanation for why they happen one way as opposed to another. Given that PSR leads to CIC, and CIC entails that everything that will happen to an individual is already contained in the individual,[137] looking ahead we can see that one issue that Leibniz will have to address is in what sense an individual can be free, given that libertarianism is incompatible with the fundamental principles of his metaphysical system.

Some Additional Considerations

Above, I have provided both a theistic and a non-theistic reason for accepting the truth of CIC. I want now to consider some additional motivations Leibniz had for positing CIC. In *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz introduces CIC, claiming that:

> It is rather difficult to distinguish between the actions of God from those of creatures; for some believe that God does everything, while others imagine that he merely conserves the force he has given to creatures. What follows will let us see the extent to which we can say the one or the other. And since actions and passions properly belong to individual substances, it will be necessary to explain what such an individual substance is.[138]

Initially, we can see that one of the issues Leibniz is concerned with, and one that we will eventually see CIC addressing, is how to distinguish the causal powers of created individuals from that of God. The project Leibniz has set for himself is particularly important when understood in the context in which it was written. Leibniz is addressing the problem of distinguishing between causation in God and creatures in light of the occasionalist doctrine,

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[137] Given a set of initial conditions and a set of causal laws.

[138] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §8, 40.

very much alive at the time, on which all true causal power lies in God. However, to claim that God is the only cause is not necessarily to claim that:

> God intervenes in time to move one billiard ball when it collides with another or to raise my arm when I decide to scratch my nose; it is rather to say that from all eternity God has laid down laws of physics and of mind-body union (psycho-physical laws) in accordance with which creatures behave as they do.[139]

The occasionalists claim that God sustains the universe causally through conserving the force he has given to creature via the laws of the universe. Leibniz, clearly, has the type of occasionalist Jolley describes as a target, as well as those who hold the more popular view of occasionalism.[140] While it is well beyond the scope of the current project to get clear on exactly how occasionalism ought best to be understood, for now it is enough to note that Leibniz had occasionalism as a target for his theory, despite its having some similarities with that doctrine. One reason Leibniz had for appealing to CIC is that he saw it as a way to respond to the occasionalists on the distinction between the causal powers of God and those of creatures.

Another reason that Leibniz had for introducing CIC is a problem he sees with the traditional Aristotelian conception of individuals, although it should be noted that Leibniz did not think that Aristotle was wrong per se; rather, Leibniz viewed Aristotle's theory on individual substances as incomplete for a proper understanding of the nature of individual substances. Leibniz claimed that:

> It is indeed true that when several predicates are attributed to a single subject and this subject is attributed to no other, it is called an individual substance; but this is not sufficient, and such an

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[139] Jolley, *Leibniz*, 42.

[140] For more on Leibniz's criticisms of the occasionalist doctrine, see for example: "Primary Truths;" "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)"; "Letter to Arnauld (April 30, 1687)"; "A New System of the Nature and Communication of Substances, and the of the Union of the Soul and Body."

> explanation is merely nominal. We must therefore consider what it is to be attributed truly to a certain subject.[141]

Leibniz here points to a common understanding of what it is to be an individual thing, one that is inherited from Aristotle and was quite pervasive in the early modern period. To say of an individual that it is a substance is to ascribe to it the feature that it is a subject of predication without itself being predicable of anything else. While Leibniz takes the Aristotelian view of substance to account for some feature of what it is to be an individual substance, it fails to be an explanation of individuation or to be a proper characterization of what it is to be an individual substance in that it does not give any account of how one thing is predicated of another. Without some sort of account of how a predicate is applied to a subject, the Aristotelian definition is empty of explanation as to what makes an individual substance an *individual* substance, since we cannot apply the definition without understanding how predicates become attached to subjects. Leibniz's criticism of the Aristotelian conception of individual substances is that it is incomplete, and he attempts to amend it by adding to it PSP. Thus, Aristotelian substance plus PSP yields:

> [W]e can say that the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to contain and to allow us to deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which the notion is attributed…Thus when we consider carefully the connection of things, we can say that from all time in Alexander's soul there are vestiges of everything that has happened to him and marks of everything that will happen to him and even traces of everything that happens in the universe, even though God alone could recognize them all.[142]

In other words, Leibniz presents CIC as the true definition of individual substance, as it explains how it is that a predicate is applied to a subject—predicates are applied to subjects just when they are contained in the subject, and to be an individual substance is to be a thing so complete that it is distinguishable from all other individual substances. Thus, Leibniz puts forward CIC as the proper way to understand what it is to be an individual substance.

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[141] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §8, 40-41.

[142] Ibid., 41

One more motivation Leibniz had for positing CIC as his account of individuals is that it is what allows for God to have a reason for creating the best possible world. Leibniz criticized his contemporaries who held divine voluntarism, on which whatever God does is best, so it is trivially true that God creates the best possible world.[143] Leibniz continuously attacks such a view as reducing or diminishing God's goodness.[144] Leibniz, then, needs to offer an account that will allow for God's goodness and justice to be maintained—it is CIC that Leibniz holds will do so. Leibniz is explicitly worried about the problem of God's choice of the best. He claims that:

> [I]f God had not foreknown or preordained the entire series of actual things, then it would follow that he would have made a judgment for a reason insufficiently understood by him, and that he would have chosen something insufficiently clear to him.[145]

In order for God to create the best, He must have a reason for doing so, which reason is consistent with His perfection. CIC can afford God the sufficient reason for His choice of which world to create by allowing Him to see all of the truths of a world *a priori*, so that He can compare each world to see which is best. Among the truths that God examines in comparing worlds are those truths about the creatures in it, which creatures are picked out by their complete concepts. In determining which possible world to create, God compares:

> [T]wo possible things, A and B, one of which is such that it is necessary that it exists, and let us assume that there is more

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[143] One of the philosophers Leibniz has in mind explicitly is Descartes. He writes, "Thus I am far removed from the opinion of those who maintain that there are no rules of goodness and perfection in the nature of things or in the ideas God has of them and who say that the works of God are good solely for the formal reason that God has made them" (Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §2, 36). That such was Descartes' view would have been well-known to Leibniz's audience.

[144] "Thus, in saying that things are not good by virtue of any rule of goodness but solely by virtue of the will of God, it seems to me that we unknowingly destroy all of God's love and all his glory. For why praise him for what he has done if he would be equally praiseworthy in doing the exact contrary? Where will his justice and wisdom reside if there remains only a certain despotic power, if will holds the place of reason, and if, according to the definition of tyrants, justice consists in whatever pleases the most powerful" (Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §2, 36).

[145] Leibniz, "Notes on Some Comments by Michel Angelo Fardella," Proposition I, Clarification, 102.

> perfection in A than in B. Then, at least, we can explain why A should exist rather than B and can foresee which of them will exist.[146]

Since what will allow for God to choose the best possible world to actualize is the set of all the facts of a particular world, He needs to compare the facts of the actual world with the facts of some other possible world—CIC is what will allow Him to do just that. It is on the basis of CIC that God can know all of the truths about His creatures, and it is by CIC that God is able to pick out creature A from creature B. Without CIC, it looks as if God could not perform the correct sort of rational process to determine which world to create. If He were unable to do so, then we could not correctly say of God that he is all-good or the most perfect being, as Leibniz points out in his criticism of Descartes and others. Therefore, by positing CIC, Leibniz is able to account for the fact that God creates the best of all possible worlds and is able to save God's perfect nature.

Completing the Concept: Consequences

There are many things that Leibniz thinks follow from CIC, as he points to in §9 of the *Discourse*. However, I focus on only a few key items that are relevant to the account of possibility and freedom that Leibniz develops. The first involves whether or not CIC collapses the distinction between possibility and necessity, so that for Leibniz as for Spinoza, everything that is possible is actual. Furthermore, if there were no such distinction, it looks as if free will, at least on any plausible understanding, would be destroyed, since one of the necessary components of freedom is that the will not be necessitated to act in the way that it does. The problems occur because:

> [T]he notion of an individual substance includes once and for all everything that can ever happen to it and that, by considering this notion, one can see there everything that can truly be said of it, just as we can see in the nature of a circle all the properties that can be deduced from it.[147]

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[146] Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility," 20

[147] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §13, 44.

As we can see, CIC makes all truths akin to those of geometry, which few would deny are analytic. The problem is that, given that it appears that all truths are analytic by CIC, and analytic truths are necessary, it follows that all truths are necessary, even those about created individuals in the actual world. Leibniz recognizes that there is a problem here, as he points out in the next sentence:

> But it seems that this would eliminate the difference between contingent and necessary truths, that there would be no place for human freedom, and that an absolute fatalism would rule all our actions as well as all the other events of the world.[148]

Such a picture would, on Leibniz's view, be a catastrophe and would provide reason enough to reject CIC. However, Leibniz offers us a solution to such a dismal scenario, which response is worth quoting in full:

> To this I reply that we must distinguish between what is certain and what is necessary. Everyone grants that future contingents are certain, since God foresees them, but we do not concede that they are necessary on that account. But (someone will say) if a conclusion can be deduced infallibly from a definition or a notion, it is necessary. And it is true that we are maintaining that everything that must happen to a person is already contained virtually in his nature or notion, just as the properties of a circle are contained in its definition; thus the difficulty still remains. To address it firmly, I assert that the connection or following is of two kinds. The one whose contrary implies a contradiction is absolutely necessary; this deduction occurs in the eternal truths, for example, the truths of geometry. The other is necessary only *ex hypothesi* and, so to speak, accidentally, but it is contingent in itself, since its contrary does not imply a contradiction. And this connection is based not purely on ideas and God's simple understanding, but on his free decrees and on the sequence of the universe.[149]

In his response to the problem created by CIC, Leibniz correctly points out that we can distinguish between two types of necessity, hypothetical and metaphysical. The distinction is an important one, as it is what will allow for Leibniz to drive a wedge between possibility

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[148] Ibid., 44-45.

[149] Ibid., 45. While there is quite a bit going on in the quote, I will put off most of it until later chapters, so as to be able to address the issue of Leibniz's theory of modality more fully. For now, the thing to notice is how the quote illuminates just how great a problem CIC causes for the issue of modality.

and necessity and will stop the collapse of his position into Spinozism.[150] Notice that one of the things that CIC entails is that the concept of an individual is so complete that all truths about that individual are in principle knowable, in the same way that one can know all of the truths about a circle (i.e. from reading them off of the concept 'circle'). That is, when God is considering the complete concept of Jones as a member of a possible world, He sees everything that will happen to Jones throughout his entire existence. An example here might prove illuminating.

It is a fact that Barack Obama is the 44th President of the United States. Since Obama has as one of his properties 'being-the-44th-president', it is contained in his complete concept that he will be the 44th president. So, even before Obama became president, it was true of him that he would one day become president, since God had it in His mind as part of the concept of Obama that that individual would be the 44th president. If Obama had failed to become the 44th president—if instead he became the 45th president or decided not to run at all—then he would no longer be Obama, as such an individual would not match the complete concept in God's mind and would have an entirely different complete concept because of it. So, by CIC, it was true of Obama even from before he was born that he would be the 44th President of the United States. Although we will return later to more fully flesh-out Leibniz's account of the issues of modality and free will, it is striking to note here just how large of a problem CIC causes for distinguishing possibility from necessity. Because it was true about Obama that he would be the 44th president even when he was nothing but a glimmer in God's eye, it is far from clear how it could be possible for Obama to have not been the 44th president. However, if it were not possible for Obama to have

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[150] It is worth noting here that Leibniz will be quite happy if he can, as a minimal conclusion, show that there is such a thing as alternate possibilities, even if it turns out that we could not have done otherwise than we did, given the determination of our actions by the past. As we will see later, it is precisely because Leibniz has introduced a way to make sense of the reality of alternate possibilities that allows him to save free will, as well as claim that this truly is the best of all possible worlds.

been other than the 44th president, then it is not clear, on the one hand, how it is not simply necessary that he be the 44th president. On the other hand, it is also difficult to see how Obama could have had any choice in the matter, so that he would be able to exercise his free will, since it seems to be a precondition for choosing between two options that there be an alternate possibility that one could choose. By CIC, it looks as if there are no alternate options from which to choose, as, by PII, the individual that chose otherwise would be another. What is important to note here is that CIC seems to create a significant difficulty for Leibniz in terms of possibility and free will.[151]

Another related issue for which CIC produces some odd results is in the analysis of possibility in terms of possible worlds.[152] On one common understanding of the nature of possibility, what it means for it to be possible for me to act other than I actually do is that there is some possible world, very much like the actual world, in which I act in a different way. Typically, the nearby possible world has only one key difference between the actual world and it, up to the moment when I act. The difference between the two worlds lies only in my acting otherwise than I actually do. So, for example, if I in the actual world choose to get a slice of pie at Perkins, then to say that it is possible that I got a slice of cake instead is simply to say there is an "I" in another possible world, which "I" chooses cake instead of pie. The possible-world "I" captures the notion, on the possible worlds account, that I in the actual world could have acted otherwise than I in fact do. We can see, then, the problem that crops up here in light of CIC. Remember that for Leibniz an individual consists in simply the set of all of the predicates that apply to her. So, when some set of predicates apply to her in the actual world, such as the predicate 'chooses-a-slice-of-pie-at-Perkins', that

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[151] We shall have to wait until the next two chapters to see exactly how Leibniz solves these puzzles and, even more interestingly, how CIC will help him to do so.

[152] I introduce the issue of identity across possible worlds at this point as a special case of the problem that CIC and PII together raise, as later I will show that Leibniz can appeal to a possible worlds analysis of possibility, despite the *prima facie* difficulty I raise here. Such an account will have to wait, however.

predicate is part of her complete concept. Now, to say that it was possible for her to choose cake instead of pie is to claim, on the possible worlds view, that instead of having the predicate 'chooses-a-slice-of-pie-at-Perkins', instead she has the predicate 'chooses-a-slice-of-cake-at-Perkins'. However, that she has the cake predicate entails that her complete concept is different than it is in the actual world. Unfortunately, by PII, because her complete concept is different in the possible world in which she chooses cake, she cannot be the same individual. Leibniz here is faced with a difficulty because he cannot appeal to trans-world identity to capture the notion of possibility in terms of possible worlds. It does not look as if he can capture the notion of possibility at all by PII because, if she were to do otherwise than she did, she would have a different complete concept, and so we cannot say of her that *she* can choose otherwise. Arnauld points out the problem CIC raises for identity across possible worlds when, in his correspondence with Leibniz, he writes:

> Among possible beings God has found in his ideas several me's, of which one has for its predicates, to have several children and to be a physician, and another to live a life of celibacy and to be a Theologian. God, having decided to create the latter, or the present me, includes in its individual concept the living a life of celibacy and the being a Theologian while the former would have involved in its individual concept being married and being a physician. Is it not clear that there would be no sense in such statements, because, since my present me is necessarily of a certain individual nature, which is the same thing as having a certain individual concept, it will be as impossible to conceive of contradictory predicates in the individual concept me, as to conceive of a me different from me?[153]

Arnauld hits the nail on the head. If we are positing a creature with a different complete concept than me, then we are clearly no longer talking about me. Of course, Arnauld takes that consequence to be a *reductio ad absurdum* on CIC; we shall later see how Leibniz responds to the challenge Arnauld puts forth when we develop more fully Leibniz's modal theory. Until then, note that CIC appears to create a significant problem for Leibniz if he wants to avoid the sort of necessitarianism for which he criticizes Spinoza.

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[153] Leibniz, "Arnauld to Leibniz (May 13, 1686)," in *Discourse On Metaphysics; Correspondence with Arnauld; Monadology*, 94-95.

The problem of identity across worlds is not the only issue that CIC raises for the possible worlds analysis of modality. One of the other things that Leibniz claims follows from CIC is that:

> Moreover, every substance is like a complete world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way, somewhat as the same city is variously represented depending upon the different positions from which it is viewed…For [a substance] expresses, however confusedly, everything that happens in the universe, whether past, present future[.][154]

For Leibniz, every single monad acts as a mirror of the world that it inhabits, reflecting all of the facts about that world through its own perceptions. The analogy of the city here is particularly vivid, since someone living in the slums of a city will have a different view of the exact same subject (i.e. the city) as one who lives in a wealthy neighborhood. Although we as limited cognizers do not, and cannot, register the fact that our perceptions represent the whole of the universe, as our perceptions are quite confused, it is nevertheless true on Leibniz's theory that each individual monad reflects everything else in the universe. Because of the connection between monads, one result of CIC is that, jumping to a possible world in which, say, Arnauld is married, that possible world is not one in which only one or two things have changed while everything else remains constant with the actual world. Instead, the entirety of that possible world has changed, since every monad in that possible world will reflect the fact the Arnauld is now married. CIC, then, creates an additional problem for an account of possibility given in terms of possible worlds, since it becomes a much greater problem in picking out what exactly counts as a close possible world, since every world will be radically dissimilar to the actual world.[155]

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[154] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §9, 42. Indeed, Leibniz titles §9: "That every individual substance expresses the whole universe in its own manner and that in its full concept is included all its experiences together with all the attendant circumstances and the whole sequence of exterior events."

[155] I am aware that, for any modal realist, picking out what counts as a close possible world presents a significant challenge. The claim I am making here is that Leibniz has a special problem in this regard, as it looks like, on whatever criteria is given for picking out nearby possible worlds,

So much then for (some of) the consequences that follow from CIC. As should now be apparent, given CIC, Leibniz will have quite a bit of work to do in developing an account of the nature of possibility that will allow him to avoid necessitarianism, which will then allow him to provide an account of free will that takes seriously the existence of alternate possibilities for an agent's choice. Because I am nothing more than my complete concept, it is by no means immediately clear how Leibniz will avoid those things of which Arnauld and others have accused him regarding the nature of possibility and freedom. Because of the difficulties raised here by CIC, it will be the task of the next chapter to examine how Leibniz conceived of possible worlds; we will next look at where Leibniz understands purely possible individuals to have their purely possible existence. Doing so will be essential to the task of Chapter Four, in which we finally resolve the issues raised by CIC and see how Leibniz is able to avoid the dangers of necessitarianism and ultimately make the (actual) world a safe place for possibility, contingency, and (in Chapter Five) freedom of the will.

Leibniz will still have to account for why whichever world is closest is so radically different than our own.

CHAPTER III: THE MANY POSSIBLE WORLDS OF LEIBNIZ

In the previous chapter, we saw a picture of Leibniz's view on possible individuals—where they exist, what sort of thing they are, and their individuating conditions—that characterizes non-actual individuals as something quite akin to actual ones. Leibniz's account of the nature of possible individuals has them as concrete individuals existing, not as we do in the actual world, but as complete concepts in God's mind. The terminology here is a bit misleading, as the possible individuals existing as complete concepts in God's mind are not pure mental items; rather, they are fully-fledged individuals of the same sort as you or I.[156] With Leibniz's view of individuals in our tool box, we can next examine his theory of possible worlds and determine the exact nature of where these individuals are housed. Understanding Leibniz's view on possible worlds will allow us in the next chapter to apply his views on modal ontology to the issues involved with Leibniz's broader account of modality. In particular, the view I develop in the current chapter helps respond to the critics of Leibniz's treatment of contingency, possibility, and necessity that we will examine in the next chapter. The work of the current chapter will be to provide a detailed account of Leibniz's understanding of the ontology of possible worlds, connect it up with current accounts of modal metaphysics, and critically evaluate Leibniz's account in order to see whether it can stand up as a satisfactory understanding of the nature of possibility.

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[156] Some readers here will naturally be struck with how Spinozistic this conception of Leibniz sounds. In particular, Spinoza offers an account on which there are no alternate possibilities because all "possibilities" are equally real. While Leibniz is offering a way to understand modality such that all possibilities are, in some sense, equally real (in that they are all of the same kind), he still differs from Spinoza in that the different possible worlds are closed off from each other, so that not everything is real in the sense that everything that is possible is actual, as the actual world and all of the other possible worlds really are disconnected from each other. Below, we shall see how Leibniz is able to say this, so that he can differentiate his position from Spinoza.

A Mote in God's Eye: Leibnizian Realism

As we discussed in the previous chapter, it is uncontroversial that possibles exist on Leibniz's theory. Furthermore, we examined exactly what Leibnizian possibles are and where they are to be found, concluding that the members of purely possible space are individuals and they exist in God's mind. However, as I have argued, possible individuals do not differ in kind from actual individuals, as CIC determines the nature of all individuals equally. Recall the key issues from the last chapter. The way Leibniz characterizes possible individuals is through our understanding of actual individuals. We have the notion of an individual as the complete set of its properties; by CIC, what it is to be an individual is to be a concept so complete that everything true of an individual is already contained in it. Leibniz does not distinguish between a concept and its predicates and a substance and its properties, as God adds nothing to his concept of the world when he chooses to actualize it. However, if the actual world is qualitatively indistinguishable from God's concept of it,[157] then by PII the actual world and its conception as a possible world are identical. Being identical, the actual and possible individuals will be one and the same thing, so that if actual individuals are substances with properties, so too are possible individuals. Possible individuals are of the same sort as actual individuals, with the difference between the two lying in the fact that possible individuals do not inhabit our world. Yet, because we as actual individuals inhabit a world, it seems likely that Leibniz would have possible individuals inhabit a world as well, since the only difference between them and us is that we are actual while they remain merely possible-in-themselves. Additionally, we see that Leibniz is happy to talk in terms of worlds:

> For example, if this world were only possible, the individual notion of some body in this world, which includes certain motions as possible, would also include our laws of motion (which are free decrees of God), but also only as possible. For, since there is an infinity of possible worlds, there is also an infinity of possible laws, some proper to one world, other proper to another, and each

[157] That is, the actual world considered as possible, which it would be if God adds nothing to it when he actualizes it.

> possible individual of a world includes the laws of its world in its notion.[158]
>
> Now, since there is an infinity of possible universes in God's ideas, and since only one of them can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for God's choice, a reason which determines him towards one thing rather than another.[159]

While there is quite a bit going on in these passages, I would like to highlight just a couple of points. First, we see that Leibniz is quite comfortable talking in terms of possible worlds, going so far as to consider our own world as possible, which consideration gives us a clue as to how he thought of possible worlds—if we are able to take our own world as possible, then when we consider a possible world it will be of the same sort as our world considered as possible. That is, the difference between the actual world and the same world when it was merely possible is simply that God had not yet freely chosen to create it. Second, the number of alternate possible worlds is unlimited: there are infinite possible worlds other than the actual. However, we may still worry about what it is to be a possible world, as we do not have a firm definition of a world on the table.

Leibniz offers us some more hints as to his understanding of what a possible world is. Recall from Chapter Two how Leibniz himself characterizes a world in *Theodicy*[160]—we may summarize here as everything that is causally connected with each other,[161] including planets, stars, people, etc. In other words, Leibniz conceives of a world as everything that there is within a closed causal system, so when he speaks of the actual world, he includes in it the entirety of the universe. By parity of reasoning, when Leibniz talks of alternate possible worlds, by each of them he means exactly the same thing—they are alternate ways

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[158] Leibniz," Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 71.

[159] Leibniz, *The Monadology* §53, 220.

[160] See my Chapter Two, 53.

[161] Regardless of how remotely these things are connected or how weak the causal forces they have on each other.

the entirety of the universe could have been. That possible worlds are closed off from each other can be seen when Leibniz writes:

> There are, in fact, an infinite number of series of possible things. Moreover, one series certainly cannot be contained within another, since each and every one of them is complete.[162]

We see two key things taking place here—first, there is an infinite number of other possible worlds, that is, an infinite number of series of possible things; second, each of the different series of possible things are closed off from each other, as any individual collection of possible things from among the infinite series is complete. So, there are infinitely many of these possible universes, each one as complete and full of stuff as ours, so much so that each even includes the causal laws of that particular world. In explaining to Arnauld how to make sense of Adam's freedom in light of God's decrees, let us look again at Leibniz's answer:

> As for the objection that possibles are independent of God's decrees, I grant it with respect to actual decrees, but I hold that possible individual notions include some possible free decrees. For example, if this world were only possible, the individual notion of some body in this world, which includes certain motions as possible, would also include our laws of motion (which are free decrees of God), but also only as possible. For, since there is an infinity of possible worlds, there is also an infinity of possible laws, some proper to one world, other proper to another, and each possible individual of a world includes the laws of its world in its notion.[163]

Possible worlds for Leibniz are so complete that they even include the causal laws of that world, which of course are only possible as they are the laws of a possible world. It makes sense that Leibniz would claim that possible worlds include their own possible laws, as given his view of possible individuals, the causal laws of a world are required to complete the concept of an individual. Even in possible worlds, we need possible laws to have individuals. Leibniz's picture of a world is one with which we ought to be perfectly

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[162] Leibniz, "On Contingency," 29.

[163] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 71.

comfortable, given our more contemporary ways of speaking of modality. Possible worlds line up nicely with some contemporary accounts, on which a possible world is just the collection of everything that inhabits that particular world, and each possible world exists in a separate, disconnected sphere from every other world, including the actual.

Another bit of evidence we can see in Leibniz's writings concerning his views on the nature of possible worlds comes from part of his motivation for avoiding necessitarianism:

> I do not think that a Spinozist will say that all the romances one can imagine exist actually now, or have existed, or will still exist in some place in the universe. Yet one cannot deny that romances such as those of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, or as *Octavia*, are possible.[164]

> One must certainly hold that not all possibles attain existence, otherwise one could imagine no novel that did not exist in some place and at some time.[165]

> If everything that exists were necessary, then it would follow that only things which existed at some time would be possible (as Hobbes and Spinoza hold) and that matter would receive all possible forms (as Descartes held). And so, one could not imagine a novel that did not actually take place at some time and in some place, which is absurd.[166]

In these quotes, Leibniz insists that the only way to make sense of fictions[167] is by positing possible worlds. It is notable that he offers the Novels Argument (NA) with relative frequency over the course of his career. Leibniz seems well-pleased that NA offers adequate justification for believing in possible worlds, as in the last quote we see Leibniz asserting that possible worlds are the only way to get us out of the necessitarian absurdity.

Let us flesh out NA a bit more. Leibniz points out that, without possible worlds, the events of fictions would have to take place in the actual world, as Leibniz thinks that the

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[164] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §173, 235.

[165] Leibniz, "On Contingency," 29.

[166] Leibniz, "The Source of Contingent Truth," 100.

[167] To Leibniz's discussion of novels, we can of course add movies, T.V. shows, radio dramas, video games, etc.

only way to account for fictions is by allowing them to take place somewhere. Fictions are the sorts of things that are in principle capable of occurring in the actual world, as they would if they were, say, histories instead of novels. The characters and plots of fictions are possible individuals and their properties, and they are no different in kind from actual individuals; else, it would not make sense to claim that fictions would happen in the actual world if we rule out possible worlds. By NA, fictions take place in possible worlds, but they do so in the same way that they would if they were to occur in the actual world. We can see that, in espousing NA, Leibniz is once again making the point that possible worlds are of the same sort as the actual world, with the key difference being that the actions of novels take place somewhere else than the actual world.

As an example here, take the British television show *Dr. Who*. Each of the individuals in the universe of *Dr. Who* are merely possible individuals, which means that their concepts are complete. They inhabit a universe that is different from ours in many ways,[168] but shares quite a few similarities as well.[169] However, when The Doctor gets into his T.A.R.D.I.S. and travels through space and time, he is (in that possible world) actually doing those things. When he saves the planet time-and-again, those events are happening in some possible world *in the same way* they would happen if they were to occur in the real world. Leibniz's appeal to NA to support his notion of possibility, then, only works if those fictions were actualizable in the sense that they consist of the same sort of creatures as the actual world. The Doctor is a merely possible individual, but as an individual he has a concept that is complete and, by my arguments of the previous chapter, as a complete individual the only difference between him and us is that he is non-actual.[170] Since the world of *Dr. Who* is

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[168] E.g. Aliens invade Earth constantly, Cardiff is a really interesting place, the members of the royal family are werewolves, etc.

[169] E.g. The basic concept of Great Britain is the same between the two worlds.

[170] There is a significant debate in the literature of the nature of fictions as to whether or not fictional entities are complete in this way. While I will not go into that literature here as it would

made up of many[171] individuals, all of whom are complete in the same way, we can see that Leibniz's understanding of what it is to be a possible world is just to be the series of individuals with all of their properties already in them. However, Leibniz characterizes the actual world also as being the series of its individual members and their properties. In both cases, the individuals that populate a world include as part of their concept[172] everything that happens in that world, so both possible worlds and the actual worlds are complete. We may conclude, then, that Leibniz is correctly characterized as a modal realist.

Lewis' Hyperrealism and Leibniz

It seems that one cannot hear the words 'modal realism' in contemporary philosophical discussion without soon after hearing 'David Lewis' as well. In claiming that Leibniz espoused a modal realist position, I would be remiss if I did not discuss his view in comparison to Lewis' own. As I have argued (with the help of Leibniz's own hand), Leibniz is what we would today consider a modal realist. He has in his ontology possible individuals who are just as complete as you or I[173] inhabiting a possible world that consists of a complete collection of such non-actual individuals. Furthermore, those possible individuals can be said to exist, although in some sense other than the way that you and I exist in the actual world. Such a view ought to strike any reader as reminiscent of Lewis, who is perhaps the most extremely realist of any contemporary philosopher writing on the subject. In order to more fully understand Leibniz's modal position, then, it would be helpful to characterize

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take us too far afield, it is clear that Leibniz thinks that fictional individuals must be complete in the way that any individual is.

[171] Indeed, an infinite number.

[172] Recall here that, for Leibniz, there is no difference between being a concept with predicates and being a subject with properties. Keeping this point in mind will be important to understanding the rest of the chapter.

[173] Remember here that, by CIC, any individual must be complete in the sense that it already contains all of its properties from the moment of its creation. This goes for us, the individuals of the actual world, but it also goes for the individuals in possible worlds.

Lewis', with which most of us are more familiar and to use that as a gateway to get a better grip on exactly how Leibniz understood possible worlds.

Establishing Similarity: Defending Genuine Modal Realism

Lewis presents a position throughout his writings that we may, following the literature, refer to as Genuine Modal Realism (GMR). Lewis presents a characterization of his position at the beginning of *On the Plurality of Worlds*. First, he defines what he means by 'world':

> The world we live in is a very inclusive thing. Every stick and every stone you have ever seen is part of it. And so are you and I. And so are the planet Earth, the solar system, the entire Milky Way, the remote galaxies we see through telescopes, and (if there are such things) all the bits of empty space between the stars and galaxies. There is nothing so far away from us as not be part of our world.[174]

On Lewis' view, worlds are just collections of everything that exists in spatial and temporal relation to each other. His claim will ultimately be that, given the understanding of 'world' as just the collection of things that are spatially and temporally connected, there is a plurality of worlds. Indeed, he identifies the thesis that there is a plurality of worlds *as* 'modal realism'.[175] Importantly, because there is a plurality of worlds in Lewis' sense and the members of each world are spatially and temporally connected only with other members of their world, we may conclude that the different worlds in Lewis' sense are wholly disconnected from each other.

However, notice something about Lewis' conception of 'world'—if we look back to Leibniz's characterization of what it is to be a world, we see that Lewis' understanding is startlingly familiar. Leibniz too understands 'world' as "the whole succession and whole agglomeration of all existent things." Both Lewis and Leibniz are contrasting the

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[174] David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 1. He makes the same claim for time as he makes for space here.

[175] Ibid., 2.

understanding of world in the context of modal logic with its meaning in everyday discourse. When we normally speak of worlds, we mean to pick out something like Earth, Mars, or Gliese 581 d (i.e. heavenly bodies). However, when both Leibniz and Lewis speak of worlds, they refer instead to everything that exists, of which things like Earth and Gliese 581 d are parts. So, when both Leibniz and Lewis talk of other possible worlds, they are not referring to other planets in our universe; instead, they are discussing an entire other collections of existent things that are disconnected from us in our world in most ways, but connected in one critically special way—modally.[176]

Lewis' argument for the existence of other possible worlds is, much like Leibniz's, incredibly straightforward:

> I believe that there are possible worlds other than the one we happen to inhabit. If an argument is wanted, it is this. It is uncontroversially true that things might be otherwise than they are. I believe, and so do you, that things could have been different in countless ways. But what does this mean? Ordinary language permits the paraphrase: there are many ways things could have been besides the way they actually are. On the face of it, this sentence is an existential quantification. It says that there exist many entities of certain description, to wit 'ways things could have been'. I believe that things could have been different in countless ways; I believe permissible paraphrases of what I believe; taking the paraphrase at its face value, I therefore believe in the existence of entities that might be called 'ways things could have been'. I prefer to call them 'possible worlds'.[177]

Lewis puts forward GMR as a way to understand our everyday intuition (shared by Leibniz) that, despite how things are in the actual world, they could very well have been different. However, we still must make sense of what it means to say that the way the world actually is is not the way that it must be. In calling what accounts for our intuition 'possible worlds', Lewis is not arbitrarily picking a term from the hat—he understands our utterances concerning possible ways the world could be as being in line with what we have to say about

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[176] We will of course return later to what exactly it means to say that some other possible world is modally related to our world.

[177] David K. Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 84.

the ways things actually are. For example, when I say of myself that I am drinking coffee right now, I am making an existential claim—there is some individual that exists and is performing an action on something else that exists. The way we make sense of "I am drinking coffee right now" is by appealing to the actual world and seeing if it is the case; we are making a claim that Seth exists and is drinking coffee, which also exists. By the same token, when I say, "Ah! but I could be drinking whiskey instead," I am describing a state of affairs that does not obtain, i.e. the state of affairs in which I am drinking whiskey right now. On Lewis' reasoning, however, the latter sentence is understood in the same way as the former—there is some state of affairs in which there exists a Seth who is drinking whiskey. However, since the situation in which I am drinking whiskey is not actual, as I am in fact drinking coffee, it cannot be the case that the existential quantification concerning Seth and whiskey ranges over the actual world. Instead, it must be about some other world in which I am in fact drinking whiskey right now. Despite the fact that the actual world does not account for the truth of the claim that I might be drinking whiskey, its being an existentially quantified sentence entails that it ought to be handled in roughly the same way as the situation in which I am drinking coffee. In order to make sense of such a claim, then, there must be some non-actual world in which Seth is drinking whiskey, but it must be enough like the actual world so that the two claims can be treated analogously. Therefore, according to Lewis, there must actually be some non-actual world in which Seth is drinking whiskey instead of coffee. Possible worlds exist, and they exist in much the same way as the actual world does.

If the only thing Lewis had to say in favor of his conception of possible worlds was exhausted by the above argument, then it would be easy to find his view dissatisfying, particularly as we would still be left with at best a vague sense of what a possible world actually is. However, Lewis wrote extensively on the subject of possible worlds and how exactly they are supposed to play a role in understanding the modal concepts of possibility, contingency, and necessity. Let us first get a little clearer on what exactly a possible world is

for Lewis, so that we know exactly what it is he is asserting when he talks of other possible worlds. In fleshing out of the conception of a possible world that we get in Lewis' argument for GMR, we can consider an interlocutor that questions what exactly Lewis means by a possible world. Lewis responds:

> I can only ask him to admit that he knows what sort of thing our actual world is, and then explain that other worlds are more things of *that* sort, differing not in kind but only in what goes on at them. Our actual world is only one world among others. We call it alone actual not because it differs in kind from all the rest but because it is the world we inhabit.[178]

Whatever it is for something to be a world, Lewis' contention is that all worlds, both possible and actual, are of that sort. Unlike other modal theorists, Lewis draws no distinction in kind between the actual and the merely possible, so when Lewis espouses GMR, he really is claiming that possible worlds are just the sort of thing that the actual world is; he really is being a modal *realist* in the strongest sense of the term. Notice, however, that Leibniz's discussion of possible individuals does much the same thing. In the last chapter, I argued that on Leibniz's understanding of possible individuals, they are no different in kind from actual individuals, as all individuals are simply complete concepts. We can imagine that if we ask Leibniz what he takes a possible world to be, he will give much the same answer as Lewis here:

1) Possible individuals are the same sort of thing as actual individuals; possible individuals do not differ in kind from actual individuals as all individuals are nothing more than complete concepts.
2) Worlds, actual or possible, are just the complete collection of everything that exists in that world; "the whole succession and whole agglomeration of all existent things."
3) Possible worlds are the collection of the possible individuals of that world.

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[178] Ibid., 85.

4) Actual worlds are the collection of the actual individuals of the actual world.
5) If there is no difference in kind between actual individuals and possible individuals, then there is no difference in kind from a collection of those individuals.
6) Therefore, there is no difference in kind between the actual world and possible worlds.

On Leibniz's theory as well as Lewis', possible worlds are just the sort of thing that the actual world is; there is no difference in kind between the two worlds.[179] If we identify Lewis' understanding of the nature of possible worlds as a sufficient requirement for being a GMR theory,[180] then we can also conclude from the above argument that Leibniz's views of the nature of possible worlds is a GMR theory. The next question is how someone might go on to argue that the appropriate understanding of the nature of modality is in terms of possible worlds—to see how someone might defend GMR, let us once again turn to Lewis.

In addition to his initial defense of possible worlds, Lewis also appeals to the theoretic power of GMR in providing a defense of the theory; Lewis' argument broadly states that the reason we ought to accept GMR is simply because it gets us so very much of what we are after in developing our best philosophical theories. Lewis claims that we should allow the possible worlds of GMR because when we do so:

> We find what we need to advance our endeavours. We find the wherewithal to reduce the diversity of notions we must accept as primitive, and thereby to improve the unity and economy of the theory that is our professional concern – total theory, the whole of what we take to be true. What price paradise? If we want the theoretical benefits that talk of *possibilia* brings, the most straightforward way to gain honest title to them is to accept such talk

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[179] Later, I will return to the issue of whether this entails for Leibniz the Lewisian point that there is no essential modal difference between actuality and possibility. For now, however, the argument stands that Leibniz did not draw a distinction in kind between possible worlds and the actual one.

[180] As Lewis himself seems to do in *On the Plurality of Worlds*.

> as the literal truth…Modal realism is fruitful; that gives us good reason to believe that it is true.[181]

We can see that Lewis takes it as a good reason for accepting possible worlds into our ontology that it is the most straightforward and least problematic way to get us a sufficient understanding of modality. He admits that GMR's theoretical power is simply a good reason; it is not a conclusive one. Lewis must also argue that, against alternative analyses of modality, GMR works best at the least cost. Although discussing such a large issue at length would take us too far outside the aim of the current chapter, it is worth spending a little time discussing exactly what theoretic benefits Lewis takes GMR to provide before moving away from the positive defense of GMR.

Before doing so, I want to point out yet another interesting connection between Lewis' presentation of his modal realism and Leibniz characterization of possible worlds. While we might accept Lewis' additional defense of GMR on the basis of its theoretic power,[182] we might still be wondering how Leibniz might attempt to defend GMR besides through an appeal to NA. We might question whether Leibniz would even accept such a consideration as theoretical benefit as a defense for a theory, in part because Leibniz never explicitly offers theoretical power as a reason to accept an ontology of possible worlds. However, there is at least one other place where Leibniz appears to offer a similar defense of another aspect of his theory. He writes:

> Were it not for [PSR] we could never prove the existence of God, and we should lose an infinitude of very just and very profitable arguments whereof it is the foundation; moreover, it suffers no exception, for otherwise its force would be weakened.[183]

Although the above passage is not as explicit as we might like, I take it that what Leibniz is doing here is presenting a further defense of PSR; another reason for accepting PSR that

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[181] Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 4.

[182] Or at least we can assume for the moment that we do.

[183] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §44, 148.

depends wholly upon its virtue as a theoretic tool in a philosophical system. When Leibniz asserts that, if we were to abandon PSR we would lose a great many arguments, including any potential argument attempting to prove God's existence, what he seems to be doing is appealing to the theoretical benefits that accepting PSR brings. The language Leibniz uses here is telling—it implies that there is no other way besides by PSR to prove that God exists, but[184] the ability to prove that God exists is so critically important[185] that, if using PSR is the only way to perform the proof, then we ought to accept the principle because we give up too much that we take to be important by giving up PSR.[186] Moreover, PSR also allows us to arrive at many other results in our philosophical theory, and we would also have to give up those other arguments if we gave up PSR. Therefore, we ought to accept PSR based on its theoretical power. Although Leibniz never applies a similar argument to the acceptance of GMR, there is also no reason why he could not. Given that Leibniz accepts the appeal to theoretical benefits in the case of PSR, then, it would be no surprise if he follows Lewis is accepting it for GMR as well.

We might now be wondering whether Leibniz saw a similar theoretical strength in accepting GMR into his system. Here we may speculate a bit. One thing that Leibniz certainly thinks GMR gets us that is incredibly important philosophically is that we can successfully refer to non-actual states of affair. In order to make a possibility claim true, we must be able to refer to some state of affairs in which that possibility claim comes out true. The alternative, on which all possibility claims come out false, leads to the position that Leibniz takes to be so onerous—necessitarianism. If we accept GMR, however, we can explain what makes our possibility claims true, and we can do so in a way that adds nothing

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[184] So Leibniz thought

[185] So Leibniz also thought

[186] Some examples of the results we get by employing PSR are the nature of an individual, an explanation of why bodies act in the way they do, and, as we shall see later, a coherent account of free will.

new to our philosophical account, as the way in which possibility claims are true is just the same way that claims about the actual world are true. Both sorts of claims just refer to some state of affairs. So, part of the theoretic strength of GMR is that it allows us to successfully refer to some state of affairs when we make our possibility claims, which in turn allows us to provide an account of free will that coheres with PSR, as well as saves God from claims of injustice. It looks as if GMR, as in the case of PSR, will have such great theoretical benefits that giving it up will come at too great a cost to our other philosophical commitments. In the same way as Lewis, Leibniz accepts GMR on the basis of its theoretical power.

What are the theoretical benefits of GMR, according to Lewis? First and foremost, Lewis claims that introducing possible worlds into our ontology allows us to analyze modality into non-modal notions. He writes:

> What actually is the case, as we say, is what goes on here. That is one possible way for a world to be. Other worlds are other, that is *un*actualised, possibilities. If there are many worlds, and every way that a world could possibly be is a way that some world is, then whenever such-and-such might be the case, there is some world where such-and-such is the case…So modality turns into quantification: possibly there are blue swans iff, for some world W, at W there are blue swans.[187]

So, GMR allows us to understand our notion of modality in terms of something wholly non-modal: being a member of a world, either actual or non-actual.[188] To say that something is possible is nothing more than to say that that possible something takes place at (or exists at, or is part of) some world. Although we will return to the issue later of GMR and the analysis of modality, the thing to notice here is that by adopting GMR, we can understand

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[187] Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 5.

[188] Michael Loux emphasizes this as a point in favor of Lewis. "Since he takes possible worlds and their contents to be unqualifiedly primitive, he can invoke the possible-worlds framework in explicating all modal phenomena. His account has precisely the same explanatory power that would attach to a successful version of nonmodal actualism. Since the modal actualist has to take certain modal notions as primitive in constructing the possible-worlds framework, however, the framework, as he presents it, has a more restricted explanatory scope. This, of course, speaks in favor of Lewis' possibilism" (Michael J. Loux, introduction to *The Possible and the Actual*, ed. Michael J. Loux (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 63).

modality without appealing to anything primitively modal and our ability to do so is a point in favor of GMR.

Lewis also claims that GMR can help us make sense of: counterfactuals and verisimilitude in terms of closeness;[189] the content of our mental states;[190] properties and how we can quantify over them.[191] In the interest of moving the discussion along, I will not take up the issue here of how exactly GMR is supposed to get us these results. Suffice it to say that the reason Lewis thinks we ought to accept possible worlds into our ontology is because possible worlds allow us to solve a lot of philosophical problems that we would otherwise not be able to solve or would only be able to do so at more expense than adopting possible worlds. Given the passage from *Theodicy* quoted above, Leibniz seems to be willing to support Lewis' defense of GMR on the basis of its theoretical power. If I am correct about Leibniz's support here, then the defense of GMR on the basis of its theoretical benefits is yet another way that Lewis and Leibniz are similar in their approach to understanding modality. On the basis of the similarity between the two views, I next examine to what Lewis thinks a possible world amounts exactly, in the hope of making it more plain what Leibniz takes them to be, as it is likely that the two theorists, having so many things already in common, will provide an equally similar account on the nature and makeup of possible worlds.

GMR and the Nature of Possible Worlds

As we have already seen, Lewis conceives of possible worlds as some collection of possible individuals. The way in which a set of possible individuals makes up a world is by being a part of that world:

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189 Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 20-27.

190 Ibid., 27-50.

191 Ibid., 50-69.

> A possible world has parts, namely possible individuals. If two things are part of the same world, I call them *worldmates*. A world is the mereological sum of all the possible individuals that are parts of it, and so are worldmates of one another. It is a maximal sum: anything that is a worldmate of any part of it is itself a part. But not just any sum of parts of worlds it itself a world. It might, of course, be only part of a world.[192]

Possible worlds are just maximal sets of worldmates. Worldmates are compossible, meaning that the existence of one does not rule out the existence of the other. In other words, worldmates are able to exist with each other in the same world.[193] Furthermore, these maximal sums of worldmates are distinct from each exactly when there is no spatiotemporal relation between the different sums:

> Things are worldmates iff they are spatiotemporally related. A world is unified, then, by the spatiotemporal interrelation of its parts. There are no spatiotemporal relations across the boundary between one world and another; but no matter how we draw a boundary within a world, there will be spatiotemporal relations across it.[194]

Possible worlds are separated from each other spatiotemporally, as they have absolutely no spatiotemporal connection with each other—to say that some individual H is some distance or time from me is simply to say that H is my worldmate. We can understand possible worlds to be, then, just the collection of a whole bunch of individuals that are worldmates of each other.

Yet again, we see Leibniz offering a quite similar account to the one that Lewis provides. Leibniz conceived of possible worlds as maximally complete sets of compossible individuals. There are two reasons that Leibniz focuses on compossibility as a requirement for worldmates. The first relies on CIC, wherein every individual substance reflects the entirety of its world. So, an individual in a world reflects all of the other individuals in that same world. If it were the case that two members of a world were not compossible, then

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[192] Ibid., 69.

[193] Ibid., 69, n. 50.

[194] Ibid., 71.

each would have as a property a reference to the other. However, since we assumed for the sake of the reduction that they were not compossible, then each individual would have as one of its properties a reason that it does not exist because the other individual, not being compossible, would have as one of its properties a reason why the first individual cannot exist. Since it does exist, it cannot be the case that there is some non-compossible worldmate in its world. Therefore, every individual in a world is compossible with every other member of that world.

The second reason comes from a theological consideration and involves Leibniz's answer to the problem of evil. While we might be tempted to claim that God could have made the world more perfectly, Leibniz denies that it is true that God could have done better in creating a world.[195] Leibniz argues that, even if we can imagine a world where America did not bomb Hiroshima, that world cannot exist because the individuals in that world are not compossible; the really bad things that happen in our world are the only ones that are compossible with the rest of our world. Additionally, although Leibniz never explicitly makes the point the way Lewis does, it seems natural to read Leibniz as agreeing with Lewis that there are no spatiotemporal relations between members of different worlds. Leibniz explicitly states in numerous places[196] that each individual reflects the rest of her world, but he at no point claims that individuals reflect other possible worlds. Indeed, Leibniz relational theory of space and time is well-known—space and time are nothing more than a certain type of relation between two individuals. Because space and time are mere relations and not absolute, if we restrict the relations to be between worldmates, we can for example avoid a Spinozistic criticism which says that the possible worlds are just part of the same space and time as the actual world. Since Leibniz rejects the absolute view of space

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[195] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §3, 36-37.

[196] See, for example, Leibniz, "Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason," §3 and §13; *The Monadology*, §56-62; "Letter to Samuel Masson, on Body."

and time, creatures in different possible worlds are not all part of the same space and time because the spatiotemporal relation is only between worldmates—members of different possible worlds are not related to each other spatiotemporally. Thus, it should be no surprise that Leibniz would agree with Lewis that possible worlds are distinguished on the basis of spatiotemporal relations.

In the previous chapter, I argued that, on Leibniz's account, possible individuals are of the same sort as actual individuals. Whatever sort of thing actual individuals are, so too are possible ones. Using Lewis' language, we can say that both types of individuals are concrete. Yet, we still need to get clear on exactly what it means for something to be concrete, so that we can understand what it is for a possible individual to be concrete. Lewis gives us a least the beginnings of an answer here:

> I take it, at least, that donkeys and protons and puddles and stars are supposed to be paradigmatically concrete. I take it also that the division between abstract and concrete is meant to divide entities into fundamentally different kinds. If so, then it is out of the question that an abstract entity and a concrete entity should be exactly alike, perfect duplicates. According to my modal realism, the donkeys and protons and puddles and stars that are parts of this world have perfect duplicates that are parts of other worlds. This suffices to settle, whatever exactly it may mean, that at least some possible individuals are 'concrete'. And if so, then at least some possible worlds are at least partly 'concrete'.[197]

Here we see a similar argument from Lewis to what we have already said on behalf of Leibniz. Possible and actual individuals are of the same sort, however we end up classifying them. Since we generally take actual individuals to be concrete entities, as opposed to abstract, then we ought also to understand possible individuals to be concrete; otherwise, the two types of individuals would not be fundamentally the same sort of thing. The notion of concrete here ought to be a familiar notion—it is the sort of thing that a proton or a platypus is. While we may have to fill in a lot of details to fully flesh out the meaning of concrete, for now we can notice quintessential features of actual individuals (e.g. actual

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[197] Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 81 – 82.

individuals are extended, they are causally efficacious, they are particular, etc.). The point here, at least, is that we once again see Lewis and Leibniz presenting roughly the same account of possible worlds. Both philosophers take possible worlds to be compossible sets of concrete worldmates and both distinguish between possible worlds spatiotemporally. What is telling about Leibniz is that he is offering an account of possible worlds that ought to be understood as a GMR account, just as Lewis' more familiar account is understood. The next natural question we might want to ask is whether GMR is an appropriate way to understand possible worlds. That is, I want to consider some serious objections to GMR and work through the different tools GMR has to respond to those criticisms. Before doing so, however, it will be worthwhile to spend a little time discussing one last key issue of GMR—the relationship between the actual world and its members and possible worlds and their members.

Next Up: Counterparts!

In his discussion with Arnauld concerning *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz introduced a way to understand how possible worlds can help us make sense of other ways the actual world could have been. For example, when we claim that Adam did not sin necessarily, we are saying that it is possible for Adam not to have sinned. There is a problem with understanding the claim if we take it at face value because it does not look as if it actually is possible that Adam not sin. By PSR, Adam was determined to sin, given the facts on the ground at the creation of the world, and by PII, if Adam had not sinned, then the individual who did not sin simply would not have been Adam. To make sense of how it could be true that it is only contingent that Adam sin, Leibniz introduces the notion of a counterpart of Adam, who is the one that does not sin and can account for the fact that Adam need not have sinned. He writes:

> When one considers in Adam a part of his predicates, for example, that he is the first man, set in a garden of pleasure, from whose side God fashioned a woman, and similar things conceived *sub ratione generalitatis*, in a general way (that is to say, without naming

> Eve, Paradise, and other circumstances that fix individuality), and when one calls Adam the person to whom these predicates are attributed, all this is not sufficient to determine the individual, for there can be an infinity of Adams, that is an infinity of possible persons, different from one another, whom this fits. Far from disagreeing with what Arnauld says against this multiplicity of the same individual, I myself used this to make it better understood that *the nature of an individual must be complete and determinate*.[198]

There are a few key things going on in the quoted passage. First, Leibniz introduces other possible Adams as a way to make sense of the fact that Adam need not have sinned. It is these counterparts of Adam that allow Leibniz to make sense of non-actual possibilities. Second, these other Adams are complete and determinate in the same way that the Adam of the actual world is. Leibniz will never admit that there are individuals who are not complete in the way that CIC requires. Third, there is an infinite number of these Adam-counterparts. Of course, it will not just be Adam who has counterparts, but rather every individual of the actual world will have an infinite number of counterparts, as we have no reason for restricting the number of counterparts or which individuals will have them.[199] So, it is clear from the passage above that Leibniz is comfortable with counterparts talk, and he will make use of them in accounting for necessity and possibility.[200]

Likewise, Lewis appeals explicitly to counterparts in developing his modal metaphysics. Much like Leibniz's discussion of Adam, Lewis appeals to some individual of the actual world and some alternate way that things could be for that individual. Lewis'

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[198] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about my Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 72, emphasis mine.

[199] Here again we see a way in which Leibniz and Lewis are similar, as Lewis too admits that there is an infinite number of possible worlds. In fact, he gives something of a similar reasoning to Leibniz. See Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 2-3.

[200] As we will see in the next chapter, it is precisely these counterparts that will allow us to respond to Robert Adams' criticism that Leibniz could not have had possible worlds in his ontology. Interestingly, Arnauld is quite confused with Leibniz's initial characterization of alternate possibilities, as he seems to be assuming either a transworld identity thesis or an actualist one.

example is of Hubert Humphrey winning the presidency, despite the fact that he did not.[201] Lewis' answer to how we ought to make sense of that fact is:

> We might say that when 'possibly' is attached to open formulas, it is a quantifier not just over worlds but also over other-worldly counterparts of this-worldly individuals; so that Humphrey satisfies 'possibly x wins' iff, for some world W, for some counterpart of Humphrey in W, that counterpart satisfies 'x wins' at W.[202]

Here again we see Lewis aligning quite nicely with Leibniz's account of modality. On Lewis' picture, the way we can account for Humphrey having done otherwise (i.e. winning the election) is the same as on Leibniz's account—we appeal to a counterpart to make sense of the modal claim. The counterpart enters into the story of how Humphrey might have won by representing Humphrey as winning, in the same way Adam's counterpart represents Adam as not sinning. How does the counterpart represent Humphrey as winning? Lewis here draws a parallel to a more familiar example of something representing Humphrey:

> The museum can have a waxwork figure to represent Humphrey, or better yet an animated simulacrum. Another world can do better still: it can have as part a Humphrey of its own, a flesh-and-blood counterpart of our Humphrey, a man very like Humphrey in his origins, in his intrinsic characteristics, or in his historical role. By having such a part, a world represents *de re*, concerning Humphrey – that is, the Humphrey of our world, whom we as his worldmates may call simply Humphrey – that he exists and does thus-and-so. By waving its arms, the simulacrum in the museum represents Humphrey as waving his arm; by waving his arm, or by winning the presidential election, the other-worldly Humphrey represents the this-worldly Humphrey as waving or as winning. That is how it is that Humphrey – our Humphrey – waves or wins according to the other world. This is counterpart theory.[203]

Lewis relies on the familiar notion we have of the sort of representation that takes place in our world—a picture or a robot can represent some individual in our world (relatively) unproblematically. In the same way, Humphrey's counterpart can represent Humphrey, so

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[201] Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 9.

[202] Ibid., 9 – 10.

[203] Ibid., 194.

we can say that representation is able to take place across worlds. There is, however, an odd feature about the representing that the counterpart does that makes it differ from the representing that the simulacrum does—counterpart-Humphrey's representation of Humphrey as waving or winning is modally relevant, while simulacrum-Humphrey's representation is not. Indeed, it is the counterpart relation that does the work that we might otherwise have thought would go to identity. According to Lewis:

> The counterpart relation is our substitute for identity between things in different worlds. Where some would say that you are in several worlds, in which you have somewhat different properties and somewhat different things happen to you, I prefer to say that you are in the actual world and no other, but you have counterparts in several other worlds. Your counterparts resemble you closely in content and context in important respects. They resemble you more closely than they do the other things in their world. But they are not really you…It would be better to say that your counterparts are men you *would have been*, had the world been otherwise.[204]

It is not identity that relates you to the ways things could have gone for you as, echoing Leibniz's use of PII, it is not the case that you are in more than one world. Instead, the counterpart relation acts as identity would, picking out some other "you" in another possible world, but it does so on the basis of similarity instead of strict identity. Despite not being identity, Lewis is perfectly happy with the claim that your counterpart is the "you" of some other world, as is Leibniz. While we will have to work through how exactly counterparts are supposed to account for the person you would have been had the world been otherwise, it is nevertheless clear that, on both Lewis' and Leibniz's accounts, it is counterparts that do the work of making sense of claims about individuals doing otherwise than they do in the actual world.[205] In order to see how counterparts are able to earn their keep, let us next turn to some objections to GMR and develop responses on behalf of both Leibniz and Lewis.

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[204] Lewis, "Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic," in *The Possible and the Actual: Readings in the Metaphysics of Modality*, ed. Michael J. Loux (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 111-12.

[205] Of course, Leibniz does not discuss the specific nature of the relation between an individual and its counterpart—he seems to think that the existence of the counterpart is sufficient to do the modal work it needs to do. However, he does seem to rely on a similarity relation (as can be

Can We Count on Counterparts to do Their Part?

In understanding the nature of modality and in making sense of statements concerning possible, non-actual states of affairs, both Leibniz and Lewis appeal to counterparts. It is these individuals that, despite being in some other possible world, make true statements about possibility in the actual world. Perhaps troublingly, however, counterparts suffer from one significant flaw—they are not, nor are they identical to, the individual of the actual world about whom we are making the possibility claim. It seems difficult to understand how counterparts are supposed to matter for understanding possibility claims at all, since they are something other than the individual for whom some state of affairs is possible. It is precisely on the point that counterparts are simply a different individual that perhaps the most common objection to GMR focuses. One of the earliest versions of the criticism of Lewis' use of counterparts in his analysis of modality comes from Saul Kripke:

> The counterpart of something in another possible world is *never* identical with the thing itself. Thus, if we say that 'Humphrey might have won the election (if only he had done such-and-such)', we are not talking about something that might have happened to *Humphrey*, but to someone else, a 'counterpart'. Probably, however, Humphrey could not care less whether someone *else*, no matter how much resembling him, would have been victorious in another possible world.[206]

We can understand Kripke's point if we consider an analogous case. Suppose that Humphrey had an identical twin brother, who was similar to Humphrey in all the relevant respects.[207] Furthermore, suppose that Thumphrey did in fact win the election. We can

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seen from the passage quoted above) to establish which possible individuals are counterparts of which actual world individuals. Given that this is precisely how Lewis understands the counterpart-making property, it would perhaps be no surprise if Leibniz would agree with Lewis' point concerning representation.

[206] Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 45, emphasis original.

[207] Let's call him Thumphrey.

take Kripke's claim to amount to something like: it should not matter that Thumphrey resembles Humphrey in claiming that Humphrey could have won the election because, despite the similarity between Thumphrey and Humphrey, it was someone else other than Humphrey who won the election. That is, because it was not Humphrey himself who won the election, it would not matter to Humphrey that someone resembling him did in fact win.[208] Kripke's criticism is that a counterpart of Humphrey winning the election still does not make it the case that Humphrey could have won, as there is no situation in which someone identical with Humphrey wins. Therefore, counterparts cannot do the work required of them for making sense of modality.

The argument is a strong one and rather convincing to many opponents of GMR. However, there are a few things we can say in order to get GMR out of trouble. First, the argument appears to entail that, if the possible Humphrey (i.e. the "Humphrey" of some other world) were identical with the Humphrey of the actual world, then possible-Humphrey would be someone that actual-world Humphrey cares about. Kripke's argument turns on the fact that counterparts are just a different individual from the actual world one about which we are making the possibility claim. If the possibility claim were about the same individual in some other possible world, then there would be no problem.[209] So, theorists who hold to the thesis of transworld identity argue that they can avoid a problem that counterparts theorists are stuck with—the Caring Problem (CP).[210] Unfortunately for transworld identity theorists, they fare no better than their counterpart theorist counterparts

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[208] The obvious dissimilarity between my case and the one Kripke is discussing is that, on Lewis' original version, it was a counterpart and not a worldmate that won. However, as Kripke's point is simply about resemblance and why it does not matter for making sense of possibility claims, the dissimilarity is irrelevant here.

[209] That is, she would not be a counterpart but instead would be the same individual across multiple possible worlds.

[210] As we may call the objection Kripke raises against Lewis' use of counterparts.

when it comes to explaining why actual-world individuals ought to care about what happens in other possible worlds.

Of the alternate possibilities there are, there is at least one in which I, instead of going to graduate school in philosophy, pursued a musical career. In that possible world, instead of writing a dissertation, I am (right now) playing to a packed crowd of adoring fans.[211] According to transworld identity theorists, I ought to care for the me of that possible world because it is actually me that is a famous musician—if the "me" of that world were merely my counterpart, I would have no reason to care about what it does as it is not me. However, what is it to say that, in that world, it is actually me that is playing music? Putting aside the worry that PII causes concerning whether or not the individual in that world really could be me, it is not clear why I should care about what happens to the individual in that world even if that individual is identical to me in the actual world. The reason CP is still lurking even for the transworld identity theorists is that, despite the fact that I am a renowned musician in that world, that has no bearing whatsoever on my life in the actual world.[212] "I" might have pursued a musical career, but given the fact that I did not, whatever happens to the individual (identical with me) in that possible state of affairs, it is still not an individual that I identify with in the actual world. Expanding the case a little bit, as a by-product of stardom, the me of that world develops a severe drug addiction. Should I let that concern me? It is hard to see why it would, as I (in the actual world) do not have that addiction. The addiction of that individual, while unfortunate, does not cause me any suffering—I am not hurt or affected in any way by the negative effects of the addiction of that individual. In other words, whatever happens to that individual in that possible state of affairs makes no difference to my life in the actual world. So, CP faces transworld

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[211] Let us not worry here about how far off this possible world is.

[212] That is, the actual me. On some modal theories, possibilities exist in the actual world as possibilia, so that it would make sense to say on those accounts that the me in the actual world is the one that exists in all of the possible ways I might exist.

identity theorists[213] unless they can motivate the claim that I ought to care about what happens to the me of another possible world, particularly given the fact that what happens to that other me is irrelevant to what happens to me in the actual world. It does not appear that they can do so.

There is at least one additional way the GMR theorist can respond to CP on behalf of counterparts. There is a sense in which the objection has very little to do with counterparts themselves. That is, what CP focuses on is the attitude of the actual world individual about which the possibility claim is being made. For example, when I say of John that it is possible that he win the lottery, I am, according to GMR, appealing to his counterpart Ron's winning the lottery to make sense of that claim. It is not enough to charge against counterpart theory that John does not care if his counterpart Ron wins the lottery because *he* wants to be the one to win it, as his caring or lack thereof does not seem to have any importance on the analysis of modality. As Theodore Sider points out:

> This is just the paradox of analysis. A reasonable person can care about a property under one description ("possibly winning") while not care about the same property under another description ("having a counterpart who wins"), provided it is not obvious that the descriptions pick out the same property. Correct analyses need not be obvious to competent language users.[214]

Sider is correct to point out that John's lack of caring about what happens to Ron does not have any immediate importance to the question of whether or not the possibility claim about John is satisfied by Ron, as John may just not realize that the description of Ron's winning actually picks out the modal property 'might-have-won-the-lottery' that John has. To take a frequently used example, Louis Lane might care about what happens to Superman, but she might not care about what happens to Clark Kent. It would be wrong to conclude on the basis of Lane's mental states that Clark Kent and Superman are two different people, or to

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[213] Lewis gives what is effectively this response in *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 197.

[214] Ted Sider, "Beyond the Humphrey Objection," accessed May 15, 2012. http://tedsider.org/papers/counterpart_theory.pdf, 2.

make the conclusion mildly more applicable to counterparts as well, it would be wrong to conclude that Lane's not caring about Clark Kent entails that 'being-Clark-Kent' is different from 'being-Superman'. Because CP depends on the mental states of the individual the possibility claim is about, it unfortunately does not follow that John possibly winning the lottery is not satisfied by Ron's winning it.

It is not enough for Lewis to *tu quoque* the transworld identity theorist, nor might some people be satisfied with counterpart theory despite its ability to overcome CP. Happily, Lewis has the resources to improve the position of counterparts against the transworld identity theorist and so by extension does Leibniz. How might Lewis do so? Consider Michael Loux's criticism of the counterpart theory. He claims that counterpart theory is ultimately unsatisfying:

> Toward accommodating our intuitions that things might have been different for the individuals surrounding us, [Lewis] settles on the machinery provided by the counterpart relation; but here I find the arguments of philosophers like Kripke and Plantinga compelling. Although counterpart theory represents an ingenious attempt to avoid the extreme essentialism resulting from the doctrine of worldbound individuals, it fails; and in this connection *I find our prephilosophical intuitions decisive. They require transworld individuals.*[215]

Loux raises an interesting point here—he relies on the prephilosophical intuitions to guide our choice of transworld identity theory, as he claims that it, not counterpart theory, best matches up with our prephilosophical intuitions, so much so that those intuitions require transworld identity. As I have argued above, however, transworld identity theory does not actually do a better job in conforming to our prephilosophical intuitions concerning what happens in some other possible world. Lewis will add to my argument two things: first, he will show that our intuitions are actually neutral with respect to whether counterpart theory or transworld identity is true. Second, and somewhat relatedly, he will argue that transworld identity ultimately does not differ in any serious way from counterpart theory, so that his

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[215] Loux, introduction, 64, emphasis mine.

opponent has no reason for rejecting counterpart theory in favor of transworld identity as a solution to the reference of modal discourse.

Before we begin, let us restate exactly to what someone who holds to counterpart theory is committed. According to counterpart theory:

> Someone else—the victorious counterpart—enters into the story of how it is that another world represents Humphrey as winning, and thereby enters into the story of how it is that Humphrey might have won. Insofar as the intuitive complaint is that someone else gets into the act, the point is rightly taken. But I do not see why that is any objection…What matters is that the someone else, or the abstract whatnot, should not crowd out Humphrey himself. And there all is well.[216]

The first thing to remember is that, on the version of GMR we are considering, even though there is someone else—the counterpart—that someone else does not interfere with or block out the individual of the actual world; it is the counterpart that makes true the modal claim about[217] the individual of the actual world. Counterpart theory does involve a different individual in another possible world than the individual in the actual world in order to make sense of modal claims about the individual in the actual world; in positing a counterpart, Lewis' GMR does differ from those modal realists who hold to transworld identity. Where it does not differ, however, is in claiming that those other worlds represent Humphrey himself as winning:

> I think counterpart theorists and ersatzers are in perfect agreement that there are other worlds *according to* which Humphrey—he himself! (stamp the foot, bang the table)—wins the election. And we are in equal agreement that Humphrey—he himself—is not *part* of these other worlds.[218]

According to counterpart theory, the other worlds do in fact represent Humphrey himself as winning the election. They do so by appealing to a counterpart relation to explain in what

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[216] Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 196.

[217] That is, gives the modal property to.

[218] Ibid.

way that world represents the Humphrey of the actual world as winning, but the introduction of a counterpart does not change the fact that it is Humphrey himself who might have won. The intuition that it must be Humphrey who might have won the election is perfectly satisfied by counterpart theory, precisely because it is the counterpart that satisfies the condition for how it is that Humphrey[219] might have won. So much for the intuitive appeal of transworld identity.

What, then, ought we to say in favor of transworld identity to allow for it to gain a leg up on counterpart theory, given that the intuitive appeal does not help? Lewis claims that:

> The simplest way that part of another world could represent Humphrey—our Humphrey—is by identity. He might lead a double life, in two worlds at once. He himself, who is part of the actual world, might be part of the other world as well. He could be a common part of both, in the same way that a shared hand might be a common part of two Siamese twins. The other world represents him as existing because he is part of it. He exists at the other world because, restricting our quantification to the parts of that world, he exists. This leading of double lives is what best deserves to be called 'trans-world identity'.[220]

On the version of transworld identity Lewis describes here, Humphrey is part of our world, but he is also part of another world. The same Humphrey is a member of both the actual world and some other possible world, for that is what it is to be a part of a world. Lewis, however, is skeptical that any philosophers actually hold the overlap view of transworld identity.[221] On the overlap view, individuals exist across possible worlds, so that the individual exists exactly at the overlap of all of the worlds of which she is a member. Unfortunately, the overlap theory leads to some odd consequences for the nature of an individual, all of them stemming from the fact that the individual can be said to exist in more

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[219] He himself!

[220] Ibid., 198.

[221] Ibid.

than one world at once. In brief, two main problems arise, according to Lewis: 1) what we would normally take to be intrinsic properties of an individual now become relational, with the property being specified as being in relation to a particular world;[222] 2) the line dividing two worlds becomes much more problematic to draw, and the modal picture now looks as if there is but one world with lots of branching.[223] In the interest of considering a more lively contender, let us leave off from the discussion of the overlap view and move on to see why Lewis thinks that any other version of transworld identity collapses into a version of counterpart theory.

Another version of the transworld identity theory holds that an individual is the mereological sum of the parts of the many different worlds that include her. According to Lewis, the mereological sum view does not differ in any important way from his proposed counterpart theory. Its version of modal realism with transworld identity shares commitments with counterpart theory, so that the mereological sum view has no leg to stand on in criticizing Lewis' version of GMR. In order to show that the mereological sum view and counterpart theory overlap, Lewis makes three points.[224] First, he claims that the

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[222] Some examples here are height and the number of fingers an individual has. To see why, consider the fact that I am 5'6" tall. Of course, I could have been 6' tall. So, there is some world in which I am 6' tall. However, on the overlap view, I am actually in both of those worlds, so I am actually both 5'6" and 6' tall. But that cannot be correct, as those two properties are in contention with each other. So, we relativize my height to each world in which I am that height, but now what was originally an intrinsic property (my being a certain height) is a relational one (one height with respect to the actual world, another with respect to a possible world). Lewis calls this the problem of accidental intrinsics (Ibid., 201).

[223] See Ibid., 206-209. The problem here is that, contra Lewis' spatiotemporal division between worlds, the overlap view cannot accept that worlds are distinguished on the basis of spatial and temporal relations among its members, since each individual will be a member of more than one world. So, the worlds really are spatiotemporally related. Lewis here discusses branching versus diverging for future states of affairs: the upshot of Lewis' discussion is that, on the overlap view, we get branching cases instead of diverging, but then the modal ontology consists of just one world with many branches instead of a plurality of worlds that can be similar but then diverge. This, he claims, conflicts with our everyday thinking about future contingents.

[224] Lewis connects each of these points to an earlier discussion of identity-over-time to help him motivate his response here.

transworld individual, unlike an individual perduring across time, engages in no causal connection between its parts. The only way that the transworld individual is unified, then, is by the similarity between its parts; the similarity relation that allows for the unification of a transworld individual, however, is also what Lewis' counterpart theory relies on to connect other-world counterparts.[225] Second, because in logical space anything that can happen will happen, the unification of transworld individuals is done through similarity between any of the parts of the individual, not simply (as in the case of change-over-time) by a similarity between close parts.[226] Finally, because of oddities with transworld identity when it comes to cases like fission and fusion in identity-across-time, the relation used in the transworld identity case is intransitive; that the relation is intransitive should come as no surprise, and it is exactly how the counterpart relation functions according to Lewis.[227] Therefore, transworld identity construed as the mereological sum of individual parts across worlds has no advantages over counterpart theory in understanding modal claims.

Let us take a moment to recap the discussion thus far. We have seen an objection to counterpart theory that we have labeled the 'caring problem'. We have also seen that the proponents of transworld identity theory that put forward CP are in no better a position than counterpart theory to explain why we have any reason to care about our transworld selves than we have to care about our counterparts. Furthermore, the overlap version of transworld identity theory suffers from problems egregious enough to take it out of the running as a viable way to understand our modal claims. Finally, the other available version of transworld identity theory, the mereological sum view, makes no better sense of our modal claims than counterpart theory. Counterpart theory, as well as GMR, has not been undermined by the arguments we have seen so far. It remains to be seen if we can continue

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[225] Ibid., 218.

[226] Ibid. Again, this point is also true of counterpart theory.

[227] Ibid., 218-219.

to stave off attacks on behalf of Lewis, as once again, the more plausible we can make Lewis' version of GMR, the more we strengthen Leibniz's own account of possible worlds.

The next criticism of counterpart theory that I would like to address is put forward by Michael Jubien in his *Possibility*. The criticism concerns one important part of counterpart theory and raises the issue of whether counterparts can adequately account for the truth of our modal claims. He provides two reasons why counterparts are insufficient for accounting for contingency. First:

> [I]t's implausible to claim that Humphrey's other-worldly counterpart *represents* anything of Humphrey simply as a result of being similar to him in this or that respect. The reason is that genuine representation does not take place merely as a result of similarity. For that matter, successful representation does not require any species of similarity in the first place.[228]

Jubien points out that similarity does not do the trick on its own for representation, as something may be similar to something else without thereby representing it.[229] Jubien's reasoning here is that we have genuine cases of similarity but are hesitant to say that those similar things represent the original. For example, Humphrey's Republican clone, on the basis of similarity alone, is not sufficient to represent Humphrey as a Republican.[230] Instead, insists Jubien, what actually does the work for representation is intentionality: an intentional act on the part of the speaker (or creator, etc.) is what allows one thing to represent another.

Another example Jubien considers is a waxwork figure in a museum:

> In the commonest sort of case a waxwork figure in a museum represents Humphrey because its maker intended it to represent him and because it is presented in the museum as doing so (or, less

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[228] Michael Jubien, *Possibility* (London: Routledge, 2005), 64-65, emphasis original.

[229] Oddly, Jubien uses an example of a spy prearranging a signal that uses a potato chip to represent Humphrey as a way to show that one can represent without similarity—what is strange about this example is that it does not show that similarity does not represent; it merely shows that we can represent in ways other than by similarity.

[230] Ibid., 65.

> commonly, because it was an object appropriated to represent Humphrey, or the like). It *wouldn't* (in the normal case) represent Humphrey's long lost identical twin, or his clone, or anyone else physically indistinguishable from Humphrey.[231]

It seems intuitive to say that the wax figure of Humphrey does indeed represent Humphrey but fails to represent anything relevantly similar to Humphrey, such as his clone. If the waxwork figure is relevantly similar to Humphrey but fails to represent something qualitatively indistinguishable from him (such as his clone), then it cannot be on the basis of the similarity the waxwork figure has with Humphrey that it represents Humphrey. By the same token, if the waxwork figure does not represent Humphrey merely on the basis of similarity, then neither would a counterpart of Humphrey represent him. Therefore, concludes Jubien, similarity is neither necessary nor sufficient for representation, which entails that counterparts, solely on the basis of similarity, will fail to represent some being in the actual world. Instead, Jubien proposes that intentionality is what actually allows for representation, so that it is the intention of the creator of the waxwork figure to represent Humphrey that makes the figure represent Humphrey. Intentionality cannot help us here either, claims Jubien, as no one has the correct sort of causal connection with both Humphrey and his counterparts to intend for the latter to represent the former; counterparts and representations fail to make sense of our modal claims.

Before moving on to Jubien's second criticism of counterpart theory, I want to spend a minute discussing possible ways for the counterpart theorist to respond here. First, although Jubien asserts in his example of the waxwork figure that it represents Humphrey and not anything qualitatively similar to him, it is not clear to me why we need admit that. Jubien assumes here that the creator of the figure intends it to represent Humphrey, so that it is uncontroversial to claim that it does in fact represent Humphrey. It is less clear why we ought admit that the waxwork figure does not also represent things that are qualitatively identical (or closely and relevantly similar) to Humphrey. The only reason I see to support

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[231] Ibid., emphasis original.

the claim that the waxwork figure does not represent, for example, Humphrey's clone is that the maker did not intend it to and the context of the figure would not lead us to think that it represents Humphrey's clone.[232],[233] That the figure represents Humphrey, however, should not stop us from asserting that it also represents Humphrey's clone—nothing about the case so described forces us to deny that the waxwork figure does in fact represent something other than Humphrey. Jubien does point out that in the normal case we would not say that the waxwork figure represents anything other than Humphrey, but that alone should not force us to admit that the figure fails therefore to represent anything else. We might simply be unaware of its representing something other than Humphrey, despite the fact that it actually does.

Additionally, I would be hesitant to admit that representation requires intentionality in order to function. The reason is as follows:

1) Representation requires intentionality. (Jubien's claim; also, begins the *reductio*).
2) Modal truths of any sort rely on representation in order for the possibilities to actually represent alternate ways the world could be. (For any analysis of modality that takes seriously alternate possibilities).
3) If representation requires intentionality, then modal truths require intentionality in order to represent alternate ways the world could be. (Since modal truths require representation, and representation requires intentionality, then modal truths require intentionality.)
4) Modal truths require intentionality in order to represent alternate ways the world could be. (From 1 and 3).

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[232] For example, if the waxwork figure were in a museum completely dedicated to Humphrey, we would not take the figure to represent anything other than Humphrey.

[233] An additional reason here might be that the waxwork figure can only represent one thing, to the exclusion of all else. I highly doubt that Jubien would support such a line of reasoning, however, as it is fairly clear that all sorts of objects represent many things at the same time.

5) If there is no intentionality, then there is no representation. (From 1).

6) If there is no intentionality, then there are no modal truths. (From 2 and 5).

7) There would be modal truths even if there were no intentionality. (Modal truths do not rely on minds or intentional states to make them true).[234]

8) Therefore, 6 is false. (From 6 and 7).

9) Therefore, modal truths do not require intentionality. (From 6 and 8).

10) Therefore, representation does not require intentionality. (From 3 and 9).

The upshot of the argument above is that one can represent without intentionality because, if one were not able to do so, then one could not make sense of modal claims without intentionality; since we can have modal truths without intentionality, we can divorce representation from intentionality. Thus, it looks more plausible that similarity can do the job for representation. Let us now consider an example to shed doubt on Jubien's first claim that similarity is insufficient for representation.

In an episode of the television series *Community*, Jeff attempts to convince Troy that Troy finds Annie attractive, even though Troy does not think that he does. In order to do so, Jeff describes what he claims is some other girl than Annie to Troy. In fact, he just describes Annie. On the basis of the description, Troy ultimately realizes that he does in fact find Annie attractive. What can we say is going on here? On the one hand, we know that Jeff intends to represent by his description Annie. However, it seems that Jeff's intention here is inconsequential to his description of a person similar to Annie representing Annie, as Troy does not realize that Jeff intends his description to represent her. It is not until Troy himself realizes that the girl Jeff described is qualitatively similar to Annie that he realizes Jeff is attempting to represent her. It is simply on the basis of the fact that the girl Jeff describes

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[234] This is an assumption, granted, but I find it an incredibly plausible one. To deny this would be to admit that, if suddenly all minds in the universe were wiped out, then so too all possibility is equally wiped out. However, it seems obvious that it would still be possible that some mind survived the mass extinction, even if no mind actually did. So, there is modality even where there is no intentionality.

is qualitatively similar to Annie that she represents Annie to Troy.[235] So, here we have a case in which the qualitative similarity, not the intention of speaker, accounts for the representation. What the example from *Community* suggests is that, on the basis of similarity alone, one thing represents another. So, contra Jubien, we have a case in which it is the similarity that does the work of representation—counterparts, then, can also represent an individual in the actual world by similarity alone.

Jubien's second response to counterparts follows closely on the heels of the discussion above. He writes:

> Suppose, despite what has just been claimed, that some other-worldly person similar to Humphrey *really did* represent Humphrey as winning. Why would it follow from this fact that Humphrey might have won? Surely we can represent things as being ways they could not be. Many have thought that Kripke argued persuasively that it is (metaphysically) impossible for Queen Elizabeth II to have been the (natural) daughter of the Trumans (given that in fact she was not). Assuming he was right, this would not prevent someone from staging a play in which she was represented as being the Trumans' daughter.[236]

Jubien's claim is just that representation is not an integral part of an analysis of modality, as we can represent something as being possible when it in fact is not. The example he uses is supposed to be a case where we have a successful representation of a series of events but no genuine possibility. To quote a truism in philosophy, however, one person's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*. Jubien wants to use such an example to show, on the basis of Kripke's arguments, that we can in fact have representations of genuinely impossible states-of-affairs. I take the lesson of the example to be just the opposite—what the example above shows is that Kripke is wrong that it is metaphysically impossible for Queen Elizabeth II to have been the daughter of the Trumans. It is precisely because we can make sense of such

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[235] In the context of the episode, the joke only works if we assume that Troy does not understand that Jeff is talking about Annie. It is only because the girl is qualitatively similar to Annie but Troy fails to recognize that Jeff intends to be describing her that allows for Troy's recognition to be funny.

[236] Ibid., 65-66, emphasis original.

an example that we ought to admit that it is a genuine possibility; nothing Jubien says here forces us to admit otherwise.[237]

As we have seen, Jubien's reasons for rejecting counterparts as relevant to analyzing modality give us no cause to abandon counterparts or GMR. Additionally, we have seen reasons why counterpart theory is more plausible than the transworld identity thesis; we have also seen why counterpart theory need not worry about CP. How, we might ask, is the defense of Lewis' GMR relevant to our discussion of Leibniz? As we have also already seen, Leibniz offers counterparts as a way to make sense of alternate possibilities for actual individuals. Although he himself does not offer much in the way of a defense of his use of counterparts, we have been able to look at Lewis' explication of GMR to strengthen Leibniz's own position on the matter. What I would like to do in the final section of the chapter is discuss the ways in which Lewis' account and Leibniz's own differ. Let us now turn to that discussion.

Highlighting the Differences

We have thus far been looking at the commonalities between Lewis and Leibniz in order to get a clearer sense of how exactly Leibniz understood possible worlds and to make it easier to motivate and defend his view by placing it in the context of contemporary discussions on the nature of modality. What we have seen develop in the preceding pages is a picture on which worlds are composed of compossible individuals that are causally, spatially, and temporally distinct from everything that is not a worldmate. Additionally, the relation between individuals in the actual world and some individuals in some possible worlds is a relation of counterparthood—as in Lewis, Leibniz understands possibility claims

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[237] Of course, one might also admit here simply that we do not have a genuine case of representation, as, given the factors of the case, we are not actually representing Queen Elizabeth II because (for example) it is essential to Queen Elizabeth II that she have the parents she had. This case would no longer be a counterexample to Lewis' and Leinbiz's positions, however. Be that as it may, I am happy to say that we are genuinely representing Queen Elizabeth II here, and therefore, we are picking out an actual possibility.

concerning actual individuals to refer to some non-identical but similar member of a possible world. We may conclude that Leibniz certainly endorsed GMR, and his version is in many ways similar to Lewis'. However, before moving the discussion into the next chapter, where we will examine how Leibniz applies his account of possible individuals and possible worlds to his analysis of contingency, I want to spend a few more pages highlighting the differences between Leibniz's version of modal realism and Lewis'.

I take it that the first and most obvious difference between Lewis and Leibniz is the theological motivations and positions of the latter. Unlike Lewis, Leibniz extensively discussed the connection between the nature of modality and various theological considerations, such as the freedom of God's choices and the nature of sin. Additionally, Leibniz famously places the realm of possibility inside God's head, in such a way that the possible worlds of his modal realism are ideas in God's head. Obviously, Lewis' picture of where possible worlds reside is fundamentally different from the characterization of Leibniz just construed. However, as I have argued above and in the previous chapter, despite the theological difference between the two theorists here, ontologically it really comes to very little when we examine how exactly Leibniz conceived of these possible worlds that are in God's mind. Since there is no real difference in kind between individuals in the actual world and those in other possible worlds, we can see that, despite the fact that they are in God's mind, they do not really differ from Lewis' conception. In fact, the key difference between the two seems to be just in where these worlds are located. However, had Leibniz decided that possible worlds can exist outside of God's mind, then it would be even more difficult to distinguish his and Lewis' accounts. The key difference between Lewis and Leibniz concerning the fundamental nature of worlds seems to be theologically motivated and not philosophically.

One key philosophical difference between Lewis and Leibniz, though, concerns the fundamental principles that underlie their different systems. Remember that one of the basic

truths that motivates Leibniz's entire system is PII.[238] Interestingly, Lewis does not include PII in his philosophical account of modality, which allows his opponents to motivate a particular objection against him concerning quantification over non-actual individuals given that singular reference to them is impossible. The objection is as follows:

> In the case of descriptions, let us begin by considering descriptions which are (we believe) consistent, but which have no actual referent—e.g. 'the mountain that is made of gold', 'the oldest talking donkey', etc. GR advises us that such descriptions apply to individuals that (unrestrictedly) exist. However, the subsequent problem is that each such description applies to many things across many worlds so that the (semantic) definiteness of the description and the implied singularity of reference proves untenable. So we still cannot isolate any non-actual object by achieving unambiguous singular reference to it.[239]

The objection contends that GMR does not offer us a real analysis of modal utterances, as it does not provide us any way of successfully referring to any one particular non-actual individual to make sense of whatever possibility claim we make. The reason that GMR is unable to provide us with a way of doing so, goes the objection, is because Lewis remains agnostic concerning the question of whether there are any qualitatively indistinguishable worlds.[240] According to Lewis, there is no principled reason for denying that there are indistinguishable worlds, so we ought not say one way or the other. The objection gets off the ground precisely because Lewis admits there may be qualitatively indistinguishable worlds, so that we cannot successfully refer to a singular, non-actual individual because our descriptive reference might be fulfilled by two members of different but indistinguishable possible worlds. Leibniz is able to provide Lewis with a way out of the worry about singular referents, and therein lies one way in which Leibniz and Lewis differ in their understanding of the nature of possible worlds.

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[238] The claim that no there cannot ever be two things that are qualitatively indistinguishable.

[239] John Divers, *Possible Worlds* (London: Routledge, 2002), 80.

[240] Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 87.

If we add PII to GMR, then we can give up our agnosticism concerning whether there are any qualitatively indistinguishable worlds. Assume for the sake of argument that there are two worlds which are qualitatively indistinguishable; there are two worlds that share all of the same properties in common. According to PII, if there are two things that have all of the same properties in common, then those two things are actually identical; they are one and the same thing. Contrary to the hypothesis, there can never be two worlds that are qualitatively indistinguishable, as by PII, there would simply be one world. By employing PII in our GMR, we have a ready response to the objection above that GMR does not allow us to determine a singular referent for our modal claims.[241] Since we already have independent reasons for accepting PII,[242] our solution is not arbitrary. It seems that Lewis ought to have accepted PII as a sufficient reason for denying that there are any qualitatively indistinguishable worlds; nevertheless, that Lewis did not accept PII offers us another way in which he and Leibniz differ in their formulation of GMR.

There are perhaps other ways in which Lewis and Leibniz differ in their modal accounts—I do not intend to be taken as providing an exhaustive list here of the differences between the two. It may turn out that there are a number of other specific details on which these two famous modal realists would disagree. Be that as it may, the lesson we should take away from the discussion in the current chapter is that, broadly speaking concerning the important details of their modal accounts, Leibniz is incredibly similar to Lewis, so much so that it would be safe to say that anyone familiar with Lewis' account of possible worlds is thereby also familiar with Leibniz's. Now that we have a more definite understanding of how Leibniz conceived of possible worlds, in the next chapter I would like to apply his GMR to the way in which he accounts for contingency and necessity. As we shall see,

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[241] Interestingly, Divers offers a similar solution without calling it PII. See Divers, *Possible Worlds*, 84.

[242] See my Chapter One.

Leibniz's treatment of possibility in terms of other possible worlds plays a central role in one of the ways in which he accounts of contingent truths. Let us now turn to that discussion.

CHAPTER IV: LEIBNIZ'S MODAL METAPHYSICS: INFINITE ANALYSIS AND POSSIBLE WORLDS

Now that we have both Leibniz's view of individuals, both possible and actual, and his conception of possible worlds as real collections of possible individuals on the table, we can begin to see how Leibniz characterizes contingency, possibility, and necessity, an account which depends, like everything else in Leibniz's system, upon PSR and PC. Commentators on Leibniz have been fascinated by his analysis of modality, in large part because it is far from clear what Leibniz's settled view on the matter is. In particular, there is a fierce debate in the literature between what we will call 'the infinite analysis account' and 'the possible worlds account' of contingency, as there is evidence that Leibniz holds both, but commentators typically agree that the two are inconsistent.[243] Because of the tension between these two accounts, commentators argue that Leibniz has to have held either one or the other but not both, and there are rather good arguments and textual evidence for both sides.

Given the confusion concerning Leibniz's account of modality prevalent in the literature, what I hope to show in the current chapter is: that Leibniz does in fact hold both accounts; that he can do so consistently; that Leibniz correctly thought the two amounted to the same thing; that Leibniz's account of modality is as philosophically interesting today as it was when he developed it. In order to do so, I will in particular be addressing two of the main objectors to the possible worlds account: Robert Adams and Margaret Wilson. In demonstrating how one might respond to Adams' and Wilson's worries that Leibniz could

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[243] Nicholas Rescher, Robert Adams, and Margaret Wilson are prominent examples of scholars who claim that Leibniz could not have held the possible worlds account of contingency. Benson Mates takes the opposite view and discusses Leibniz's account of modality purely in terms of possible worlds. Patrick Maher argues that the infinite analysis account alone cannot account for contingency—it must be paired with God's choice of the best. David Blumenfeld argues explicitly that the infinite analysis account does not offer a solution to contingency and, furthermore, it is inconsistent with Leibniz's other doctrines. As we can see, the literature is quite divided on exactly how to understand Leibniz on the analysis of necessity, possibility, and contingency.

not have held such an account, I hope to open a doorway through which I can plausibly show that Leibniz was working with a possible worlds account of modality, which will then let me show the way in which that account lines up with the infinite analysis account that Adams and Wilson support. I will also respond to one serious objection to the infinite analysis account, the so-called "Lucky Proof." Doing so will help show that, on either the possible worlds interpretation or the infinite analysis one, Leibniz's account of modality is on strong footing. However, it will first be necessary to spell out both accounts of modality that Leibniz offers and show how he understands and motivates each.

Precursory Discourse

Leibniz's account of the nature of possibility and contingency is rather surprising, given the rest of his system, as it seems obvious to many commentators that elements like PSR and CIC would completely destroy any notion of possibility or contingency. One reason that the theory is so interesting, however, is precisely because Leibniz thought that everything that happened was determined to happen in exactly the way it did, yet he still attempts to make room for the contingent actions of creatures.[244] Again, the reason that Leibniz's claims concerning contingency seem so odd can be seen in two of his doctrines. First, PSR leads Leibniz to claim that everything that happens must be determined to happen in that way because every effect must have a (perfectly determinate) cause. In other words, for anything that happens, there is a reason why it happened that way rather than another, which reason determines that it had to happen exactly the way it did. Second, from CIC one can see that Leibniz is committed to some form of determinism because each individual has within it already all of its predicates, so that whatever happens to it is determined to do so through its own nature. Given these two principles, it is indeed surprising that Leibniz thinks he can make room for the existence of real possibilities; yet, it is precisely in his

[244] As well as of God.

understanding of the nature of contingency in light of his determinism that Leibniz's theory is so fascinating.

It is perhaps somewhat surprising that Leibniz did not simply settle on a Spinozistic view of modality, according to which there are no genuine unactualized possibilities, so that everything that happens does so necessarily. Part of what kept Leibniz from accepting such a view was the basic intuition that possibility claims are meaningful and that they therefore need a truth-maker that cannot be any actualized thing. As a way to motivate the intuition that there are unactualized possibilities, recall again the Novels Argument:

> One must certainly hold that not all possibles attain existence, otherwise one could imagine no novel that did not exist in some place and at some time.[245]

> Nor can we really deny that many stories, especially those called novels, are thought to be possible, though they might find no place in this universal series God selected—unless one imagined that in such an expanse of space and time there are certain poetical regions, where you see King Arthur of Britain, Amadis of Gaul, and the illustrious Dietrich von Bern of the German stories, all wandering through the world.[246]

Leibniz here is rather nicely pumping the intuition that there really are possible states of affairs that are unactualized. He thinks it absurd to deny such possibilities, as doing so would, "eliminate all beauty from the universe and all choice among things."[247] While Leibniz's assumption that works of fiction are not simply meaningless utterances might be something that certain contemporary philosophers[248] find objectionable, I take it that Leibniz, and indeed many of his contemporaries, certainly saw it as unproblematic. Since fictional statements have meaning, then, it must be the case that there is something which

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[245] Leibniz, "On Contingency," 29.

[246] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 94.

[247] Ibid., 95.

[248] E.g. Frege, who claims that fictional statements are neither true nor false and are therefore meaningless.

gives them meaning: The options seem to be either that they really happen in the actual world or that there is some possible state of affairs that makes them true. Since it seems absurd to claim that every novel actually has happened in some place or time in the actual world, the latter must be true. From the need for a truth-maker for possibility claims, Leibniz gets some motivation for spelling out a theory of modality that allows for there to be unactualized possibilities. As we saw in the previous chapter, Leibniz offer a possible worlds account to make sense of unactualized possibilities. It is worth mentioning here that Leibniz's discussion of possibility and necessity is not an attempt to allow room for libertarian freedom. Instead, Leibniz is trying to get at the true nature of possibility that will allow for human freedom in some sense, as otherwise we would be committed to Spinozism. As we shall see later, the sense in which Leibniz allows for freedom is a compatibilist one, and it is in characterizing an account of contingency that is compatible with the determinism prescribed by PSR and CIC that he is able to do so. Before we can turn to that discussion, we must first examine and clarify the way in which Leibniz understood contingency.

Theory of the First Part: Infinite Analysis

Of the two accounts of modality that Leibniz provides, the stranger one to contemporary readers is certainly the infinite analysis account (INFANT). Consider how INFANT characterizes both contingency and necessity. According to Leibniz, truths that are necessary are:

> [T]hose that can be demonstrated through an analysis of terms, so that in the end they become identities, just as in algebra an equation expressing an identity ultimately results from the substitution of value [for variables]. That is, necessary truths depend upon the principle of contradiction.[249]

Necessary truths are those whose opposite implies a contradiction (by PC), which contradiction can be found when one assumes the opposite and through a complete analysis

[249] Leibniz, "On Contingency," 28.

derives a contradiction—or to put it another way, when one is able to complete an analysis such that the terms on other sides become identities. Mathematical truths fall under necessary truths and are derivable in a finite number of steps, as in the case of showing that 2+2=4.[250] Indeed, I take it that such a conception of necessary truth is more-or-less what we have in mind when we discuss such truths today and many of Leibniz's contemporaries would have been perfectly satisfied with such an account. Where INFANT gets really strange, however, is in the case of contingent truths. As a contrast to necessary truths, which end when the analysis realizes identities on both sides, contingent truths are those truths where such an analysis fails:

> In contingent propositions one continues the analysis to infinity through reasons for reasons, so that one never has a complete demonstration, though there is always, underneath, a reason for the truth, but the reason is understood completely only by God, who alone traverses the infinite series in one stroke of mind.[251]

> But in contingent truths, even though the predicate is in the subject, this can never be demonstrated, nor can a proposition ever be reduced to an equality or to an identity, but the resolution proceeds to infinity, God alone seeing, not the end of the resolution, of course, which does not exist, but the connection of the terms or the containment of the predicate in the subject.[252]

The way in which the analysis fails is just when the analysis is infinite, so that one could never reach the end of it. In such cases, the truth is contingent. Notice what Leibniz does not claim here: he does not admit that for contingent truths, there is no reason to be given why that thing happens as opposed to something else. If contingency were something like that, then such an account would violate PSR, which is reason enough to reject that account. Instead, Leibniz here is offering an account of contingency that follows PSR, although

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[250] I.e. one can show that ||+||=|||| in a finite number of steps.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 96. See also "The Source of Contingent Truths," 99.

getting clear on how such an account is supposed to work will take us quite some time in the coming pages.

An example here may be helpful in understanding Leibniz's INFANT. Suppose that I have as part of my complete concept the property, 'being-a-graduate-student-at-the-University-of-Iowa-in-2011'.[253] As part of my complete concept, one may think I have the property necessarily, as I would not be me if I lacked it.[254],[255] Leibniz, however, claims that such properties, while being intrinsic to me, are not necessary; ψ is only contingently true of me. INFANT allows Leibniz to claim that ψ is contingent because, if one were to attempt to analyze my concept to show that I have such a property, such an analysis would be infinite.[256] In Leibniz's own words:

> That there are contingent truths, in whose explanation the progression of reasons is infinite, can also be understood from the fact that there is an actually infinite number of creatures in any part of the universe whatsoever, and each and every individual substance contains that whole series of things in its complete notion, and harmonizes with everything else, and to that extent contains something of the infinite.[257].
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> Therefore, we must realize that all creatures have impressed upon them a certain mark of divine infinity, and that this is the source of many wonderful things which amaze the human mind.

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[253] Call this property ψ.

[254] By PII and CIC.

[255] I should note here that the current argument assumes that Leibniz is a super-essentialist; Leibniz thinks that individuals have *all* of their properties essentially, so that it cannot lack any of its properties and remain the same individual. Fabrizio Mondadori, for example, argues that Leibniz is a super-essentialist based on CIC. Graeme Hunter, however, argues that the texts do not bear out such a view. While the essentialism/super-essentialism debate is alive and well in the literature, settling it is unfortunately outside the scope of my dissertation. I will henceforth be assuming that super-essentialism is the correct way to understand Leibniz on individuals, and I will defer to the excellent arguments by Mondadori, Mates, and others to support my position.

[256] I will return below to the most potent objection to such a claim, the so-called Lucky Proof, on which one simply gets lucky and shows by analysis that I do in fact have ψ early on in the infinite analysis.

[257] Leibniz, "The Source of Contingent Truths," 100.

> Indeed, there is no portion of matter so tiny that it does not contain a sort of world of creatures infinite in number, and there is no individual created substance so imperfect that it does not act on all others and is not acted upon by all others, no substance so imperfect that it does not contain the entire universe, and whatever it is, was, or will be, in its complete notion[.][258]

According to Leibniz, every individual complete concept has an infinity of properties, as it reflects the entirety of the series of the world that it inhabits. The reason the analysis would be infinite is that I have an infinite number of properties that one would have to go through before reaching a conclusion to the analysis that I have ψ. Therefore, by INFANT, it is contingent that I have ψ.

Another example here might make contingency by INFANT even more apparent. In explaining INFANT, Adams writes:

> It may be that there is a property, φ, such that for every natural number *n*, it can be proved that *n* has φ, but the universal generalization that every natural number had φ cannot be proved except by proving first that 7 has φ, then that 4 has φ, and so on until every natural number has been accounted for—a task that can never be completed. In this case it is a purely mathematical truth that every natural number has φ, but it cannot be demonstrated. And it is a purely mathematical falsehood that some natural number lacks φ, but no contradiction can be derived from it in a finite number of steps.[259]

Adams presents us with another great example of INFANT. On Leibniz's account, the claim that every natural number has some property is a contingent one because, given that the series of natural numbers is infinite, any attempt to prove that every natural number has that property would never be completed—therefore, the claim that every natural number has a certain property is contingent.

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[258] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 95

[259] Robert Merrihew Adams, "Leibniz's Theories of Contingency," *The Rice University Studies* 63 (1977): 15.

INFANT and the Actual World

Now that we have seen how Leibniz understands contingency by INFANT, let us looks at one final contingent truth that Leibniz asserts throughout his writing: that the world we inhabit is only contingently actual. Initially, Leibniz looks as if he might be in some trouble concerning the modal status of the actual world, since if God necessarily chooses that which is best, and the actuality of the world follows from God's choice, then it looks as if the actuality of the world must too be necessary:

> It is an uncontroversial truth of modal logic that if *p* is necessary and *p* entails *q*, then *q* is necessary. So if it is (absolutely) necessary that God choose the best, and if the existence of the best world is (hypothetically) necessary in relation to his choice, then it is (absolutely) necessary that the best world exist.[260]

According to the claims of modal logic, it looks as if Leibniz cannot claim that the actuality of our world is contingent, since it appears that God's choice of the best is a necessary feature of God, given His divine attributes. Surprisingly, Leibniz still wants to claim that the creation of our world is contingent, which leaves him in a difficult position of either denying that God's choice is necessary or asserting that—despite the rules of modal logic—the existence of the actual world is contingent. In fact, as we shall see, it is precisely the latter that Leibniz endorses, and he is able to do so by INFANT.[261]

There are many places in his writings where Leibniz defends the claim that God's creation of the actual world is contingent, for example:

> But it cannot be demonstrated that God makes that which is most perfect, since the contrary does not imply a contradiction; otherwise, the contrary would not be possible, contrary to hypothesis…Let there be two possible things, A and B, one of which

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[260] E.M. Curley, "Recent Work on 17th Century Continental Philosophy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 11 (1974): 243.

[261] It should be noted here that there is some debate about the appropriate way to understand the contingency of the actual world. Some commentators, such as Curley, embrace the former way out, while others (such as Adams) accept the latter, and still others deny contingency to Leibniz at all. I find Adams the most convincing in this debate—see "Leibniz's Theories of Contingency" and *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* for Adams' account of contingency in Leibniz.

> is such that it is necessary that it exists, and let us assume that there is more perfection in A than in B. Then, at least, we can explain why A should exist rather than B and can foresee which of them will exist; indeed, this can be demonstrated, that is, rendered certain from the nature of the thing. And, if being certain were the same as being necessary, then, I admit, it would also be necessary for A to exist. But I call such necessity hypothetical, for if it were absolutely necessary that A exist, then B would imply a contradiction, contrary to the hypothesis.[262]

> So, although one can concede that it is necessary for God to choose the best, or that the best is necessary, it does not follow that what is chosen is necessary, since there is no demonstration that it is the best. And here the distinction between necessity of the consequence and necessity of the consequent is in some way relevant; in the end, the proposition in question is a necessity of the consequence, not of the consequent, because it is necessary once we grant the hypothesis that we take it to be the best, assuming that the best is necessarily chosen.[263]

These two examples illustrate a couple of important features of Leibniz's discussion on the contingency of the actual world. First, these passages make it quite clear that Leibniz does in fact hold that the creation of the actual world is contingent and that the contingency comes not from God's choice but from the contingency that the actual world is the best. Second, the contingency comes from the fact that a demonstration that the world is best cannot be done and its contrary does not imply a contradiction. The reason a demonstration that the actual world is the best cannot be done is because one would have to compare the actual world to all of the other possible worlds and show, for each world, that the actual world is better than that world. To return to the quote from Adams above, doing so would be like trying to show of all the natural numbers that they have some property. We would have to compare the actual world to world A, world B, etc. for the infinite series of possible worlds, but we could never actually reach an end to the demonstration. Therefore, it is true that the actual world is the best, even though it cannot be demonstrated that it is. By INFANT, it is contingent, not necessary, that the actual world is the best.

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[262] Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility," 20.

[263] Leibniz, "On Contingency," 30.

Hypothetical versus Absolute Necessity

One other feature of Leibniz's theory of contingency to which the passages quoted above point is the distinction Leibniz makes between hypothetical and absolute necessity. According to INFANT, something is absolutely necessary just when its contrary implies a contradiction. Otherwise, it is contingent, either because its contrary does not imply a contradiction or because a contradiction cannot be demonstrated from its contrary. It is precisely the distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity that Leibniz is discussing when he distinguishes between necessity of the consequent and necessity of the consequence.

Hypothetical necessity is necessity of the consequence,[264] such that the entire conditional is necessary. Absolute necessity is necessity of the consequent, where, regardless of whether or not the conditional is necessary, the consequent of the conditional is necessary. In terms of the contingency of the actual world, Leibniz claims that it is merely hypothetically necessary, so that we can construe God's creation of the actual worlds as, necessarily (If God creates what is best, then God creates the world we inhabit). Still, Leibniz maintains that hypothetical necessity saves the contingency of the existence of the actual world, and by INFANT we can say why the actual world might be contingent, despite God's choice being necessary.

Assume that God creates what is best, and that He is necessitated to do so, even by absolute necessity. Therefore, it is necessary that God wills what is best. Since our world is the best, it is necessary that when God wills what is best he wills our world. However, Leibniz denies that the actualization of our world entails that our world is necessary, since it cannot be demonstrated that our world is the best. Even though "necessarily (If God creates what is best, then God creates the world we inhabit)" is true, it is not the case that "(If God creates what is best, then (necessarily)(God creates the world we inhabit))." The

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[264] That is, necessarily (If P, then Q).

reason that it is not necessary that God create our world is because, by INFANT, it is not demonstrable that our world is the best and Leibniz is able to maintain the distinction between necessity of the consequent and necessity of the consequence. It is by INFANT that Leibniz is able to differentiate between absolute and hypothetical necessity.

It should also be noted here that it is precisely the distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity that Leibniz thinks saves him from the necessitarian pitfall of Spinozism. Early in his career, Leibniz was very close to losing the distinction between necessity and contingency, which is evident from his admission that:

> When I considered that nothing happens by chance or by accident, that fortune distinguished from fate in an empty name, and that no thing exists unless its own particular conditions are present, I was very close to the view of those who think that everything is absolutely necessary, who judge that it is enough for freedom that we be uncoerced, even though we might be subject to necessity, and close to the view of those who do not distinguish what is infallible or certainly known to be true, from that which is necessary.[265]

It is perhaps unsurprising that Leibniz would find himself so close to necessitarianism, and I take it that many of his readers think he ought not to have given up on such views, particularly because Leibniz held to PSR; there are many who think that Leibniz is foolish for distinguishing between what is certain and what is necessary.[266] Yet, it is precisely because Leibniz can draw a distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity that allows him to move from his earlier position into his more mature one. We see Leibniz using precisely the distinction between the two in a correspondence late in his life:

> Consequently, sins and evils, which [God] has judged permissible in order to allow greater good, are included in some way in his choice. It is this necessity that we can now attribute to things to come, a necessity which we call *hypothetical* or *consequential*, that is, necessity based on a consequence of the hypothesis of the choice made. This necessity does not destroy the contingency of things and

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[265] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 94.

[266] Bertrand Russell and Louis Couturat being two prime examples here.

> does not produce the absolute necessity that contingency cannot allow.[267]

Again we see Leibniz affirming that the existence of and truths in the actual world are contingent, as they are only hypothetically necessary on the basis of the choice that God makes.[268] Their opposite cannot be shown to imply a contradiction so, by INFANT, they are contingent. It is precisely the distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity that Leibniz thinks allows him to avoid Spinozism, and it is INFANT that helps make sense of that distinction.

Putting INFANT to Bed

One thing to be said of INFANT here is that it does not provide a satisfying account of contingency, simply because not being able to derive a contradiction from a truth in a finite number of steps does not mean there is not in fact a contradiction. While a full defense of INFANT's accounting for contingency will have to wait until later in the chapter, I want to point out here that Leibniz does in fact correctly analyze the normal definition of contingency. On the typical understanding of contingency, what it is for a truth to be contingent is that its opposite does not imply a contradiction—Leibniz pulls such an account from the traditional philosophical use of that term. Leibniz is simply pointing out that when a philosopher makes that claim, she has to give it a definite meaning. While we might be tempted to say that it is in some cases obvious that the opposite of a truth implies a contradiction,[269] Leibniz does not think we ought to be satisfied with the claim that the contradiction is obvious. Instead, he requires us to show that such a contradiction can be derived. Without such a proof, we lack any real reason to assert that we have found a

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[267] Leibniz, "Letter to Coste, on Human Freedom (19 December 1707)," 193, emphasis original.

[268] Indeed, Adams calls Leibniz's version necessity of the consequence necessity on the hypothesis of something else. See Adams, "Leibniz's Theories of Contingency," 8.

[269] As in the case of the opposite of some property contained in my complete concept.

contradiction; Leibniz is trying to force rigor on the traditional philosophical understanding of contingency. It is insufficient to simply say of INFANT that it does not correctly capture what we mean when we say of a contingent truth that it is one where the opposite does not imply a contradiction because INFANT does provide a satisfactory analysis of that claim. If we think that it does not, then we must, like Leibniz, provide an answer to the question of why a contradiction cannot be found—we cannot simply say that the infinite analysis account is not what we meant by the failure to find a contradiction. For that reason, INFANT does at least successfully fulfill the requirements of the definition of contingency, and if we want to criticize it, the first thing we must do is offer a better explanation of what it is that we meant in the first place when we said of a contingent truth that its opposite does not imply a contradiction.

Another point in favor of INFANT as an analysis of contingency comes from Leibniz's considerations on mathematics.[270] We can understand Leibniz's motivation for developing INFANT better if we see him as considering the prime example of necessary truths: truths of mathematics. When Leibniz examines what is the case in mathematical truths that makes them necessary, he claims:

> Necessary truths are those that can be demonstrated through an analysis of terms, so that in the end they become identities, *just as in algebra* an equation expressing an identity ultimately results from the substitution of values [for variables]. That is, necessary truths depend upon the principle of contradiction.[271]

In the case of mathematical truths, what accounts for their necessity is that they can be demonstrated through analysis to be identities; PC makes them necessary. When considering truths that cannot be so demonstrated, we can see that the lack of demonstration would make them not necessary. Since we cannot reduce certain truths to

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[270] "And with this secret the distinction between necessary and contingent truths is revealed, something not easily understood unless one has some acquaintance with mathematics" (Leibniz, "On Contingency," 28). See also Leibniz, "Necessary and Contingent Truths," 98-101.

[271] Leibniz, "On Contingency," 28, emphasis mine.

identities in the way we can with mathematical truths, those truths will not be necessary but will instead be contingent. We can track Leibniz's development of INFANT as a way to understand contingency through his work with mathematics—it is precisely because mathematical truths are necessary and are reducible to identities that encourages Leibniz to say that when a truth is not reducible to identities, because the analysis is infinite, then that truth is contingent.

We might also be worried here that INFANT, far from picking out true instances of contingency, is an epistemic principle that relies on our inability to complete an infinite analysis. It is easy to see one reason that we might think we are unable to perform such an analysis—given our finite natures, we simply would not have time to complete analyses concerning contingent truths. God, however, ought to be able to perform these demonstrations, as He is infinite. Now, Leibniz does admit that God can know contingent truths and the reasons for them, even if He is unable to demonstrate them:

> For having accepted the notion of necessity everyone accepts, namely that those things whose contrary implies a contradiction are precisely those that are necessary, it readily appears from a consideration of the nature of demonstration and analysis that there surely can be, and indeed there must be, truths which cannot be reduced by any analysis to identical truths or to the principle of contradiction, truths endowed with an infinite series of reasons, *fully known to God alone*.[272]

Leibniz points out that truths that are not reducible to identities nevertheless have a reason for their being true, which reason is an infinite series that God alone is able to know. Lest we think that God's knowledge of the reason for contingent truths makes INFANT an epistemic principle, however, Leibniz responds:

> But in contingent propositions one continues the analysis to infinity through reasons for reasons, so that one never has a complete demonstration, though there is always, underneath, a reason for the

[272] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 98, emphasis mine. Notice too here that Leibniz thinks he has offered a conception of necessity that nicely matches with the way it is normally understood.

> truth, but the reason is understood completely only by God, who alone transverses the infinite series in one stroke of the mind.[273]

It is not the case, then, that God is able to perform a demonstration in the case of contingent truths. Instead, God has the special power of grasping the entirety of the series of reasons for a contingent truth in a single act of His infinite intellect. God's ability to know contingent truths through His infinite intellect does not mean that there can ever be a demonstration reducing contingent truths to identities. It is simply the case that contingent truths have infinite analyses. God's ability to know contingent truths notwithstanding, we can see that INFANT is, on Leibniz's account of modality, not an epistemic principle but a metaphysical one.

Still, INFANT is not the only account of contingency that Leibniz provides. Leibniz also has on the table a possible worlds account of contingency that is more in line with the way we think of modality today. What I hope to show by the end of the chapter is that, on Leibniz's considered view, INFANT and the possible worlds account overlap and, for that reason, INFANT does in fact provide an adequate understanding of contingency. Before doing so, we must first get clear on how Leibniz understands the possible worlds account of contingency.

Theory of the Second Part: Possible Worlds

As early as the correspondence with Arnauld concerning the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, we see Leibniz introduce and motivate a possible worlds account of contingency (POWA). That Leibniz would offer POWA as a way to understand freedom and contingency in his correspondence with Arnauld is surprising for at least two reasons. First, the exchange occurs at roughly the same time as the texts in which Leibniz presents INFANT as the way to understand contingency. It is notable, then, that Leibniz would offer POWA during the same time period in which he endorsed INFANT in other texts. Second, even if INFANT

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[273] Leibniz, "On Contingency," 28.

is able to offer an account of contingency that resists the necessitarian pull of PSR and CIC, it is much less clear how POWA is able to do so. Notably, Arnauld is worried about how Leibniz can account for contingency in the first place, and he is also skeptical (at least initially) that POWA can do the job. He writes:

> It seems to me to follow from [CIC] that the individual concept of Adam has involved that he would have so many children and the individual concept of each of these children involves all that they will do and all the children which they will have and so on. Whence I thought that we could infer that God was free, in so far as the creating or not creating of Adam, but supposing that he has wished to create him, all that has since happened to the human race has come and must come by a fatalistic necessity or I thought at least that there was no more freedom in God regarding all that, supposing that he had wished to create Adam, than there was not to create a being capable of thinking, supposing he had wished to create me.[274]

We see here Arnauld worrying how Leibniz can account for contingency, at least once God creates that world with Adam in it. The reason there appears to be a problem here is, if everything that happens to an individual is already contained in the individual from the moment it was created, then when God created Adam and everything else that happens in the world is already contained in Adam, then everything else that will happen in the course of the world follows from Adam's creation. That everything else in the world follows from Adam's complete concept follows from everything true of Adam and PSR. Adam's properties provide the determinate reasons for what each of his children will do and what their children will do and so on, so that it is possible in principle to see from Adam's concept alone everything else that will happen in the world. Arnauld is concerned that, by CIC and PSR, it does look as if, once God decides to actualize a world, everything that

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[274] Leibniz, "Arnauld to Leibniz (May 13, 1686)" in *Discourse on Metaphysics; Correspondence with Arnauld; Monadology*, 89-90. Arnauld's worries come most explicitly from Leibniz's claims in *Discourse* §13.

happens in that world truly does follow with fatalistic necessity, so that Adam's actions[275] are as absolutely necessary as my having a mind.[276]

Leibniz's responds to Arnauld's criticisms in a series of remarks on the letter, where he begins by drawing the now familiar distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity. Again, we see Leibniz's emphasis on hypothetical necessity as the way out of Spinozism. A few paragraphs later, however, Leibniz adds a wrinkle to his account:

> I have said that all human events can be deduced not simply by assuming the creation of a vague Adam, but by assuming the creation of an Adam determined with respect to all circumstances, chosen from among an infinity of possible Adams.[277]

We find here a clear assertion of POWA, on which the contingent actions of the Adam of the actual world are preserved because God chooses from among an infinity of possible Adams. Presumably, what Leibniz has in mind here is that, other Adams being possible-in-themselves, the actions of $Adam_{actual}$ are not necessary because it is not necessary that $Adam_{actual}$ exist. Given the fact that $Adam_{actual}$ was not the only Adam that God could have created, it is contingent that $Adam_{actual}$ exist and all of his actions, and everything that follows from his existence,[278] are also contingent. Going back to the discussion of the previous chapter, what allows for POWA to account for contingency is the existence of real possible individuals that God leaves uncreated. Notice as well that Leibniz is not willing to admit, even on POWA, that there are any vague or indeterminate individuals. Even in the context of defending contingency based on POWA, CIC is in effect—Leibniz once again points out that, even for possible creatures, a thing is individuated by its complete concept.

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[275] And everything else in Adam's world.

[276] Or any geometrical or logical truth. For Leibniz and his contemporaries, it is true that I am essentially a thinking thing, so that it is impossible in the strongest sense for there to be a me that lacks a mind.

[277] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 72.

[278] Including his children and their actions, etc.

Unfortunately, Arnauld is initially less than satisfied with POWA. He writes in a letter from May 13:

> Among possible beings God has found in his ideas several me's, of which one has for its predicates, to have several children and to be a physician, and another to live a life of celibacy and be a Theologian. God, having decided to create the latter, or the present me, includes in its individual concept the living a life of celibacy and the being a Theologian while the former would have involved in its individual concept being married and being a physician. Is it not clear that there would be no sense in such statements, because, since my present me is necessarily of a certain individual nature, which is the same thing as having a certain individual concept, it will be as impossible to conceive of contradictory predicates in the individual concept of me, as to conceive of a me different from me?[279]

Arnauld's worry is one that I think strikes many of Leibniz's readers when they first are introduced to POWA. Given the fact that, as an individual, I have within me my complete concept which perfectly determines me as an individual, if God considers me as having different properties, He is not really considering me at all but rather some other individual since, by PII I cannot be identical with something that has different properties than I. The worry is that POWA does not account for the contingency of my actions because, if I were to do otherwise in some other possible world, I would have a different complete concept. Yet, the individual that does otherwise is not me and does not account for the contingency of my actions because it is some other individual, with its own complete concept. Leibniz's response is to explain how he understands POWA and its use in capturing contingency:

> I agree, but when speaking of several Adams, I was not taking Adam as a determinate individual. I must therefore explain myself. This is what I meant. When one considers in Adam a part of his predicates, for example, that he is the first man, set in a garden of pleasure, from whose side God fashioned a woman, and similar things conceived *sub ratione generalitatis*, in a general way (that is to say, without naming Eve, Paradise, and other circumstances that fix individuality), and when one calls Adam the person to whom these predicates are attributed, all this is not sufficient to determine the

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[279] Leibniz, "Arnauld to Leibniz (May 13, 1686)," in *Discourse on Metaphysics; Correspondence with Arnauld; Monadology*, 94-95.

> individual, for there can be an infinity of Adams, that is, an infinity of possible persons, different from one another, whom this fits.[280]

So, the possible Adams that Leibniz allows for are not identical with $Adam_{actual}$. Instead, they are the individuals of the worlds they inhabit that match the general description of $Adam_{actual}$ (e.g. 'being-the-first-man', 'living-in-the-Garden-of-Eden', etc.). Each of these possible Adams, however, also has a complete concept by which he is a determinate individual; it is merely an epistemic point that we are considering Adam not as a determinate individual, but rather as a general description that many individuals will fit. What allows for contingency, according to POWA, is not that Adam exists in many different possible worlds. Instead, $Adam_{actual}$ has counterparts[281] that allow for Adam's actions to be contingent because they capture what it is for Adam to have done otherwise. When God is considering which world to create, he compares, not the Adam of different possible worlds but rather what it would be for a creature that matches roughly the description of $Adam_{actual}$ to exist. To put it another way, God considers the general concept of Adam as the individual that is the first human, which comprises the infinite number of completely determinate individuals that fit that notion in a particular possible world. From that comparison, God chooses the one that exists in the world that is most perfect. So, the contingency of $Adam_{actual}$ is accounted for by POWA on the basis of the existence of the counterparts of Adam that exist in God's mind when he is considering which world to actualize.[282]

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[280] Leibniz, "Remarks on Arnauld's Letter about My Proposition That the Individual Notion of Each Person Includes Once and for All Everything That Will Ever Happen to Him (May 1686)," 72.

[281] As we saw in the previous chapter, Leibniz has a full-blown notion of counterparts in his modal metaphysics.

[282] "Therefore, we must not conceive of a vague Adam, that is, a person to whom certain attributes of Adam belong, when we are concerned with determining whether all human events follow from positing his existence; rather, we must attribute to him a notion so complete that everything that can be attributed to him can be deduced from it. Now, there is no room for doubting that God can form such a notion of him, or rather that he finds it already formed in the realm of possibles, that is, in his understanding" (Ibid., 73).

We should perhaps distinguish here between two different ways of understanding POWA's account of modality. On the one hand, it looks as if POWA captures the contingency of some truth in the actual world by appealing to the contingency of God's decision to create our world, so that we may say that the contingency of my having a beard is traceable to God's decision to create a world that includes the version of Seth that will eventually have a beard as opposed to some other world. God's decision to create the world that includes me is contingent, but once God decides to create our world, everything true of me follows from that decision. It is necessary on the basis of the hypothesis that God create me that I have a beard. Counterparts provide for contingency by saving God's choice from being necessary, but once God makes His choice, it is no longer possible that I fail to have a beard. On the other hand, counterparts may have a more direct role to play in accounting for the contingency of some truth in the actual world. Taking the same example, we might say that it is my counterpart that directly accounts for the fact that I only contingently have a beard. That is, it is because I have a counterpart that lacks a beard that allows for me to say that it is possible that I lack a beard. The difference here is that, instead of having to appeal to God's choice to understand why it is contingent that I have a beard, we simply refer directly to the counterpart's lack of a beard, and it is the state of the counterpart at the time of reference that makes my having a beard contingent.[283] Although it is difficult to determine which of these two possible ways of understanding Leibniz's talk of counterparts is correct, it seems likely that Leibniz understood the contingency-making features of counterparts in the latter sense, as he appeals directly to the other properties of the counterpart when accounting for the contingency of any particular individual's action.[284]

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[283] Of course, by CIC, the explanation for why the counterpart lacks a beard will be traced back to the his initial conditions, so that God's choice comes into the matter in some sense. However, the analysis of modality here only depends on the fact that I have a counterpart to which I can appeal; God's choice is unrelated to the *analysis* of contingency.

[284] See for example Leibniz, *Theodicy* §282, 299, where Leibniz calls contingent events whose opposite is possible [-in-itself]. The reason that I find it difficult to say conclusively which is the correct understanding Leibniz had of how counterparts work is that he does occasionally claim it is

So, it is simply and directly from the fact that my counterpart has a certain property other than the one I have in the actual world that makes contingent some truth about me.

If the correspondence with Arnauld were the only place we find Leibniz using POWA to explain contingency, it would be easy to dismiss POWA as a mere fluke in Leibniz's explanation of contingency, reverting instead back to INFANT as Leibniz's true account of modality. Instead, we see that Leibniz offers POWA in many other places, particularly in his later writings, so that it is undoubtable that Leibniz took POWA seriously as an answer to the questions concerning possibility and necessity. It is striking that Leibniz's language changes from his early writings in which he endorses INFANT so strongly, to his later writings where we see POWA play a more dominant role:

> From this it is obvious that of the infinite combinations of possibilities and possible series, the one that exists is the one through which the most essence or possibility is brought into existence.[285]
>
> From an infinity of possibles, God chose, in accordance with his wisdom, that which is most appropriate.[286]
>
> For the whole universe could have been made otherwise, since time, space, and matter are absolutely indifferent to motion and to shapes, and God has chosen from an infinity of possibles that which he judges most suitable.[287]
>
> Now, since there is an infinity of possible universes in God's ideas, and since only one of them can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for God's choice, a reason which determines him towards one thing rather than another.[288]

God's choice to create me and not some other possible individual that accounts for the contingency of my properties; it is entirely possible that Leibniz did not distinguish between these two ways of understanding POWA. As I do not think that settling this matter greatly affects my account of POWA as a way to analyze modality for Leibniz, I will leave off from settling the matter here.

[285] Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," 150.

[286] Leibniz, "Letter to Johann Bernoulli (January 1699)," 170-171.

[287] Leibniz, "Letter to Coste, On Human Freedom (19 December 1707)," 193.

[288] Leibniz, *The Monadology* §53, 220.

What these passages show is that Leibniz is perfectly happy with POWA as a solution to the problem of contingency—Leibniz thought it perfectly legitimate to characterize the contingency of an individual by appealing to the infinity of possible worlds in which that individual's counterparts exist. Notice as well that Leibniz does not use anything like the language of analysis here to characterize contingency. In addition to INFANT, Leibniz also understood the nature of contingency through POWA.

POWA and the Actual World

In addition to showing that Leibniz endorsed POWA as an account of contingency, what the above passages also show is that Leibniz thought he could explain the contingency of the actual world in terms of POWA. Given the strength of the textual evidence, it is somewhat surprising that many commentators have thought either that Leibniz did not really endorse POWA or that he could not endorse it. One striking example is found in Adams:[289]

> There is a familiar conception of Leibniz's views about the nature of necessity and contingency which portrays him as a sort of grandfather of possible worlds semantics for modal logic. According to this conception, Leibniz envisages an infinity of possible worlds, of which God (who exists necessarily) chooses and actualizes one (the best). Necessary truths are propositions that are true in all possible worlds. Contingent truths are propositions that are true in the actual world but false in at least one other possible world. […] The familiar Leibniz described above is in large part a creature of misunderstanding, though not exactly of fiction.[290]

Adams explicitly rejects POWA as an accounting of contingency that Leibniz endorses. In addition, in his discussion of the contingency of the actual world, Adams rather clearly

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[289] The following is not the only problem that Adams has with POWA. While I will return to address explicitly the issues that Adams raises, for now I simply want to focus on the way in which Adams thinks POWA fails to account for the contingency of the actual world.

[290] Adams, "Leibniz's Theories of Contingency," 1-2.

thinks that only INFANT can account for how Leibniz can admit that God's choice of the best is necessary, but the actuality of the world is not.[291] In particular, Adams claims that,

> Leibniz regarded as contingent some truths which he would hardly have recognized as depending on which world God actualized. The most obvious example in this category is the proposition that this world is the best possible.[292]

The reason that Adams thinks Leibniz would be dissatisfied with accounting for the contingency of the actual world on POWA is that, if contingency is understood according to POWA, then there has to be some possible world where it is not true that the actual world is the best of all possible worlds, but then POWA would require that the actual world would exist in some other possible world, a claim which is hard to understand, to say the least. However, I think it is possible to make sense of such a claim and thereby save POWA from Adams' criticism.

It is important to point out at the outset of a discussion on Leibniz and POWA that, contrary to Adams, Leibniz was satisfied with an account of contingency that relied solely on there being other possible worlds in order to account for the contingency of the actual world.[293] Leibniz states over-and-over again that what saves God's choice, and thereby makes the existence of the actual world contingent, is the fact that God examined an infinite number of possible worlds, one of which was the actual world considered as possible, and chose from the series the one that was best. That Leibniz held such a view is apparent from the overwhelming textual evidence; yet, we might still wonder whether Leibniz was entitled to such a view, or whether such a view actually solves the problem of contingency. Regardless of how POWA holds up as a solution to the contingency of the actual world,

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[291] Ibid, 12.

[292] Ibid., 32.

[293] To put it another way, if Leibniz thought that INFANT alone was sufficient for the contingency of the actual world, he would not even need to appeal to other possible worlds, as it might be the case that the actual world is the only possible one, but by INFANT, it would still only be contingently actual.

however, the reason that we can view Leibniz as the "grandfather of possible worlds semantics" is precisely because, building from his modal realism that we examined in the previous chapter, he presented POWA as a solution to the contingency of the actual world.[294]

Understanding POWA Through Contingently Possible Worlds

Can POWA solve the problem of the contingency of the actual world in a satisfactory manner? The first thing to note is that Leibniz held, simply on the basis of the reality of possible worlds, that the actual world only contingently exists, as the other possible worlds also had a claim to existence in proportion to their perfection.[295] Therefore, God need not have chosen the actual world, as it may have turned out that some other possible world actually had the most perfections. Rather quickly, however, we see why such a story on its own would not really work to save the contingency of the actual world. Given the actual series of possible worlds that existed in God's intellect[296] prior to the actualization of our world, it looks as if only the actual world could have been the most perfect, as it was the one that best met SP.[297] So, simply from what Leibniz tells us concerning POWA, it does

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[294] It should also not be expected that Leibniz's account of contingency match up exactly with any contemporary account of possible worlds semantics—as the grandfather, we ought to expect his descendants to hold younger and fresher views concerning modality. Additionally, it seems to me that if Adams is right, it is difficult to see why we ought to worry about Leibniz's account of modality, as INFANT does not really get us the results we want when talking about possibility and necessity. However, if it turns out that Leibniz really is the progenitor of possible worlds semantics, and his INFANT account is consistent with or amounts to POWA, then we would, I take it, have sufficient motivation for employing INFANT in a modal account. More on this later.

[295] See Leibniz, "Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason," §10, 210, and *The Monadology* §54, 220.

[296] Recall again that we have to understand this language with a grain of salt, as it is equally available to Leibniz to have these possible worlds without any theistic underpinnings.

[297] That is, the standard of perfection that lets God determine that our world is the best possible. Remember again here that the possible worlds and SP do not rely on God's will, so that

not look as if it solves the problem of contingency. The mere existence of other possible worlds does not do the work we need, unless it could have been the case that some other possible world be actual.

In order for the existence of other possible worlds to do the work for which Leibniz needs them, it must be the case that they are only contingently possible. According to POWA, to say that a possible world is only contingently possible would only be true if we analyzed that contingency in terms of the existence of other possible worlds, just as we analyze the contingency of the actual world in terms of other possible worlds. What it would mean to consider some other possible world as actual[298] would be to compare it to all of the other possible worlds and see that it is the best. Given SP, it is false that that possible world is best, as by SP our world is the best. We have to consider that possible world as the best relative to all other possible worlds, our own included. The only way to do that is if we can think of SP as being other than it is; in order for us to think of some possible world as actual, we have to think of it as being the world that best fits SP, which would only be the case if SP were otherwise than it actually is. The picture with which we end up is one where a possible world is not simply some self-contained state-of-affairs; rather, it is a state-of-affairs taken as actual that also contains within it its relation to all other possible worlds and a standard by which it becomes the actual world. The lesson here that comes out of considering POWA concerning possible worlds is that the actual world is contingently actual because we can also make sense of what it is on POWA for a possible world to be contingently possible, which allows us to make sense of the claim that some other world could have been actual. So, POWA can account for the contingency of the actual world.

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whatever explanation there is for their existence is something other than the explanation for the actual world's existence.

[298] That is, considering it as false that it is merely possible.

There are at least two initial worries with the account I have just stated. The first is, if each possible world consists of that world considered as actual, its possible worlds relative to it, and its own SP,[299] then we have effectively pushed the problem back a level. We now must answer the question of why God chose to actualize one PW* over another, and the answer that most immediately jumps to mind is that there is some further SP by which God judges which PW* is best. We then run into exactly the same problem as before because we still would need to make sense of the claim that our PW* is only contingently actual—down that path lies the Ogre of Regress. How might we resolve the worry? One way would be to appeal back to INFANT, as Adams does. Unfortunately, doing so would be simply to admit defeat and give up POWA, despite the strength with which Leibniz endorses it. Alternatively, we might attempt to hold onto Leibniz's claim that the mere existence of alternate possibilities is sufficient for the contingency of the actual world.

Given the actual SP, it is true that our world is the only one that can be actualized because it is the best of all possible worlds. However, God's choice is maintained because he can consider what would be the case if some other SP obtained. Since it is false that those other possible standards obtain, God does not actually choose between possible standards, which allows us to avoid the regress. The SP that results in our world is the only one that actually exists, and it is enough for God's choice that he can consider it as being other than it is, which would allow for some other world to be actual. Since the only contingency we need worry about is the contingency of the actual world, it is not a problem that those other SPs are false—it is sufficient that God can conceive of them. Unfortunately, if Leibniz's initial claim that the only thing needed for the contingency of the actual world is the existence of other possible worlds is unsatisfying, then I do not think that construing possible worlds in terms of PW* fares any better, as without the added claim that other possible worlds are only contingently possible, the same worries remain.

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[299] Call this whole collection PW*.

If we want to make sense of Leibniz's claim that POWA solves the problem of contingency in a way that avoids the worries raised above, then we have to understand the contingency of our actual world in a way that also accounts for contingency of possible worlds. We also have to understand it in such a way that avoids the regress problem. It seems to me that the only way to do so is to take seriously the claim that possible worlds are only contingently possible, so that each PW* does in fact have as its main component a from-our-perspective possible world considered as actual, with our world being possible from its perspective. The SP of some other PW* means that some other possible world is the actual world in that PW*, just as our world is actual in our PW*. The contingency of our world is maintained because other possible worlds could have been actual, and we can make sense of the claim that other possible worlds are only contingently possible if we accept that there are other PW*s in which that world is actual. Also, construing POWA in terms of alternate PW*s makes it look more like David Lewis' modal realism[300] than we might have initially thought, which lines up nicely with the discussion of the previous chapter and is unsurprising if we do in fact think of Leibniz as the grandfather of possible world semantics. Either way, the PW* account can make sense of how POWA solves the problem of the contingency of the actual world.

Some Final Thoughts on POWA

There are, of course, a few problems with the account I have discussed above. The first is that it is one that Leibniz himself would probably be less than satisfied with since it seems to destroy the important ontological difference between actuality and possibility. That is, if every possible world is actual in some PW*, then there is no real distinction between our world and those worlds that are merely possible from our perspective. While I think that such a concern is exactly right, I do want to show how it is possible to maintain a

[300] Indeed, as we discussed in the last chapter, this claim is much more plausible than it might initially have appeared.

distinction between actuality and possibility on POWA. One the one hand, it is true that, if the scope of our focus covers all of the PW*s in God's mind, then we lose the distinction that Leibniz takes to be so obvious. On the other hand, if we narrow our focus to just our own PW*, then it seems to me that we can maintain an important difference between the actuality of our world and those worlds that are possible relative to it. Within a PW*, there is only one actual world and, when creatures in W_{actual} make possibility claims, they refer to the non-actual possible worlds in PW*. Furthermore, the relationship that W_{actual} has to $W_{possible}$ in a given PW* is closed within that PW*; possibility claims only ever reference possible worlds within the same PW* and never refer to other PW*s, despite the fact that the contingency of a particular possible world in a given PW* depends on its being actual in some other PW*.[301] By distinguishing between a world that is possible in some PW* but actual in another, we are able to maintain the important distinction between actuality and possibility, at least relative to a particular PW*.[302]

One result that we get by understanding POWA in the way developed above is that we can begin to see how both INFANT and POWA amount to two different ways of understanding the same view of contingency. An interesting feature of INFANT that Bertrand Russell pointed out is that, "the view that infinite complexity is the defining property of the contingent has the curious consequence that truths about possible substances are contingent."[303] Despite some other commentators' skepticism about such a

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[301] That is, the counterpart relation between $W_{possible}$ in PW^*_1 and W_{actual} in PW^*_2 is non-transitive, so that W_{actual} in PW^*_1 has no relationship to W_{actual} in PW^*_2.

[302] There is another very important objection to the account I have just given, one that Margaret Wilson raises in her article "Possible Gods," in which she argues that for POWA to work, there must be an infinite number of possible Gods that are different from the God of the actual world. I would like to hold off on addressing that objection until a later section of the current chapter.

[303] Bertrand Russell, "Recent Work on the Philosophy of Leibniz," in *Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Harry G. Frankfurt (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 374, n.5.

claim, Adams affirms that Leibniz held the view that there are contingent connections among possible objects. He writes:

> Indeed the idea that there are contingent connections among things considered as possible becomes quite important to Leibniz in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and the correspondence with Arnauld. This is to be expected, in view of Leibniz's insistence that all of the acts of any individual follow from the concept of that individual considered as possible.[304]

I agree that Leibniz thought that contingency was an important issue even for possible individuals, and if I am correct about POWA, then it too can account for the contingent truths about possible substances. Therefore, we can begin to see one way in which INFANT and POWA overlap in their accounts of contingency—they both account for the contingency of truths concerning possible individuals. In the next section, we will examine even more ways that the two views overlap, concluding with the result that Leibniz took INFANT and POWA to be two ways of understanding the same account of contingency.

A Happy Union

That Leibniz thought that INFANT and POWA were simply two different ways of understanding the same account of contingency is clear, despite any problems to which we might point concerning Leibniz's understanding of either INFANT or POWA. In 1698, Leibniz writes:

> There are as many possible worlds as there are series of things that can be thought up which do not imply a contradiction. This thesis is identical with me, for I call possible that which does not imply a contradiction, and so in this sense it cannot be refuted.[305]

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[304] Adams, "Leibniz's Theories of Contingency," 19.

[305] Leibniz, "Discussion with G. Wagner (March 1698)." Quoted in Adams, *Leibniz,* 48. Adams assumes that "does not imply a contradiction" picks out INFANT, and he takes this passage to show that Leibniz does think both INFANT and POWA pick out the same notion of contingency. I agree with Adams in this regard, but as we shall see, I think he is wrong to criticize Leibniz's claim here.

Leibniz is explicit about the connection between INFANT and POWA, as he thinks that the claim that there are many possible worlds is the same as the claim that a contingent truth is one that does not imply a contradiction. According to INFANT, a truth is contingent just when it does not imply a contradiction, so that it cannot be shown to be not possible. Again, the reason for which it does not *imply* a contradiction is because such analyses are infinite, so that one can never end the analysis in a contradiction. On POWA, however, contingency is picked out by there being possible worlds other than the one where the contingent truth takes place. By the quote above, these possible worlds consist of a series of things that is self-consistent. On Leibniz's understanding of "does not imply a contradiction," the set of possible worlds will be picked out by INFANT; in order to determine which worlds are possible, one must apply INFANT, which allows one to see which worlds are possible-in-themselves. Once we have the set of possible worlds (by INFANT), we can then use POWA to pick out contingency by determining what is true in the possible worlds that INFANT picks out.

The overlap between INFANT and POWA consists precisely in the fact that they return exactly the same results concerning the question of contingency. On INFANT, a truth is contingent when its opposite does not imply a contradiction, which will be cashed out in terms of an infinite analysis that does not end in a contradiction. On POWA, a truth is contingent when its opposite does not imply a contradiction, which will be cashed out in terms of its opposite being true in some possible world. On INFANTPOWA, a truth is contingent when its opposite does not imply a contradiction, which will be cashed out in terms of its opposite being true in some possible world, which will be the case just when one cannot do an analysis in a finite number of steps to get a contradiction. INFANT and POWA overlap because they both return exactly the same results, and Leibniz is justified in his thinking that they amount to the same thing because they provide exactly the same results concerning contingency, albeit they use different methods to get those results.

Despite Leibniz's assertion above, Adams in particular objects to the union of these two. He points to four issues that he claims POWA entails and that Leibniz would not accept, for which reason we ought to reject it as Leibniz's account of contingency and focus instead only on INFANT. These issues are:

> (1) A possible individual will in general exist in more than one possible world.
>
> (2) Each actual individual will be compossible with individuals of almost every possible sort, in the sense of coexisting in some possible world with an individual of that sort.
>
> (3) There will be possible worlds in which different worlds will be the best possible; for the bestness of this world is not demonstrable.
>
> (4) There will be possible worlds that have (with one exception) all the perfections that the actual world (considered as possible) has, and more.[306]

Adams is correct to say that it looks as if, had Leibniz accepted POWA, he would also have to accept these, and Leibniz's accepting (1) – (4) goes against commitments Leibniz explicitly holds throughout his writings. However, it is possible to respond to each of these four points and show how it is that Leibniz could have held them in light of some of his other claims. My hope is that, by showing how Leibniz can deal with (1) – (4), we will burst through one of the main roadblocks in accepting that INFANT and POWA were two different ways in which Leibniz characterized the same account of contingency.

The reason that Adams holds that POWA entails (1) can best be seen from an example. Take any property β I have, say 'has-brown-hair.' According to Leinbiz, β is only contingently true of me, as it is not demonstrable (by INFANT) that my not having β leads to a contradiction. The worry generated by POWA is there would have to be some possible world in which I do not have β; instead, my hair is for example blonde. For it to be true that I have blonde hair in some other possible world, it must be the case that I exist in some

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[306] Adams, "Leibniz's Theories of Contingency," 34.

other possible world. In other words, POWA makes sense of the claim that it is only contingent that I have β by appealing to some other possible world in which my having β is false, but I would have to exist in another possible world in order for it to be true that my having β is false. As Adams points out, Leibniz explicitly rejects the claim that an individual can exist in more than one possible world.[307] The response to (1), then, ought either be that POWA does not entail (1) or that Leibniz can accept (1). Since Adams correctly points to places in which Leibniz explicitly rejects (1), we must show that POWA does not entail (1).

Recall the discussion of the previous chapter. Adams claims that the only way to make sense of the contingency of my having β on POWA is if I exist in more than one possible world. Leibniz explicitly thinks that (1) is not the case. Appealing to the same passage in which Adams points to Leibniz's rejection of (1), we see Leibniz offering an alternative way to understanding contingency on POWA without accepting (1). He writes:

> I will show you some [possible worlds], wherein shall be found, not absolutely the same Sextus as you have seen (that is not possible, he carries with him always that which he shall be) but several Sextuses resembling him, possessing all that you know already of the true Sextus, but not all that is already in him imperceptibly, not in consequence all that shall yet happen to him. You will find in one world a very happy and noble Sextus, in another a Sextus content with a mediocre state, a Sextus, indeed, of every kind and endless diversity of forms.[308]

As Adams points out, Leibniz here does reject that an individual can exist in multiple possible worlds (by CIC). However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Leibniz also offers in the above passage is that one need not think (1) is true in order to understand contingency on POWA. What exists in different possible worlds is not the same Sextus but is instead some other individual *resembling* Sextus that fulfills the contingency of (some of) Sextus's properties. In other words, what we see Leibniz presenting here is a counterpart

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[307] See Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §30, 61, and *Theodicy* §414, 370-71.

[308] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §414, 371.

theory on which there are individuals in other possible worlds that resemble the individual of the actual world and these counterparts are all that are needed for contingency. The way in which Leibniz is able to reject (1) is to point out, contra Adams, that one need not admit that the same individual exists in multiple possible worlds. Instead, in order for POWA to account for contingency, one needs only a counterpart with the appropriate resemblance relation to make sense of the claim, for example, that I may have had blonde hair instead of brown. Therefore, given the account of possible worlds we developed in the last chapter, Leibniz shows us how we might accept POWA and reject (1) without any sort of internal incoherence to his account.

Adams assertion of (2), I take it, follows from (1). The reasoning here is, if, by (1), individuals can exist across different possible worlds, and what it is to exist in some world is to be compossible with all of the other individuals of that world, then for any actual individual S, S will be compossible with not only the members of the actual world but will also be compossible with the members of any possible world W_p of which S is also a member. If (2) holds, then Leibniz's defense against the criticism that there are better possible worlds than ours would be severely undercut. He claims that those other apparently better worlds are not actually compossible and therefore cannot be actual. If every given actual individual is compossible with a host of other possible worlds, then Leibniz would not be able to make that claim because it would no longer be the case that our world is the best possible world of compossible individuals. That is, I may very well be in some other possible world in which, say, the Holocaust never occurred.

Yet, as (1) falls there too goes (2). Leibniz's appeal to counterparts to understand possibility claims about actual individuals saves him from (2) because it is no longer the case that an actual individual is compossible with some other possible world; she is only compossible with the actual world. Instead, she has counterparts that are compossible with possible worlds of which they are a member, so Leibniz is perfectly able to say that the

actual world is the best of all possible and all of its members are compossible only with the other members of it.

Leibniz's ability to deflate (3) if he accepts POWA is a bit more difficult. However, if I have provided a convincing characterization of how one might admit that the bestness of the actual world is contingent on POWA, then it follows that there will be possible worlds (PW*) in which some other possible world is the best possible world. It would not be a problem for Leibniz, however, that such alternate states of affairs exist because it is precisely by allowing for (3) that POWA accounts for the contingency of the actual world. Therefore, although on the face of it, it looks as if Leibniz would not want to accept (3), if understood correctly, it is precisely because of (3) that POWA is able to do the work for which Leibniz needs it.

Finally, it seems that the motivation for (4) comes from the considerations raised in (3). If there are PW*s in which some other possible world is best, then there might be other possible worlds which differ slightly from the actual world but are better. One caveat needs to made here. The other possible worlds are better with regard to the PW* of which they are a member, as that PW* has a different SP. Adams would want to say that those possible worlds are better than the actual world in our PW*, which would indeed be problematic for Leibniz.

Two things can be said here. First, remember that part of Leibniz's defense of our world being the best possible is that any apparently better world is not compossible. (4) seems to rely on (2) as well, as we need only worry about better possible worlds within our own PW* if those worlds are compossible. We need not admit that an individual in the actual world is compossible with some other possible world, so we also do not have to admit that those apparently better possible worlds are compossible. Second, on the understanding of contingency that POWA provides, (4) may very well turn out to be true, when that possible world is considered as a member of some other PW*. In our PW*, however, with our SP, there is no motivation to think that (4) is true, especially given the fact that we have

shown how Leibniz can deny (1) – (3). At the end of the day, when understood correctly, POWA is able to handle the difficulties that Adams places before it and, therefore, his motivation to abandon POWA for INFANT is severely undercut.

Trouble With the In-Laws

There remain two critical objections to each of Leibniz's accounts of contingency, each of which would be sufficient cause for us to give up either INFANT or POWA or both. The first objection comes from Adams: the so-called "Lucky Proof" (LP). The second objection comes from Wilson: the "Possible Gods" objection (PG). Both of these objections are cause for concern, both for my unified account of Leibniz on contingency, as well as for Leibniz's account of contingency more generally. In order to secure Leibniz's place as an important thinker on the nature of modality, it will be necessary to provide a solution to each of these problems—doing so will allow us to understand why Leibniz's solutions to the problem of contingency are important.

INFANT Releases LP

Remember that, on INFANT, to say that something is contingently true is for there to be no finitely completable analysis through which one can show that the opposite implies a contradiction. While we have already seen how best to understand INFANT, as well as how Leibniz employs it in his account of modality, one important issue that we have yet to discuss is raised by Adams—LP. The reason for which LP creates a problem for INFANT is because:

> Even if infinitely many properties and events are contained in the complete concept of Peter, at least one of them will be proved in the first step of any analysis. Why couldn't it be Peter's denial? Why couldn't we begin to analyze Peter's concept by saying, 'Peter is a denier of Jesus and…'? Presumably such a Lucky Proof must be ruled out by some sort of restriction on what counts as a step in an analysis of an individual concept, but so far as I know, Leibniz does not explain how this is to be done.[309]

[309] Adams, *Leibniz*, 34.

The issue to which Adams points here is that, regardless of whether or not the analysis of some individual's complete concept will be infinite, the fact that the analysis will involve steps that include the different properties of the individual means that we could hit upon some property early enough in the analysis such that we can show its opposite leads to a contradiction. Taking an example from earlier in the chapter, while it is supposed to be merely contingent that I have brown hair, given that it is part of my complete concept, when we analyze my concept, we might quite early on show that it is part of my concept that I have brown hair. Therefore, the claim that I have blonde hair can be shown to contradict my concept (in a finite number of steps), so that it is necessary that I have brown hair, despite Leibniz's claim to the contrary. On any normal understanding of analysis, such a thing could very well happen. Why, then, did Leibniz seemingly not worry about LP when spelling out INFANT?

In their "Infinite Analysis and the Problem of the Lucky Proof," John Hawthorne & Jan Cover discuss an interesting answer to the worry that Adams raises. The first thing that Hawthorne & Cover point out is that, before one can complete an analysis that some individual has a particular property, one must also show that such an individual is possible-in-itself. Perhaps the most significant example of the possible-in-itself criterion can be seen in Leibniz's criticism of traditional Ontological Arguments. It is not enough simply to show that God must necessarily exist, as that conclusion is contingent on its also being true that such a being is possible. As Hawthorne & Cover point out, Leibniz insists that the possible-in-itself criterion is "a general requirement applying to any proof involving concepts."[310] From here, Hawthorne & Cover then conclude that, in order to show that some individual S has a property F, one must also show that S is possible-in-itself:

> According to Leibniz, '*s* is F' can express two distinct propositions according to whether or not 'is' presupposes the

[310] John Hawthorne & Jan A. Cover, "Infinite Analysis and the Problem of the Lucky Proof," *Studia Leibnitiana* 32 (2000): 154.

> existence of *s*. If it does, then its content is equivalent to '*s* the F is an existent'. If it does not (i.e. if it belongs to the class of truths that interest us here), then it is equivalent to '*s* the F is a possible entity'. Now s the F is a possible entity only if *s* is a possible entity. Thus to prove that *s* is F, one is required to prove, *inter alia*, that *s* is a possible entity—that '*s*' expresses a possible concept.[311]

In order to show *a priori* that S has F, one must show not only that S has F; one must also show that S does not have some further property that contradicts F. In order to show the latter, one must run through the entire list of properties that S has. The list, being infinite, can never be completed in a finite number of steps. Therefore, it is not enough to show that S has a particular predicate. One also has to show that the being with that predicate is a possible being—only from there can one show that S exists and has the predicate F. Thus, one can never show by LP that S has F because merely stumbling upon F at some point in the analysis is not, by itself, sufficient to show that S has F.

I should point out here that Hawthorne & Cover are not satisfied with the above proposed solution to LP. The reason for which they abandon their initial solution is:

> When construed along the lines we have just explored, the infinite analysis doctrine renders too much contingent…Granting the existence of a finite proof that the predicate F is indeed contained in the subject concept expressed by '*s*', it remains to be proven that this is a possible concept. Suppose, as Leibniz seems to assume, that a determination of *s* as possible requires an examination of all of *s*'s predicates. Only an infinite analysis will suffice to determine *s* as possible. But then, *no matter what F is*, an infinite proof sequence is required to determine that *s* the F is a possible existent. 'Caesar is a rational animal'—indeed even 'Caesar is Caesar'—turns out to be no less contingent than 'Caesar crossed the Rubicon'.[312]

The problem to which Hawthorne & Cover point is that, on their initial account, even necessary truths turn out to be contingent because one must show for all truths of the sort *s* is F that it is a possible existent , which would indeed be a problem for Leibniz. So, they abandon their first attempt at solving LP. I claim, however, that they abandon their answer too quickly and for insufficient reasons. Consider the most obviously necessary claim to

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311 Ibid.

312 Ibid., 155-56, emphasis original.

which they point: 'Caesar is Caesar.' Construed as S is F, it would indeed require an infinite proof to show that 'Caesar is Caesar.' However, I think that 'Caesar is Caesar' is construed incorrectly as S is F, as the claim that 'Caesar is Caesar' is not ascribing predicates to a subject. Instead, 'Caesar is Caesar' is saying of Caesar that he is Caesar. In other words, it is merely a claim about self-identity and ought to be construed as S is S, which we can show in a finite number of steps. To understand 'Caesar is Caesar' as S is F, we would have to construe it as 'Caesar is [the complete concept of Caesar]'. The latter formulation, however, *is* contingent, as Caesar may very well have had a different complete concept; we cannot show by a finite analysis that Caesar has to have the complete concept that he in the actual world does, even though we can show by a finite analysis that Caesar is identical with Caesar. Hawthorne & Cover move away from their proposed solution too quickly, and it is because of the fact that we not only have to show that S has F, but also that S is possible, that we can avoid the problem raised by LP. Therefore, Adams worry concerning INFANT is solvable.

Are You There God? It's Me, Possible

The second of the two main objections to Leibniz's account of contingency comes from the title of Margaret Wilson's article, "Possible Gods" (PG). According to PG, the only way to make sense of how POWA handles contingency is if we admit that there is not simply one God that decides which world to actualize. Instead, there are an infinite number of possible Gods—one for each possible world. The reason PG arises can be seen if we consider once again how POWA handles the contingency of the actual world.[313] Wilson's criticism of POWA as a view Leibniz could have held depends on the claim that the actual world, by Leibniz's own admission, is contingent. She points out that, given that God is an individual, He has a complete concept that contains everything He will do.[314] One of the

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[313] Again, part of what it means for the actual world to be contingently so is that God could have actualized some other world.

[314] Margaret D. Wilson, "Possible Gods," in *Ideas and Mechanism: Essays on Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Margaret D. Wilson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 724. I take Wilson

things God will do, however, is actualize our world. In order to understand the contingency of God's choice to actualize our world on POWA, according to Wilson, "we should simply postulate other possible Gods (or God-concepts), the counter-parts of our God (or of His concept)."[315] Wilson's point here is clear. Given that POWA makes sense of contingency claims with regard to individuals by appealing to counterparts, and given the fact that God is an individual, then the way in which POWA makes sense of the contingency of God's actions is by appeal to counterparts. Yet, it would be disastrous if we ended up with counterparts of God on Leibniz's view, as God is supposed to be a necessary being, which POWA would characterize as being the same across all possible worlds. So, PG presents a truly powerful objection to POWA, one that we must solve in order to be able to understand Leibniz in the way I have characterized above.

There are at least two ways to respond to Wilson's critique of POWA. The first comes from the consideration of the way in which Leibniz characterizes a possible world. Remember that for Leibniz a possible world is an idea in God's mind. So, the most straightforward way to understand the claim that God could have done otherwise on POWA is to consider what God would do in some other possible world; God thinks in his own mind what would be the case if he were to actualize some other world. Therefore, if PG is correct, then the other possible Gods would only exist in God's mind. That God can consider himself as possible, though, does not seem nearly so bad as claiming that there are other possible Gods alongside the God of our world outside the realm of our God's intellect. We might still worry that the claim that there are other possible Gods within God's own mind still conflicts too much the traditional (and Leibnizian, for that matter) notion of God as a perfect being.[316] In particular, I am not sure that Leibniz would be at all happy

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to be correct on this point, especially given the connection Leibniz draws between God and monads more generally.

[315] Ibid.

[316] That is, the God we see in the Ontological Argument.

with the result that the only way to capture the sense in which God could have done otherwise is by appeal to counterparts of God, even if those counterparts exist only in God's mind.

The second way we can respond to Wilson, then, is by maintaining the claim that God is a necessary being. While Wilson is correct to point out that Leibniz understands the contingent actions of individuals on POWA by appeal to counterparts, the reason that he has to introduce counterparts is because of PII—the individual of that other world cannot be identical with the individual of our world because she has different properties. Wilson goes wrong in thinking that the account generalizes to all individuals; she is mistaken in claiming that God also must have a counterpart that will account for the contingency of His actions. God, for Leibniz, is a special case[317] so it should be no surprise that in understanding the contingency of God's actions, the normal account for individuals on POWA would not apply. If God really did have different properties in some other possible world, then PG would apply. The way to avoid PG, then, is to keep God as a necessary being, who has all of His properties necessarily, but account for the contingency of His actions in some other way. Recall the discussion concerning Leibniz's claim that God necessarily wills the best—such a claim is ambiguous between God's will and the object of His will. Interestingly, Adams picks up on the ambiguity of the necessity when understanding how it can be the case that the actual world is contingent when God's choice is necessary. He writes:

> The crucial point in the ambiguity is whether the necessity applies *de re* to the object that God in fact wills. This point could be brought out by distinguishing wide from narrow scope of the definite description operator in 'God necessarily wills the work that is most worthy of His wisdom.' If it has wide scope, the necessity applies *de re* to the work, and the sense of the proposition is, 'The work that is most worthy of God's wisdom is such that it is necessary that God will *it*'—which Leibniz denies. But if the definite description

[317] In that He is the one creature that violates the normal rules that apply to other monads (e.g. He is necessary, He is uncreated, etc.).

> operator has narrow scope, the sense is rather, 'It is necessary that God wills whatever work is most worthy of His wisdom'—which Leibniz here accepts.[318]

Adams' discussion points to the fact that what accounts for the contingency of the actual world is not God's will. Instead, the contingency comes from the fact that the world that is the best is contingent. Construing the necessity of God's choice narrowly, then, we can see that the proper way to understand the contingency of God's choice is not by having God have different properties when some other world is actualized. Instead, God always only wills *whatever* work is most worthy of His wisdom, and He does so necessarily.[319] What changes from world to world is not God's will, nor his properties. The thing that changes from world to world is which world fits the description of being most worthy of God's wisdom. Therefore, we do not need to appeal to counterparts of God to understand the contingency of His actions, as His actions never change. Instead, we need only appeal to the contingency of which world is the best, which is independent of God's actions. Therefore, the answer to PG is that there are no counterparts to God because His properties never change, so there is no problem with having one-and-the-same God populate each possible world. Instead, what accounts for the contingency of which world God actualizes is the fact that which world is the best is contingent, but that fact changes nothing about God. PG fails as an objection to POWA.

Some Final Thoughts on Leibniz's Modal Metaphysics

Adams and Wilson offer what I take to be the two strongest objections to each of the ways in which Leibniz characterized his account of contingency. In offering a response to both LP and PG, what I hope to have shown is that Leibniz's account of contingency can handle the objections specific to it. If either LP or PG proved to be unanswerable, then my attempt to unify INFANT and POWA would be in serious trouble. As I have shown how

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[318] Adams, "Leibniz's Theories of Contingency," 14.

[319] That is, he does exactly the same thing across all possible worlds.

one might successfully respond to both LP and PG, we can see that Leibniz was quite serious when he claimed that INFANT and POWA amounted to the same way of understanding contingency. Leibniz thought that his account of modality was crucial for salvaging an account of freedom that allows for lots of neat results. In the next chapter, we will take Leibniz's account of modality and see how he uses it to advance a compatibilist account of freedom of the will; we will see how Leibniz's understanding of contingency can get us the result that, although our actions are all determined, they are nevertheless free.

CHAPTER V: COMPATIBILISM AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON

One question Leibniz was particularly interested in answering concerns the status of human freedom. The problem of the nature of the will and how it can be free is an issue that plagued Leibniz throughout the course of his life. As early as 1680, Leibniz asserts that "it can scarcely be doubted that every person has the freedom of doing what he wills."[320] The theme of human freedom concerned him until the end of his life—the sole full-length work published in his lifetime, *Theodicy*, is given over to understanding the nature of man's freedom and its connection to God's actions.[321] Given the emphasis he placed on developing a proper account of human freedom, it behooves us in the current chapter to examine how best to understand Leibniz's account of the freedom of the will, as well as to specify the way in which it depends on and is motivated by his account of modality. Once we have a proper understanding of his views on freedom, we can then discuss the ways in which Leibniz fits into the current free-will debate and show what, if anything, he has to offer to contemporary accounts.

As I have foreshadowed throughout the preceding chapters, there are a few elements of Leibniz's philosophy that might cause worry for the claim that humans are free in any sense of the word. In particular, one thing that falls out of some of the central tenets of his system is that, from them, he develops a theory on which it is difficult to make sense of the claim that any of my choices are free. Take for example Leibniz's claim that an individual has all of her properties already contained in her concept from the moment of

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[320] Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility," 19. Leibniz originally added to this claim, but later deleted, "that is, doing what he judges best. One can ask whether people also have freedom of willing."

[321] "It is this that I have undertaken in the Essays which I offer here, on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil" (Leibniz, preface to *Theodicy*, 53).

creation.[322] Given CIC, it becomes quite difficult to see how any individual could ever make a free decision: prior to her deciding, it was already true of her that she would make the decision she does. Such a consideration makes it at best difficult to see in what sense her decision was freely made. Moreover, consider once again PSR, which states that for any action there is a perfectly determinate reason why that action happened as opposed to some other. If we take decision-making to be a sort of action, by PSR our decision-making process was perfectly determined to go exactly the way it did, so that the choices that we make appear to be determined by some proceeding reason. It is difficult to see how such a choice could be free in light of such determination. Nevertheless, despite the apparent obstacles for a coherent notion of freedom that these theoretical commitments seem to present, Leibniz held that we as humans are free in a normatively important sense and that the freedom we have in willing is consistent with the rest of his philosophical system.[323]

The remainder of the dissertation will be involved in the task of understanding exactly how Leibniz understood the notion of human freedom and how his theories fit into contemporary scholarship in the free-will debate. One thing we shall see is how much his account depends on the analysis of modality that I have provided in the proceeding chapters. It is in virtue of the fact that Leibniz provided a modal realist account of modality that he is able to make consistent his views on freedom with his other philosophical commitments. Furthermore, it is from the fact that he was driven to his views on freedom by the basic principles of his system that Leibniz is able to respond forcefully to his opponents and, by the same token, find a place in the contemporary debate on free will. In order to see how he understood the notion of freedom for human creatures, let us now focus in on the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for freedom Leibniz offers in developing his view.

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[322] For a complete account of CIC, please see my Chapter Two.

[323] Of course, given this, the challenge is in understanding exactly what Leibniz means by 'free'.

The Three Little Pigs (of Freedom): Spontaneity, Intelligence, and Contingency

At the outset of any discussion of the nature of freedom, it is perhaps best to highlight what we may call the two main challenges to it. On the one hand, the thesis of causal determinism is an obstacle to the notion that any of our actions are free because they are completely determined by a preceding set of causes that sufficiently account for the decision being made. On the other hand, God's foreknowledge also presents a difficulty for human freedom. If God knows what I am going to choose before I even begin deliberating about my actions, then it is far from clear in what sense my choice is free.[324] Leibniz was very much aware of both of these problems, as can be seen when he writes:

> How freedom and contingency can coexist with the series of causes and with providence is the oldest worry of the human race. And the difficulty of the problem has only increased through the investigations Christians have made concerning God's justice in providing for the salvation of men.[325]

In developing his theory of freedom, Leibniz is conscientious that he must overcome these two great roadblocks in a way that is consistent with the rest of his system. Furthermore, he will attempt to do so in a way that avoids the problems he sees with the attempts offered by both the Dominicans and the Jesuits.[326] The way in which Leibniz approaches his solution to the problem of freedom is by first offering the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for a free choice. Following the Aristotelian tradition, Leibniz identifies three key features involved in a free action:

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[324] The problem here is that, knowledge being a success term, God's knowledge of my future actions implies that it is already true that I will choose a certain action, and no amount of deliberation on my part can change the fact that I will choose to do that action—the conditions for God's knowledge of my choice determines that such will be my choice.

[325] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 94.

[326] For a nice discussion of Leibniz's connection with earlier attempts to overcome the problem of divine providence, see Michael J. Murray, "Leibniz on Divine Foreknowledge of Future Contingents and Human Freedom," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55 (1995).

> Up to this point I have expounded the two conditions of freedom mentioned by Aristotle, this is, *spontaneity* and *intelligence*, which are found united in us in deliberation, whereas beasts lack the second condition. But the Schoolmen demand yet a third, which they call *indifference*. And indeed one must admit it, if indifference signifies as much as 'contingency'[.][327]

The three conditions Leibniz offers are spontaneity, intelligence, and contingency. We can see from the passage that, while Leibniz adopts the conditions of spontaneity and intelligence, he is somewhat hesitant to admit the condition of indifference unequivocally. Instead, he offers his account of contingency as the final condition for freedom. Although we will below delve more deeply into each of these three terms, for the moment it would behoove us to examine what exactly Leibniz's worry with Scholastic indifference is.

Whatever, Man: The Liberty of Indifference

One excellent example of the way in which Leibniz's basic principles motivated his theory of freedom can be seen in Leibniz's vociferous denial of the liberty of (complete) indifference[328] on the basis of PSR. Leibniz explicitly denies in numerous places the coherence of the notion that we can be free of all constraints or influence when we act:

> If complete indifference is required for freedom, then there is scarcely ever a free act, since I think that the case in which everything on both sides is equal scarcely ever comes up.[329]

> But I find that we need to be very cautious here so that we do not fall into a chimera which shocks the principles of good sense, namely, what I call an *absolute indifference* or *indifference of equilibrium*, an indifference that some people imagine freedom to involve, and that I believe to be chimerical.[330]

> Thus, although we have a freedom of indifference which saves us from necessity, we never have an indifference of equilibrium

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[327] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §302, 310, emphasis original.

[328] It is important to note that, although Leibniz does reject what he calls the indifference of equilibrium or equipoise, he does accept the terminology of 'the liberty of indifference', although in a restricted sense.

[329] Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility," *Marginal Comments*, 22-23.

[330] Leibniz, "Letter to Coste, on Human Freedom," 194, emphasis original.

> which exempts us from determining reasons. There is always something which inclines us and makes us choose, but without being able to necessitate us.[331]
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> It is not to be imagined, however, that our freedom consists in an indetermination or an indifference of equipoise, as if one must needs be inclined equally to the side of yes and of no and in the direction of different courses, when there are several of them to take.[332]

In these and many more places, we see Leibniz offering a denial of what he terms 'the indifference of equipoise' (LIE) because such indifference violates PSR. PSR requires that every action be perfectly determined by prior reasons or causes. To see why LIE would constitute a violation of PSR, consider a case like that of Buridan's ass.

Imagine that I am equidistant from two delicious-looking burritos. On either side of me (but the same distance from me on both sides) sits a warm, fragrant, bulging tortilla stuffed with rice, vegetables, meat, and other culinary accoutrements. Given the fact the both burritos appear to me to be exactly identical and the distance I am from each of them is the same, the worry is that there is no reason for me to choose one burrito over the other; if somehow I did decide to eat the burrito on my right as opposed to my left, I would do so for no determinate reason! Unfortunately, because I have nothing pushing me towards either burrito, my (somehow) choosing one is a violation of PSR and, instead of enjoying a delicious treat I would instead starve to death for want of a reason to pick either one.

Although Leibniz has more to say on the impossibility of Buridan's burrito, the important lesson we ought to take away is that Leibniz denies LIE because it violates PSR, so that we can begin to see how his account of freedom is motivated by his more basic philosophical commitments. Furthermore, one implication of Leibniz's denial of LIE is that the common libertarian notion that the will is free just when it is at complete liberty to decide between two alternatives is incoherent on Leibniz's system. The problem with LIE is

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[331] Ibid, pp. 194-95. Shortly thereafter, Leibniz proceeds to explicitly deny Buridan's ass-type examples.

[332] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §35, 143.

that, in the case of the will, I would be in a situation in which I were trying to decide on a certain action, but all of my reasons, passions, and desires would be at a perfect equilibrium, so that presumably my will just chooses one of the options. However, if I am truly am in a state of equilibrium, according to PSR there would be no reason for my will to go one way over the other and so I would not be able to decide on a course of action. As we can begin to see, on the basis of PSR Leibniz will reject any libertarian notion of freedom that requires LIE to be true. Although we will return to the reliance on PSR in rejecting libertarianism later, the important thing to note here is that (1) Leibniz's theory of freedom is motivated by his more fundamental philosophical precepts, and (2) whatever notion of freedom Leibniz wants to use in discussing human wills, it cannot be the sort of libertarian freedom of complete indifference that is so often thought to be a requirement for a truly free will. Instead, he must offer an alternate way of understanding the liberty of indifference that captures our intuitions about freedom in a way that is consistent with his philosophical system. Before we turn to that discussion, however, let us first get clear on the other two requirements for freedom: spontaneity and intelligence.

Act Now and You'll Get Spontaneity for Free!

One key feature on any account of freedom, I take it, is that the individual who is free acts wholly from her own power and not from any outside force or determination. The reason we think that freedom requires an exemption from external constraint is deeply intuitive—if the reason or cause of my acting in a certain way or making a certain choice cannot ultimately be traced back to me, it simply strikes us that here is a prime example of my not acting freely. In detailing his account of freedom, Leibniz characterizes the notion of an agent acting from her power as 'spontaneity'. He writes:

> We also see that every substance has a perfect spontaneity (which becomes freedom in intelligent substances), that *everything that*

> *happens to it is a consequence of its idea or of its being*, and that nothing determines it, except God alone.[333]

Leibniz asserts here that every individual substance, including free persons, acts from perfect spontaneity inasmuch as every action she does is a direct consequence of her own being.[334] He reiterates his acceptance of a perfect spontaneity in *Theodicy*:

> I am of the opinion that our will is exempt not only from constraint but also from necessity. Aristotle has already observed that there are two things in freedom, to wit, spontaneity and choice, and therein lies our mastery over our actions. When we act freely we are not being forced, as would happen if we were pushed on to a precipice and thrown from top to bottom; and we are not prevented from having the mind free when we deliberate, as would happen if we were given a draught to deprive us of discernment. There is *contingency* in a thousand actions of Nature; but when there is no judgement in him who acts there is no *freedom*. And if we had judgement not accompanied by any inclination to act, our soul would be an understanding without will.[335]
>
> As for spontaneity, it belongs to us in so far as we have within us the source of our actions, as Aristotle rightly conceived.[336]

Leibniz aptly makes use of an example to help illustrate what he means by spontaneity: if someone pushes me off of a cliff, my plummeting to my death is not the result of one of my free choices because the cause did not originate from me; rather, the cause of my sudden fall is the person who pushed me (i.e. something external to me). He also sets up the next requirement for a free action: in order for one of my actions to be free, it must be the result

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[333] Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §32, 64, emphasis mine.

[334] I should note here that, given the discussion of the previous chapters, the most plausible way to make sense of Leibniz's comment that God determines our actions is to understand him as asserting that all creatures depend on God for their existence; the influence God has on our actions is derivative on the fact that we depend on God for our existence. Alternatively, we might also understand Leibniz's claim as an appeal to his doctrine of pre-established harmony. Either way, we can say with certainty here that Leibniz does not think God directly intervenes by causing our actions, as this would be inconsistent with His perfections.

[335] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §34, 143, emphasis original.

[336] Ibid. §290, 304.

of intelligent deliberation.[337] Indeed, Leibniz explicitly admits that contingency and intelligence alone are not sufficient for freedom; our actions also need to be spontaneous.

As we might expect, however, spontaneity is not alone sufficient for freedom, as:

> [T]o bring conclusion to this question of spontaneity, it must be said that, on a rigorous definition, the soul has within it the principle of all its actions, and even of all its passions, and that the same is true in all simple substances scattered throughout Nature, although there be freedom only in those that are intelligent.[338]

One interesting feature of Leibniz's system is that, given the way in which he conceives of spontaneity, every individual substance cannot help but be spontaneous.[339] By CIC, every property an individual has is already included in her subject from all eternity.[340] For any given action or choice she makes, we know that that action or choice is already within her and cannot come from any outside source. The explanation for any given property an individual has is exhausted by some subset of her previous states, so that all of her choices are determined by some preceding internal states. Since Leibniz identifies spontaneity simply as a lack of external causes or determinations, it turns out that every individual, from the freest human to the lowliest rodent, is perfectly spontaneous; there cannot be any external force acting on any individual. Although Leibniz at times will talk as if such external pressures could be present (as in the case of someone pushing me off a cliff), when he is being careful he realizes that all individuals have perfect spontaneity on his system. Given

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[337] We will focus on this in the next section.

[338] Ibid. §65, 158. See also, Leibniz, "A New System of Nature and Communication of Substances, and of the Union of the Soul and Body," 143, and "Letter to Coste, on Human Freedom," 195. Notice we have here another instance where Leibniz points to intelligence as being relevant to the issue of freedom.

[339] See Jolley, *Leibniz*, 131-32.

[340] One thing that it is important to remember is that, for Leibniz, there is no distinction between the individual substance and the individual concept—the concept just is the substance. So, when Leibniz affirms of a substance that it is spontaneous (i.e. that it is source of all of its actions) on the basis of its already having all of its properties (or at least the basis for all of its properties), this is the same as affirming of a concept that it contains all of its predicates. For a more complete discussion, see my Chapter Two.

the fact that Leibniz includes CIC in his system, when an individual acts they automatically act spontaneously and, since the spontaneity follows from a more basic aspect of his system, Leibniz gets spontaneity for free.

One feature of Leibniz's system that is worth noting in the context of his discussion of spontaneity is that, while he is focused in on the spontaneity of individual substances, Leibniz is more concerned with the spontaneity of persons than bodies. In fact, it may turn out that on his system bodies are not spontaneous, as it may turn out that they can interact causally with each other. However, even if bodies are not spontaneous, Leibniz is correct that, on his account, all individual substances are—monads, not bodies, are simple substances and are therefore candidates for being true individual substances. In discussing spontaneity, we need only discusses monads, so that even if it turns out that bodies are not spontaneous in the way that Leibniz discusses, it will still be true that all individual *substances* are spontaneous in virtue of being monads.[341]

"The Soul of Freedom"

The second condition for freedom is, according to Leibniz, intelligence—it is through intelligence that Leibniz is able to differentiate free creatures from creatures incapable of freedom. In making clear precisely how freedom requires intelligence, Leibniz writes:

> I have shown that freedom, according to the definition required in the schools of theology, consists in intelligence, *which involves a clear knowledge of the object of deliberation*, in spontaneity, whereby we determine, and in contingency, that is, in the exclusion of logical or metaphysical necessity. *Intelligence is, as it were, the soul of freedom*, and rest is as its body and foundation. The free substance is self-determining and that *according to the motive of good perceived by the understanding*.[342]

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[341] I should also note here that if one is worried about whether bodies are spontaneous, we can always appeal to Leibniz's idealism to get us out of trouble—a body only exist as the perceptions of monads and so, inasmuch as it is merely ideal, can never interact causally with other bodies.

[342] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §288, 303, emphasis mine.

In calling intelligence the soul of freedom, Leibniz is pointing to the fact that it is intelligence that sets apart mere simple substances from freely acting creatures. If we may attempt to unpack his language somewhat, we have seen Leibniz assert quite often that if necessitarianism is true there can be no freedom—giving an adequate account of contingency lays the foundation necessary to even begin discussing the issue of freedom. Spontaneity too is important, but all monads have spontaneity inasmuch as there is no causal connection between them and they all act from internal forces alone. The last bit needed for freedom is the soul, as it is only those things with souls that are the sorts of creatures that are candidates for freedom. In other words, intelligence is the soul of freedom.

For Leibniz, intelligence "occurs in the actual use of reason."[343] Nevertheless, Leibniz realizes that often times we are a slave to our passions and to our senses, which cause in us confused thoughts that are at odds with the clear light of reason. On the basis of the confusion caused by our being the slaves of passions, however, Leibniz would find himself in trouble if he claimed that we are only free in those cases in which we are exercising our reason to the height of our ability.[344] Happily, Leibniz recognizes the problem in which our human condition places us, and he allows instead that there is a continuum of freedom, as when he describes the situation of slave:

> Yet a slave, slave as he is, nevertheless has freedom to choose according to the state wherein he is, although more often than not he is under the stern necessity of choosing between two evils, because a superior force prevents him from attaining the goods whereto he aspires. *That which in a slave is effected by bonds and constraint in us is effected by passions*, whose violence is sweet, but none the less pernicious. In truth we will only that which pleases us: but unhappily, what pleases us now is often a real evil, which would displease us if we had the eyes of the understanding open. *Nevertheless, that evil state of the slave, which is also our own, does not prevent us, any more than him, from making a*

[343] Ibid. §289, 303.

[344] This would be a problem, as it is in point of fact incredibly rare, if ever it actually occurs, that we are fully rational.

> *free choice of that which pleases us most*, *in the state to which we are reduced*, *in proportion to our present strength and knowledge*.[345]

Leibniz allows for a relative notion of freedom that takes into account the fact that we are not always able to make full use of our reason. In the same way that a slave can be said to have a freedom in a certain sense, despite not being completely free, we can be said to have freedom in a limited sense even when we are not fully exercising our intellect. While intelligence is a necessary condition for freedom, it is important to note that Leibniz intends the intelligence requirement to be a capacity for rational thought; he does not mean to say that we are only being free just in those cases where we are being fully rational.[346] In adopting the intelligence requirement, Leibniz gains the ability to make a distinction between creatures that are able to be free and those that are not, and in allowing for a sliding-scale of freedom, he can account for the fact that we can still make free choices even when we are at least a partial slave to our passions.

Back to the Future Contingents

The final piece of the freedom puzzle rests in our ability to do otherwise than we actually do. The idea that we are free only in those cases where we are able to do otherwise appears to be a fundamental starting point for our analysis of freedom; a denial of our ability to do otherwise strikes most people as being synonymous with a lack of freedom. Following the commonsense notion that freedom requires an ability to do otherwise, Leibniz is emphatic that the necessitarianism of someone like Spinoza is false; he takes it almost as intuitive that our actions are not necessary. By denying necessitarianism, Leibniz asserts that at least some of our actions (and indeed a great many) are merely contingent; for at least

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[345] Ibid., emphasis mine.

[346] To be fair, Leibniz might very well say that, in a careful and technical sense, we are only truly (i.e. completely) free when we are completely rational, while still allowing for a liberal use of the term 'free' to apply to cases in which we are partially or somewhat free. I take it that Leibniz's allowance for less than ideal cases to be a virtue of his theory, as it is sadly the case that we are all too often ruled by our passions or confused by our senses.

some of our actions we had the ability to do otherwise when we performed them. The work of the proceeding chapters was an attempt to understand precisely the way in which Leibniz understood the ability to do otherwise. Recall that in developing his modal account, Leibniz offers a modal realist conception of contingency on which some action I perform is contingent just when it is true of me that I perform the action in the actual world and false in at least one other possible world. Additionally, he offers an infinite analysis account on which one of my actions is contingent just when it is impossible for any being (including God) to demonstrate that it is part of my concept in a finite number of steps. Leibniz takes the two accounts to be two different ways of understanding the same concept of contingency, and I have attempted to show that he could have consistently held that the two account are equivalent.[347] The next step in developing Leibniz's system is to see how his account of contingency can help save him from the necessitarianism of Spinoza and secure him a notion of freedom of the will that is relevant to considerations of justice and responsibility.

According to what we might call the commonsense notion of the ability to do otherwise, the ability to do otherwise can be understood in terms of alternatives open to us in a strong sense: although we chose to perform a certain action, we very much could have done any of a number of other actions instead. The picture that is often given to represent these open alternatives is a garden of forking paths:

> To illustrate, suppose Jane has just graduated from law school and she has a choice between joining a law firm in Chicago or a different firm in New York. If Jane believes her choice is a *free* choice (made "of her own free will"), she must believe both options are "open" to her while she is deliberating. She could choose either one. (If she did not believe this, what would be the point in deliberating?) But that means she believes there is more than one possible path into the future available to her and it is "up to her" which of these paths will be taken. Such a picture of an open future

[347] See my Chapter Four, 154-60.

> with forking paths – a garden of forking paths, it has been called – *is essential to our understanding of free will*.[348]

In the example above, the commonsense approach describes Jane as having a will that is free because either outcome of her deliberation could come to pass in the actual world—her future action is undetermined until her deliberation is complete, at which point her will determines that she will either join the firm in Chicago or the one in New York. The same story may be told for any of our free choices on the commonsense view and, as Kane points out, it is the fact that my future is open that many people think is essential to the freedom of my choice.

I take it that it is also part of the commonsense view of the nature of human freedom that the picture of the future as a garden of forking paths is the relevant sense of 'can' in the truism: "Ought implies can." It is often thought that a prerequisite for a normative claim's having any force is that one is able (i.e. is free) to do what one is (morally, rationally, etc.) required to do. The reason is fairly intuitive: if it is impossible for me to, say, save a drowning child because all of my limbs are broken, then it does not seem right to criticize me for not saving the child by claiming that I ought to have done so. Most people would respond to the claim that I ought to have saved the child that it was not possible for me to do so, so I am not responsible for the fact that I did not; I violated no obligation. Taking the Jane case again, we might say that she ought to take the job at the firm in Chicago or in New York,[349] but it would be absurd to tell Jane that she ought instead to take a job at a law firm on Mars—it is impossible for her to do so and the normative force of our claim is lost. By the same token, if the future is not a garden of forking paths but is instead a single path, the thought goes, and Jane's will is determined to choose the Chicago firm, then we cannot tell Jane that she ought to have chosen the New York firm—because

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[348] Robert Kane, "Libertarianism," in *Four View on Free Will*, ed. John Martin Fischer, et al. (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 6.

[349] And we would inevitably add reasons for why she ought to choose one or the other.

the choice to work at the New York firm was not open to Jane, it is not true that she ought to have picked it. Jane's responsibility for her choice ends with the cutting off of the other avenues of the path, as does her freedom.

It is against the commonsense approach to the issue of freedom that Leibniz sets himself. As perhaps is obvious, given the commitments of his theory, Leibniz must reject the picture of freedom as a garden of forking paths. The notion that Jane's choices are open to her in the sense that they are undetermined violates PSR. As we have already seen, one of the consequences of Leibniz's acceptance of PSR is that everything that happens is perfectly determined by the preceding states, so that the notion that some action of mine could be at any point undetermined simply amounts to a rejection of PSR.

In light of his denial of the commonsense view of freedom, the challenge to Leibniz is two-fold. First, he has to make sense of our ability to do otherwise, since we have already seen that it is the ability to do otherwise that allows us to avoid the error of Spinozism. Second, he either has to account for the claim that "ought implies can" in terms of his theory of contingency, or he has to raise doubts for the obviousness of its truth. The second task is particularly important, as Leibniz wants to be able to explain such things as the nature of sin in light of his commitment to PSR and CIC.[350] In answering both of these challenges, we will see how Leibniz's account of contingency helps him make sense of freedom in a way that offers a serious alternative to the commonsense and libertarian accounts of freedom.

What Can You Do (Otherwise)?

If we return to the modal view we developed in the preceding chapters, we can make sense of how Leibniz understands our ability to do otherwise. Recall that on his view, the way to avoid the claim that all of our actions are necessary is not to reject the truth of

[350] And indeed, he thinks he can.

determinism; for Leibniz the garden path never forks. Instead, we can understand our ability to do otherwise in light of the fact that our actions are determined by appealing to other possible worlds and our counterparts in those worlds. Consider Leibniz's fable involving Theodorus in *Theodicy*: After Sextus Tarquinius leaves Jupiter to follow his choice to go to Rome, Theodorus (the high priest) asks of Jupiter why He did not give Sextus a different will. In answer, Jupiter sends Theodorus to Pallas, whereupon she shows him "the palace of the fates" where there are:

> Representations not only of that which happens but also of all that which is possible. Jupiter, having surveyed them before the beginning of the existing world, classified the possibilities into worlds, and chose the best of all.[351]

As should be familiar, Leibniz includes in his ontology an infinite number of possible worlds. In the fable of Theodorus, one thing that comes to light is precisely the fact that Leibniz appeals to these alternate possible worlds to make sense of our ability to do otherwise. He continues the story:

> At the command of Pallas there came within view Dodona with the temple of Jupiter, and Sextus issuing thence; he could be heard saying that he would obey the God.[352] And lo! he goes to a city lying between two seas, resembling Corinth. He buys there a small garden; cultivating it, he finds a treasure; he becomes a rich man, enjoying affection and esteem; he dies at a great age, beloved of the whole city.[353]

The picture Leibniz paints for us is one in which Sextus makes a decision in the actual world that leads to a particular future, but he could have made some other decision; he was not necessitated into making the decision to go to Rome. The way we can account for Sextus' having the ability to have decided other than he did, however, is not by admitting that Sextus could have done other than he did in the actual world. The way we account for Sextus'

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[351] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §414, 370.

[352] Jupiter commanded Sextus not to go to Rome.

[353] Ibid. §415, 371.

choosing to do something else of his own free will is by traveling to another possible world wherein Sextus did something other than he did in the actual world. Thus, on Leibniz's account the ability to do otherwise is captured by appealing to counterparts in other possible worlds, and it is through the fact that my counterparts act as truth-makers for possibility claims about me that I can say of one of my actions that it is contingent.

Instead of a garden of forking paths, on Leibniz's theory we have a picture on which the garden has many parallel but unconnected paths running through it. One thing to remember, however, if that I can only ever walk down one of the paths. The other paths are occupied by my counterparts—counterparts which are non-identical with me. Nevertheless, it is these counterparts that make sense of my ability to do otherwise, so when I make a choice of my own free will I can truly say that I am not necessitated in my choice because there is some other possible world in which "I" do otherwise; there is another possible world in which my counterpart makes a choice different from the one I make in the actual world. Leibniz's modal theory accounts for the contingency of my choice by recognizing that I could have done otherwise, not in the actual world, but in some other possible world. The alternate paths in the garden just are the other choices that I could have made if my complete concept were other than it is in the actual world.

Ought 'ought' Imply 'can'?

The final issue we must address in understanding how Leibniz's theory of contingency allows him to develop a plausible theory of freedom is how he is able to account for the claim that "ought implies can." Because Leibniz is explicit that we, not God, are responsible for our sins,[354] one thing he must be allowed to say is that we ought not to have committed the sin that we did. One worry is that the fact that I already have within me all of my properties, which includes the fact that I will sin at some particular time, seems to

[354] See for example Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* §30, 60-62.

entail that I could not have done otherwise. If I am unable to do otherwise than what is in my concept, then it does not seem correct to say that I ought to have done otherwise.

On the commonsense view of freedom, the claim that I could have done otherwise is captured by a contra-causal ability of our will. When we are faced with the choice to sin or to refrain from sinning, nothing about our prior states determines that we will do one or the other. Instead, our will is able to interpose itself and decide whether or not to sin. In a quite literal sense, we have the ability to do either action in the actual world and what we do is not determined prior to our willing it to happen. So, a proponent of the commonsense view will assert that she can account for the claim that "ought implies can" because we have the ability to decide which action we do. In those cases in which we sin, we could have just as easily refrained from sinning, so we are responsible for our action. Normativity is accounted for on the commonsense view by the contra-causal ability of a free will.

As we have already seen, Leibniz cannot accept the sort of contra-causal power to which the commonsense view appeals. The contra-causal power is in explicit contention with PSR because it admits that the individuals choice to sin is not a product of her preceding states. On the commonsense view, the will is undetermined until the individual makes a decision regarding what her choice will be. Since the will is undetermined before the choice is made,[355] we have an instance in which there is an insufficient reason for the decision that constitutes her will.[356] Because PSR is a necessary truth on Leibniz's system, it is impossible for him to accept the commonsense account of "ought implies can." Instead, he appeals to his modal account to make sense of the 'can' in "ought implies can." He is explicit that, despite the consequences of PSR and CIC, we are free when we sin and therefore are responsible for our sins:

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[355] To put it into Leibniz's language, her will is LIE-ing.

[356] One might be tempted here to say that her decision is the sufficient reason for the constitution of her will, but this simply pushes the problem back a level as we can then ask for the sufficient reason for her decision. We will return to this point in our discussion of libertarianism below.

> Properly speaking, [God] did not decide that Peter would sin or that Judas be damned, but only that Peter who would sin with certainty, though not with necessity, *but freely*, and Judas who would suffer damnation would attain existence *rather than other possible things*.[357]

The reason that Peter sins is not because God determines Peter to sin nor is it because Peter was necessitated to sin. Peter could have refrained from sinning and, indeed, in a number of other possible worlds Peter refrains from doing so. While it is perhaps unfortunate that the Peter of our world sinned, he is responsible for his sin because he could have done otherwise. Leibniz's way of making sense of the claim that Peter could have done otherwise is to appeal to those other possible worlds in which one of Peter's counterparts does not sin. Therefore, Leibniz is able to account for normativity on his account of freedom by admitting the truth of the principle "ought implies can" by understanding 'can' in terms of the actions of an individual's counterparts in other possible worlds and not through some impossible counter-causal power of the individual.

Despite Leibniz's solution to the issue of normativity, there are assuredly some proponents of the commonsense view that will be less than pleased with the way in which Leibniz accounts for the ability to do otherwise. In particular, they will criticize Leibniz's account by claiming that it does not really capture the notion of 'can' implied in "ought implies can" because it is not I who am able to do otherwise. My counterparts do something other than what I do, but they are not me, and I in the actual world am determined to choose whatever it is I choose. Therefore, it does not make sense to tell me I ought to have done otherwise, because in the actual world I could not have done otherwise, despite what my counterparts do. Furthermore, part of what is driving the commonsense view's objection to Leibniz is the intuition that the ability to do otherwise is so important to making sense of our notions of responsibility, praise, blame, justice, etc. that anything weaker than contra-causal power fails to capture the force of our normative claims. As we discussed in

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[357] Leibniz, "Primary Truths," 32, emphasis mine.

chapter three how Leibniz can respond to worries about counterparts, what I would like to focus on instead is a potential response to the commonsense intuition concerning "ought implies can."

Given that the idea that we cannot get ought claims without the contra-causal ability to do otherwise is supported by such a strong intuition, one response available to Leibniz is to attempt to weaken the intuition that we cannot get normativity without the contra-causal ability. We may weaken the commonsense intuition by appealing to certain cases in which it seems we do want to make a normative claim despite the lack of the contra-causal ability—doing so will provide us with some evidence that we can get normativity in an important sense even without the contra-causal ability. Perhaps the most obvious cases in which we still invoke normative standards despite lacking a contra-causal ability are found in sports. I will here present two examples:

1) In American football, if the quarterback is hit or tackled after the ball has left his hand, the defensive player who tackled him is guilty of "roughing the passer." While there is some ambiguity in terms of what counts as a legal hit despite the fact that quarterback is no longer in possession of the ball, often the referee will indicate that the defensive player has committed a foul when he hits a quarterback who is no longer in possession of the ball. If we consider the nature of most defensive linemen, however, one thing that becomes apparent is that it can often be quite difficult for them to avoid illegally tackling the quarterback. A defensive player weighing hundreds of pounds running at full-speed cannot stop instantaneously and, if the quarterback throws the ball away before the defender tackles him, quite often the defender is not able to reign in with enough time to avoid hitting the quarterback. Given the physics involved in such a scenario, it is impossible for the defender to avoid hitting the quarterback, regardless of what the defensive lineman chooses to do. Despite the inability of the defender to avoid hitting the quarterback, he is nevertheless called for roughing the passer.

2) In roller derby, there is a range of contact that is illegal. However, one thing that happens with relative frequency is the following: player A is hit legally by player B. The contact from player B causes player A to then hit player C. Unfortunately, player A's contact with player C falls under the list of illegal hits. Again, given the physics of the situation, even if player A had the contra-causal power to decide not to hit player C illegally, such a choice would not be effective—there is a very real sense in which player A could not do otherwise than hit player C illegally. Nevertheless, the referees will call player A for an illegal hit.[358]

What is common to both of these cases is that they are situations in which a person commits a foul and is wholly unable to avoid committing the foul. While discussing the proper analysis of 'foul' is well outside the scope of my dissertation, one thing we can say is that a foul is something one ought not do, as one is penalized for committing fouls. In the examples above, despite the fact that the individuals do not have the ability to do otherwise according to the commonsense view,[359] they are still doing something they ought not do. These are examples in which it appears that 'ought' is separable from 'can'. If we accept the claim that "ought implies can" then it should strike us as incredibly strange that the actions performed in either of these cases constitute a foul; however, many would not raise an eyebrow when the referee blows his whistle in either case.

I do not take it that either of these examples are sufficient to show that the claim "ought implies can" is false. Instead, what they offer is a challenge to the intuitive force of

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[358] It might strike you that these examples look much like Frankfurt-style cases, inasmuch as both my examples and Frankfurt's attempt to motivate the claim that we occasionally are willing to assign normative responsibility even in cases where there is no ability to do otherwise. While I am sympathetic toward Frankfurt-style cases, one reason I prefer my examples is that they do not rely on the intuitions of the reader in order to motivate them—here are two cases that look at least *prima facie* to be instances of normative judgment without an ability to do otherwise.

[359] Again, they lack the contra-causal ability to do otherwise because, even if they could exercise their will to choose not to commit the foul, they still would commit the foul.

the principle that undercuts the commonsense view's ability to offer it as a criticism to Leibniz's account of freedom. Leibniz appears to be in a better position to say why the individuals in the examples are responsible for committing the foul despite their inability to do otherwise in the actual world because he is able to appeal to what their counterparts do in other possible worlds to make sense of their ability to do otherwise.[360] If it is the case that in some other possible world the defensive lineman or the roller derby player avoids committing the foul, then on his view we can truthfully say of the individual in the actual world that they could have done otherwise. If Leibniz is actually able to better account for cases in which there is a normative judgment despite a lack of contra-causal ability to do otherwise,[361] he would then be in an excellent position to respond to one of the stronger criticisms against his theory of freedom. Even if his view is not able to comfortably handle cases like the two above, it still remains that we have reason to doubt the truth of "ought implies can"[362] and any appeal to the principle in order to criticize Leibniz's account of freedom is nevertheless severely weakened.

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[360] There might be a worry here that Leibniz actually is unable to account for such cases on his view, as it is not clear, especially if we take as implicit in the claim that "ought implies can" the further assertion that statements of normativity also require free will. In the second example, we might wonder whether there is true spontaneity on the part of the player. The reason we might doubt that the derby skater is making a spontaneous decision is because she is being caused to commit the foul from an external source (in this case, by an opponent legally hitting her). While I do think that such a worry is quite apt, we should note that Leibniz would most likely not accept the worry, as he rejects the claim that we are ever caused from an external source (that is, spontaneity just falls out of CIC, as we saw above). So, at least in the sense that Leibniz understands spontaneity, even the roller derby skater will be spontaneous—because on his modal theory the skater also could have done otherwise, it looks at least initially plausible that Leibniz would have no trouble handling such cases.

[361] That is, despite the fact that the action of the individual is determined.

[362] One thing I will discuss below is that for the libertarian the notion that ought implies an ability to do otherwise in any rich sense is problematic, as there is a serious worry that the libertarian, in not allowing for the right sort of control over our actions and choices, cannot save the claim that "ought implies can." One lesson we might ultimately draw from the discussion of the current chapter is that it is best for everyone if we give up on thinking that normativity requires alternate possibilities that are really open to an individual.

Compatibilism v. Libertarianism: The Leibniz Edition

As with many philosophical problems, the debate concerning the nature of freedom has continued into the contemporary landscape. On one extreme, we see philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre espousing something much like the commonsense view above. In the literature, such a view is called libertarianism, or the view that freedom is incompatible with determinism and yet we are still free. At the other end, we find hard determinists[363] who also claim that if determinism is true then we cannot have free will, and they accept the truth of determinism. For the remainder of the discussion on freedom, I will not be addressing either of these camps. The hard determinist is someone who simply rejects freedom and normativity, and I follow Leibniz in thinking that we would be expressing a falsehood if we deny either of those two things. However, the extreme Sartrean libertarian position is simply too implausible for us to consider it here. Sartre claims that "no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free."[364] While it is notoriously difficult to get clear on in what sense Sartre thinks we are free, from the basic statement of his view we can see that there will be problems. If my will is truly completely unconstrained, then presumably I can will anything, regardless of whether or not I have a reason for my will; if my will is not hooked up to things like my reasons and desires, it is not clear why we should call it *my* will. Furthermore, there are presumably any number of things I cannot will—such as willing to turn into a dormouse.[365] While there are other issues with the extreme libertarianism of someone like Sartre, for now it is enough to note

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[363] Derk Pereboom is a contemporary proponent of hard determinism.

[364] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Estella Barnes (New York: Washington Square, 1992), 567.

[365] I do not mean to imply that Sartre has nothing to say in response to such worries; it is well outside the scope of this dissertation to engage in a debate concerning Sartrean libertarianism. Here I simply want to flag just a couple of the key issues with extreme libertarianism that give us excellent reason to reject it as being relevant to the current discussion.

that it is sufficiently problematic for us to not take it as a serious contender in the contemporary free will debate.

Fisching for Freedom in a Wagen

Instead, I would like to focus our attention on the debate between a more reserved libertarianism, taking as my model Peter van Inwagen, and the contemporary compatibilist view as defended by John Martin Fischer. It is the debate between these two camps that I find to be the most interesting, as they both attempt to answer the question of in what sense we are free in such a way as to save normative responsibility, and they both offer views that are at least initially plausible. Yet, as with most of the significant discussions in philosophy, neither the libertarian nor the compatibilist is in a firm position with regard to the unimpeachability of their views. It is here that I think Leibniz might be of some use in offering support for the compatibilist position against the libertarian. In the remainder of the chapter, I would like to lay out the debate between the two camps in order to show what we may take away from Leibniz's views on modality and freedom for use in contemporary philosophy.

On one side of the free will divide, we have a libertarian view that attempts to capture as well as possible the commonsense view of freedom that we saw above. In capturing what is normally meant by free will, van Inwagen writes:

> To say that one has free will is to say that when one decides among forks in the road of time (or, more prosaically, when one decides what to do), one is at least sometimes able to take more than one of the forks. Thus, Jane, who is deciding between a fork that leads to telling all and fork that leads to a life of continued deception, has free will (on this particular occasion) if she is able to tell all and is also able to continue living a life of deception. One has free will if sometimes more than one of the forks in the road of time is "open" to one.[366]

[366] Van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 184.

The view van Inwagen is attempting to elucidate here is something very much like the commonsense position: in order for an individual to be free, she must be able to decide between at least two equally available choices. As we have seen, one must be careful to explain what one means by "open," as a compatibilist may be perfectly justified in saying that Jane has options that are open to her in a sense that is insufficient for a libertarian conception of freedom. How one understands the notion of "open" in van Inwagen's example will be dependent on what one's modal view is.[367] Therefore, in order to properly characterize libertarianism, van Inwagen adds to the developing picture the fact that libertarianism involves a rejection of determinism:[368]

> Suppose [God] were to cause things to be once more just as they were at high noon, Greenwich time, on 11 March 1893 and were thereafter to let things go on of their own accord. Would history literally repeat itself? […] If the answer to these questions is No, then determinism is false. Equivalently, if determinism is true, the answer to these questions is Yes.[369]

Determinism holds that every event in the world is perfectly determined by a set of sufficient prior causes and therefore, if by some miracle we could roll back time to some prior point, events would always happen exactly as they did the first time—the list of events in the causal chain includes the wills of agents. Libertarianism rejects determinism as being incompatible with free will and claims instead that for at least some events—the free choices of agents—the reason for the choice is outside the scope of the causal chain. In other words:

> *Libertarianism* is the conjunction of the following two theses:
>
> *The Free-Will Thesis*: Various human agents at various times and on various occasions have been in the following situation: They were faced with a choice between alternative courses of action (e.g. between lying and telling the truth, between becoming a physician

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[367] As van Inwagen points out, it is open to the compatibilist to say that a future may be open to us even if it is not connected to the present without a violation of the laws of physics (Ibid., 188).

[368] Or, at least causal determinism.

[369] Ibid., 187.

> and becoming a concert pianist, between meeting Jill in Phoenix on Thursday and not meeting Jill in Phoenix on Thursday) and it was up to them which of these courses of the action they would pursue.
>
> *Incompatibilism*: If one is, at a certain moment, faced with a choice between doing A and doing B, it is then up to one whether one will do A or do B *only if* it is then undetermined whether one will do A or do B—and *necessarily* so.[370]

The libertarian holds the view that we have control over which choice we will make when faced with certain situations—situations in which we are free—and it is precisely in the ability we have to decide whether to do A or do B when it is undetermined prior to our choice which will happen that freedom consists.

In contrast to libertarianism, compatibilism is the view that free will and determinism are compatible. While there are different types of compatibilists, all share the intuition that we are able to make sense of the freedom of agents and normativity despite the fact that we lack the ability to do otherwise that is picked out by the commonsense view. Following the definition van Inwagen provided, we might define compatibilism as the view that accepts the free-will thesis but rejects the incompatibilism thesis. As Fischer understands it, compatibilism is:

> The doctrine that both some central notion of freedom and also genuine, robust moral responsibility are compatible with the doctrine of causal determinism (which, among other things, entails that every bit of human behavior is causally necessitated by events in the parts together with the natural laws).[371]

However, both Fischer and van Inwagen recognize that compatibilism under its traditional construal is problematic. The problem van Inwagen raises for the compatibilist is founded in what he has termed the 'No Choice Principle':

> Suppose that *p* and that no one has (or ever had) any choice about whether *p*. And suppose also that the following conditional (if-then) statement is true and that no one has (or ever had) any choice

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[370] Peter van Inwagen, "A Promising Argument," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 475, emphasis original.

[371] John Martin Fischer, "Compatibilism," in *Four Views on Free Will*, ed. John Martin Fischer, et al. (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 44.

> about whether it is true: if *p*, then *q*. It follows from these two suppositions that *q* and that no one has (or ever had) any choice about whether *q*.[372]

Van Inwagen points out that the compatibilist is forced to reject the No Choice Principle, despite its being so intuitive. The compatibilist claims that *p*'s entailing *q* does not make it the case that we do not have a choice about *q*, despite not having a choice about *p*. Van Inwagen's criticism of compatibilism is that, on the basis of its rejection of the No Choice Principle, we are left with a mystery as it should strike us as undeniably obvious that the No Choice Principle cannot be false.

Fischer levels a similar criticism against the traditional compatibilist. As with van Inwagen, the problem he picks out rests in the nature of choice on the compatibilist account. To see the problem with compatibilism, consider the following thought experiment:

> An individual could have his brain directly manipulated (without his consent) so as to choose *Y*. This would presumably render it true that he cannot do *X*. (Of course, if the individual were to choose *X*, then he would not have been subject to the actual manipulation to which he has been subjected – manipulation that issues in his choosing *Y*.) […] Under such circumstances, it would seem ludicrous to suppose that the individual is free to do *X*; and yet it may well be true that *if* he were to choose *X*, the neuroscientist would not have intervened and the individual would successfully do *X*. The outcome is choice-dependent, but the individual is clearly powerless (in the relevant sense).[373]

Fischer's worry is that, on the traditional compatibilist picture, the mere fact that I would have done otherwise if I had chosen otherwise is not sufficient for my being free, as it is striking in cases like the example above that I am decidedly not free, at least in any normal sense. That is, Fischer's criticism is amounts to the claim that the compatibilist is forced to assert that I have a choice in situations in which it is intuitively obvious that I do not; the compatibilist is forced to reject van Inwagen's No Choice Principle.

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[372] Van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 189-90.

[373] Fischer, "Compatibilism," 50-51.

Given the problem raised against the compatibilist on the basis of the No Choice Principle, there appear to be two ways one could go in the context of the debate.[374] The first way is to follow van Inwagen into accepting a modest libertarianism. He takes the fact that we have a choice in at least some of our actions to be so overwhelmingly undeniable as to lead him to accept libertarianism as the correct view. He writes:

> I conclude that there is no position that one can take on the matter of free will that does not confront its adherents with mystery. I myself prefer the following mystery: I believe that the outcome of our deliberations about what to do is undetermined and that we—in some way that I have no shadow of an understanding of—nevertheless have a choice about the outcome of these deliberations. (And I do not believe that the concept of agent-causation is of the least help in explaining how this could be.)[375]

Because van Inwagen accepts the No Choice Principle and the fact that we (sometimes) have the ability to make choices, he is willing to accept the libertarian account of freedom, despite the fact that he cannot make sense of how such a view would work. One option is that we might perhaps follow van Inwagen away from traditional compatibilism and accept a modest form of libertarianism as a way to make sense of our free will.

The second avenue we might follow is Fischer's move to what he calls 'semicompatibilism'.[376] In response to the problems raised against compatibilism, he introduces two notions that are relevant to his solution; he distinguishes between two types of control that he takes to be important in capturing the correct account of freedom. Fischer distinguishes between the two types of control through use of an example:

> Let's say you are driving your car and it is functioning normally. You want to go to the coffee house, so you guide the car to the right (into the parking lot for the coffee house). Your choice

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[374] As I have constrained it. Remember that we have put aside extreme incompatibilist views on either side of the issue.

[375] Ibid., 197.

[376] "The doctrine of semicompatibilism is the claim that causal determinism is compatible with moral responsibility, quite apart from whether causal determinism rules out the sort of freedom that involves access to alternative possibilities" (Fischer, "Compatibilism," 57).

> to go to the coffee house is based on your own reasons in the normal way, and the car's steering apparatus functions normally. Here you have a certain distinctive kind of control of the car's movements – you have "guidance control" of the car's going to the right.[377] […] Supposing that there are no "special" factors at work – that is, no special psychological impairments, brain lesions, neurological disorders, causal determination, and so forth – and imagining (as above) that the car's steering apparatus is not broken, you had it in your power (just prior to your actual decision to turn to the right) to continue going straight ahead, or to turn the car to the left, and so forth. That is, although you exercise guidance control in turning the car to the right, you presumably (and apart from special assumptions) possessed freedom to choose and do otherwise: you had "regulative control" over the car's movements.[378]

Fischer's example quite nicely gets at the distinction between guidance and regulative control. Guidance control picks out the agent's choice as being the reason for an action, as opposed to some other cause, and regulative control is the familiar commonsense ability to determine between two or more equally open futures. With the distinction between the two types of control in hand, Fischer thinks we can make sense of a compatibilist view that avoids the problems with the traditional account.

According to semicompatibilism, the only sort of control that is important in securing freedom is guidance, so that even if we lack regulative control[379] we can still be free in a sense relevant to moral responsibility. Semicompatibilism, as a way of capturing the relevant sense of control, offers traditional compatibilists a way out of the problem raised by Frankfurt-style cases.[380] Frankfurt-style cases, as in the two examples I raised above, are cases in which the ability to do otherwise is lacking; there are no alternate possibilities available to the individual in the example. On the traditional compatibilist understanding of

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[377] Fischer points out that guidance control is more than causal determination, as there are a number of ways you might have caused the car to turn into the parking lot without exercising this sort of control. The similarity between Fischer's 'guidance control' and Leibniz's criteria of intelligence and spontaneity is to me quite striking.

[378] Fischer, "Compatibilism," 56 – 57.

[379] That is, if there are no other alternatives available.

[380] Cases in which there does not appear to be any regulative control, but we nevertheless want to attribute responsibility for the choice to the subject of the thought experiment.

freedom, Frankfurt-style cases are rather difficult to handle, as they are examples in which if I had chosen otherwise, I would not have been able to do otherwise. Nevertheless, they are also cases in which we want to say the individual freely made her choice. Semicompatibilism is a way to remain compatibilist in light of Frankfurt-style cases—if we give up the notion that freedom requires the existence of alternate possibilities and instead focus on the fact that when we freely choose to do something we are exercising guidance control, we are able to avoid the problem raised by Frankfurt-style cases. Semicompatibilism's response to Frankfurt-style cases is to point out that an agent is morally responsible for her choice just when she exercises her guidance control, regardless of whether or not any alternate possibility was open to her. So, the second route we can go in light of the problems with traditional compatibilism is to adopt a version that is able to accommodate any modal view, whether it be indeterminism, determinism, or necessitarianism.

What's a Leibnizian to do?

It is here that I think Leibniz may most naturally enter the discussion. In light of the worries raised against compatibilism above, Leibniz's account of freedom can be useful in two important ways. First, as a compatibilist, Leibniz is able to offer us an important resource in responding to van Inwagen's move to libertarianism. Leibniz is able to show why, despite any worry we have with compatibilism, we ought not follow van Inwagen down the libertarian path. Second, although Fischer's attempt to revise compatibilism in light of the worries he sees with the traditional account is an important contribution to the debate, we can buttress semicompatibilism against some of its problems if we adopt key elements of Leibniz's system. In these two ways, we can see how adopting a Leibnizian approach to freedom is a valuable resource in the contemporary debate.

Round 1: Leibniz v. the Libertarian

As one of the basic truths of his system, Leibniz held that nothing happens without there being a perfectly determinate reason why it should happen that way as opposed to

another. In chapter one, I offered some independent reasons to motivate the truth of PSR in order to see why we might accept it even if we disagree with Leibniz that it is as intuitively obvious as any of the axioms of geometry. I would now like to add an additional motivation for accepting PSR on the grounds of its usefulness in the current debate.

On his version of libertarianism, van Inwagen admits that he does not know how the freedom of our choices is supposed to work; he merely knows that it is the appropriate position to take in the free will debate. Part of the problem van Inwagen has in making sense of libertarianism is that it is far from clear how we would have the appropriate sort of control over our choices. Return to the case of Jane: in deliberating on whether to tell the truth or stay silent, it is difficult to see how Jane could have any influence over her choice, particularly if the choice is undetermined. Van Inwagen's worry about such a case is that there is no way for Jane to influence her choice and have it remain undetermined.[381] Although he does point to one possible way some libertarians take to get themselves out of the problem, he is less than sanguine about the coherence of what we will call the 'agent-causation' libertarian view:

> It has been suggested, however, that, although events do indeed cause other events, it is sometimes true that individual, *persons* or *agents*, cause events. According to this suggestion, it might very well be that an event in Jane's brain—a current-pulse taking the left-hand branch of a neural fork, say—had Jane as its cause. And not some event or change that occurred with Jane, not something Jane *did*, but Jane herself, the person Jane, the agent Jane, the individual thing Jane.[382]

On the agent-causation view, Jane's choice is undetermined by any prior causal sequence, and it only becomes determined when Jane qua agent exercises her will to determine her choice. On the agent-causation story, it is because Jane is a free agent that her choice is both free and *her* choice—Jane's choice was not determined by anything other than Jane herself.

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[381] Van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 193.

[382] Ibid.

The problem with the agent-causation view is that it seems to lead to a vicious regress, as we may ask of any event what is the reason it happened that way as opposed to another. Jane's choice is an event, so we may ask the same question concerning her agent-causing her choice. In order to avoid the claim that her choice was determined, the agent-causation libertarian will give the same account that her agent-cause also had an agent-cause. Since we can continue to ask the same question at each level of the agent-cause, we quickly fall into a regress that will stop us from ever getting an original cause.[383]

That the regress is a problem for the agent-causation view might by itself appear problematic enough, but the issue goes deeper than just the fact that there is a regress. The agent-cause is meant to offer an explanation for how an agent makes a free choice when she decides what to do, but, given the regress, it is difficult to see how such a decision could be *her* choice. When we say an agent makes a choice, what we typically mean to be offering is an identification of the source or original cause of the action—it is the agent's choice which caused the action. However, when the regress gets introduced into the agent-causation picture, it becomes clear rather quickly that we cannot ever give a non-arbitrary answer to the question of which agent in the chain is the cause of the choice. Assuming that we choose to identify Jane's choice (in the example above) with whichever the original agent-cause was, as the viable candidate for control of the action is the original agent-cause, then the regress causes a significant problem for the view. Given the fact that the regress is infinite, at no point can we identify Jane with the original agent cause, and therefore it cannot have been the case that Jane's choice was actually in her control at all. Although agent-causation was introduced as a way to save the freedom of the choice of an agent, it

[383] I should note that van Inwagen surprisingly does not reject agent-causation on the basis of this regress. Instead, he rejects agent-causation because he cannot make sense of how an agent can act as a cause. I am sympathetic to his worry, although I also find the regress to be deeply problematic for agent-cause libertarians.

now appears that, because of the regress, far from saving the freedom of the agent's choice, agent-causation libertarianism destroys her ability to have any choice at all.

One thing to note concerning the generation of the regress is that it depends on something like PSR, even if there is not any explicit appeal to the principle. If we reject PSR, it is difficult to see how the regress would get off the ground. At any point (even the first step) we can simply deny that we need offer any reason why Jane made her choice. If we do not think that every event necessarily has a reason why it happened that way as opposed to some other, then I do not see any problem with a libertarian simply saying that Jane is the agent-cause of her choice and that is the end of the story. What more could be said against the agent-causation libertarian if we reject PSR? Once she admits that the agent was the cause of the choice, it seems she has all she needs to answer the question of how it is that Jane is responsible for her choice. If we accept PSR, though, we can see the underlying reason for thinking the agent-causation libertarian is faced with a regress—each new level of agent-cause must have a reason for its going one way rather than another, ad infinitum.[384]

If the agent-causation libertarian attempts to deny the need for a move to the next level in the agent-chain, then we are still left with a mystery, as it would then appear that the agent's decision came from nowhere. If the explanation of the agent's choice being free is that the agent chose it independently of any determining factors, then it is not clear where the choice could have come from. If the choice was not determined by the agent's reasons and desires, then it looks like the agent simply made the choice out of nowhere;[385] on the agent-causation view, we cannot trace the agent's choice back to any prior determinate source (other than the agent's choice). If the agent-causation libertarian wants to deny the regress by resisting the need for a higher level of agent-cause, then she is left with a view on which the choice comes from nowhere. A decision coming from nowhere certainly cannot

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[384] Interestingly, Leibniz picks up on this worry in "On Freedom and Possibility."

[385] That is, on the basis of nothing, without any determining reason.

be correct, however, as a choice (as a certain sort of idea) is a thing with some amount of reality and, as such, we need to explain how it got that reality. On the agent-causation view, it looks as if it gets its reality from nowhere, which is a clear violation of PSR. Once again, we see PSR providing a powerful theoretical tool in its ability to give us a clear reason why agent-causation libertarianism is faced with such deep difficulties.

By the same token, we can use PSR to motivate an objection to van Inwagen's libertarianism. Although van Inwagen rejects agent-causation versions of libertarianism, he accepts a position on which the outcome of our deliberations is undetermined, but where we still retain control over the outcome of those deliberations through our choice. Any other issues with such a view aside, if we accept PSR in order to explain how agent-causation libertarianism is forced into a vicious regress, we can apply it just as well to van Inwagen's version, since he includes in his theory the claim that the outcome of our deliberations is undetermined. Once van Inwagen admits that there are events in the world that are undetermined, the game is over. If PSR is true, then it is impossible that any event is undetermined, and it would be impossible that the outcome of my deliberations would be undetermined. If we accept PSR, then in the free will debate we have something to which to appeal in responding to the libertarian position. In other words, PSR can be a rather powerful tool to have at our disposal in providing the reason why libertarianism is problematic and its usefulness here gives us further reason to accept it into our philosophical systems.

Round 2: Leibniz v. the Semicompatibilist

Fischer's semicompatibilism is in many ways surprisingly similar to the account Leibniz offers. In particular, the notion of guidance control sounds quite a bit like a combination of spontaneity and intelligence.[386] The notion guidance control captures as

[386] I add the intelligence criterion here because Fischer develops his view by including a choice's being appropriately responsive to the right sorts of reasons via some mechanism in the decision-making process. See Fischer, "Compatibilism," 78-80.

being important for freedom is that a necessary condition for a choice's being free is that it is a willful act on the part of the individual to perform a certain action.[387] On Leibniz's account, what is important for a choice's being free is that the agent sees the reasons she has for acting one way as opposed to another and acts on the basis of those reasons. Additionally, her choice is the reason that she acts in the way she does; it is not from the fact that she sneezes that she turns the car into the coffee house parking lot (to use Fischer's earlier example) but rather from the fact that she chose to do so. It does not matter for Leibniz that the individual's choice is determined, just so long as it is spontaneous and intelligent. By the same token, Fischer's semicompatibilism takes the question of whether or not our choices are determined, that is, whether we have regulative control, to be irrelevant to question of whether or not we have freedom in our willings. Neither Leibniz nor Fischer needs regulative control to make sense of freedom; it is not clear for Leibniz how we could even make sense of something like regulative control. Given the similarity between guidance control and Leibniz's two requirements of spontaneity and intelligence, one exciting result we get is that Leibniz anticipated the move to semicompatibilism and away from the more traditional compatibilist view.

Despite the similarities between Leibniz and Fischer on the issue of freedom, one significant way in which Leibniz would diverge from semicompatibilism is on the question of the need for alternate possibilities. Fischer claims that one benefit of his view is that it accounts for the way in which we are free even if there are no other alternatives available to us:

> Indeed, my defense of semicompatibilism allows (although it does not require) one to accept that we never have genuine metaphysical access to alternative possibilities.[388]

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[387] As opposed to the individual causing an action by mere happenstance.

[388] Fischer, "Compatibilism," 73.

The semicompatibilist is open to the claim that we are free even if it to turns out that there are no alternate possibilities at all.[389] Yet, it strikes me as plausible that if it turned out there were no alternate possibilities *at all*, we would lose freedom in any relevant sense. Leibniz would concur. The problem that Leibniz would pick out for the semicompatibilist is not that the position is wrong or misguided but only that it overstates its case. Where semicompatibilism gets itself into trouble is that, if it turned out that necessitarianism were true, freedom and moral responsibility would fall away; it is a problem for the semicompatibilist that she thinks her theory would save freedom even on such an account. As it turns out, nothing in the semicompatibilist account requires that it allow for the possibility of necessitarianism, and Fischer was being overly cautious when he tried to make room for it. Leibniz is able to aid the semicompatibilist by showing a way to avoid necessitarianism without forcing us back into the alternative-possibilities puzzle about which Fischer is so concerned.

Why does necessitarianism spell such a disaster for freedom? According to Leibniz:

> When I considered that nothing happens by chance or by accident (unless we are considering certain substances taken by themselves), that fortune distinguished from fate is an empty name, and that no thing exists unless its own particular conditions are present (conditions from whose joint presence it follows, in turn, that the thing exists), I was very close to the view of those who think that everything is absolutely necessary, *who judge that it is enough for freedom that we be uncoerced, even though we might be subject to necessity*, and close to the view of those who do not distinguish what is infallible or certainly known to be true, from that which is necessary.[390]

It is notable that Leibniz explicitly rejects the view that we can be free even if we were necessitated. One thing we may take away from the passage is that, while being uncoerced is important for freedom, it is not by itself sufficient as it must also turn out that we are not

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[389] This is perhaps a bit stronger than what Fischer actually says. Nevertheless, given that he is only concerned with guidance control, which an individual could have even if necessitarianism were true, I think it is fair to put things this way.

[390] Leibniz, "On Freedom," 94, emphasis mine.

subject to necessity. Although it can be difficult to see why Leibniz was so adamant that freedom is opposed to necessitarianism, perhaps we can get at the heart of his reasoning if we consider a quintessential case of a necessary truth and compare it to a free choice. One way to illuminate the difference between a necessary action and free (but determined) one is to consider examples from mathematics:

> It is necessary that three times three is nine and this depends on no condition. God himself cannot prevent this. But a future sin can be prevented, if the man does his duty, even though God foresees that he will not do [his duty].[391]

We know for certain that mathematical truths are necessary, so that nothing three—nor anything or anyone else for that matter—ever does[392] can ever make it false that when you add three to itself twice it will be nine. By the same token, no matter how hard a triangle tries, it will never have four sides. Taking these two cases as prime examples of necessary truths, when we turn to consider some particular action of an agent, it should strike us that there is a difference between what makes a triangle have three sides and what makes me drink my coffee. The difference, I take it, is that I am making a choice when I put my coffee mug to my mouth, while the triangle is not making a choice to have three sides. Given that it is in the triangle's essence that it has three sides, and it is in my essence to drink my coffee, the relevant difference between what is true of me and what is true of the triangle has to be found in some other feature of the situation, and the difference lies in the fact that I am not subject to necessity while the triangle is. The fact that we are taking it as a given that I am making a choice in drinking my coffee sets my action as being relevantly different from the triangle's "action"[393] to have three sides. These sorts of cases highlight the fact that it is precisely because I am not necessitated in my actions that I am free. I have alternatives available to me when I act.

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[391] Leibniz, "Dialogue on Human Freedom and the Origin of Evil," 112.

[392] If I may use such language.

[393] Indeed, it is silly to even call it an action.

Lest we think that having alternatives open to us when we make a choice is going to force us to slip right back into the debate that Fischer is so determined to avoid, remember that Leibniz offers us a way to avoid necessitarianism without having to admit that we ever have regulative control over any of our actions. If we add to semicompatibilism Leibniz's account of contingency, we would be able to dodge any potential problems that necessitarianism makes for freedom. One of the nice features of his version of contingency is that it makes true the claim that we could have done otherwise without thereby entailing that we have the sort of control over our choices or actions for which the libertarian is looking. The notion of contingency we may add to strengthen semicompatibilism has it that an action is not necessary—and hence is a candidate for freedom—just in those cases where one has a counterpart that chooses other than one does in the actual world. As such, we can see that the notion of contingency that appeals to counterparts does not commit us to any additional powers an agent has. Rather, the contingency is found by appealing to what happens in other possible worlds. Leibniz's account of contingency is rather thin, inasmuch as it does not commit us to anything like the claim that there are any alternate options available in the actual world in such a way that, in the actual world, I could easily as well have gone either way. I take it, however, that the fact that his account is so thin is a virtue in the current discussion, as we do not have to take on too implausible a power such as regulative control would be. Nevertheless, it is a sufficiently rich account as to allow us to avoid necessitarianism and to mark a real difference between the actions of agents and such things as mathematical truths.

The worry from the chapter three concerning counterparts might strike us as particularly poignant here. To wit—why should I care about what happens to some other individual in another possible world when I am trying to decide whether or not I am free in my actions? If the sort of contingency that Leibniz thinks is necessary for freedom requires an appeal to counterparts, then why not simply give up the notion of contingency as being

necessary for freedom because counterparts do not strike us as relevant to the question of what *I* am able to do.

In response to such a worry, we may say a few things on Leibniz's behalf to motivate why the semicompatibilist ought to be comfortable accepting his view of contingency. First, assume for the sake of argument that there is a relevant difference between what is true of me when I freely act and what is true of a triangle when it has three sides. If we take there to be a relevant difference between the modal statuses of these two truths, then we must explain that difference. If we accept that the difference lies in the fact that I could have done otherwise (as seems intuitive), then we must explain in what sense I could have done otherwise. One option is the contra-causal libertarian sense of regulative control, but it does not seem that we can make sense of the notion of regulative control because it is incompatible with both determinism and indeterminism.[394] So, we must provide an alternate account of the ability to do otherwise.

We might be tempted to appeal to what we ourselves would do in some other possible world, but by PII, such an individual would not be me because it has different properties than I do.[395] Nevertheless, we may appeal to individuals in other possible worlds to make sense of how we might have done otherwise; it is our counterparts that make sense of our claims of alternate possibilities. If the semicompatibilist accepts Leibniz's notion of contingency, then she is rightly justified in claiming that counterparts are important in understanding how we can act freely in the actual world—without counterparts, it looks as if truths about us are no different than truths about a triangle. If we do not want to accept counterparts,[396] then we ought to give up the notion that there is any relevant difference

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[394] See van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 195. Leibniz, of course, would reject it as a violation of PSR.

[395] Additionally, as I argued in chapter three, I do not see how transworld identity is supposed to fare any better concerning the caring problem than counterpart theory.

[396] As it is the best modal theory on offer.

between what we do when we act in a certain way and what three does when it "acts" in a certain way. That is, we ought to either give up the notion that we are free, or we ought to accept a counterpart theory of contingency as the appropriate way to make sense of our ability to do otherwise.

Another worry with the semicompatibilist view concerns the concept of guidance control. Although Fischer is correct to highlight the fact that the choice is intentional on the part of the agent, we might worry here that the decision to focus on the internal choice of the agent is somewhat arbitrary, as there is a causal chain that we can trace back from the agent's choice to some external forces.[397] Separating the agent's choice from the external causal chain that ultimately resulted in the choice as being relevant to the freedom of the agent might strike us as illegitimate in the sense that there is nothing that really distinguishes the agent's choice from any of the rest of the chain. That is, we might worry about how we can make sense of the choice coming from within the agent given the fact that the agent is part of a causal nexus. However, if we incorporate Leibniz's characterization of spontaneity into the semicompatibilist account, then we can avoid the worry that the choice is a product of some set of external forces. If we replace the notion of guidance control with spontaneity, then we can dampen the worry that the true cause of the choice was external to the agent because, on Leibniz's view, there are no causes external to an individual.[398] As we saw above, spontaneity just falls out of Leibniz's metaphysics, and we may help ourselves to it in developing the best compatibilist view on freedom. Of course, we would find ourselves committed to CIC in order to get out of trouble here, but given the plausibility of PSR and

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[397] For this argument, I am assuming that causal determinism is true. Because semicompatibilism is consistent with causal determinism, I am able to do so.

[398] Remember that, when discussing spontaneity, Leibniz is really talking about the spontaneity enjoyed by minds; the agent is just the complete individual concept, which is just the substance, and it is the monadic substance that is spontaneous and makes choices. If we wish to accept idealism, too, it is even clearer how Leibniz's account can help us out here; even if we reject idealism, the spontaneous nature of all substances on Leibniz's account can help us to solve the arbitrariness worry.

the fact that PSR entails CIC, perhaps accepting CIC would not be such a bad idea. Given the fact that a compatibilist has to tell some story about in what sense the agent's choice is relevantly hers and not just a product of a long series of causal choices, Leibniz's ability to help us develop an answer to the worry is another way in which he is able to aid the contemporary compatibilist.

Taking It as It Comes: Final thoughts on Leibniz and Freedom

One of the upshots of the discussion in the current chapter is that we can see how we might appeal to elements of Leibniz's philosophy in developing positions in the contemporary debate on freedom. In particular, we can use PSR to motivate the reason why libertarianism is in so much trouble. We are also able to appeal to Leibniz's account of contingency to allow semicompatibilism to say what it needs to say without stepping over the precipice of necessitarianism. In both of these ways, Leibniz continues to have a valuable role to play in contemporary philosophy. There is, however, one other way in which Leibniz may be useful in the context of the discussion on freedom.

As with Descartes, Spinoza, and the Stoics that preceded them, Leibniz was interested in understanding how we as creatures might live a good life in the face of all of the causal forces that are continuously acting on us. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Leibniz was in broad agreement with his predecessors—we are at our most free when we are driven by the dictates of reason, and as morally responsible free agents we need to remove ourselves as much as possible from the influence of anything other than our own intellect:

> One should rather maintain that the wise mind tends towards all good, as good, in proportion to his knowledge and his power, but that he only produces the best that can be achieved.[399]

[399] Leibniz, *Theodicy* §282, 299..

> And we may say that we are immune from bondage in so far as we act with a distinct knowledge, but that we are the slaves of passion in so far as our perceptions are confused.[400]

> Employing the former sense [of freedom], the Stoics said that only the wise man is free; and one's mind is indeed not free when it is possessed by a great passion, for then one cannot will as one should, i.e. with proper deliberation. It is in that way that God's mind alone is perfectly free, and that created minds are free only in proportion as they are above passion[.][401]

Leibniz's advice for living a just life is, as with the Stoics, an invitation to us to move away from the bondage presented by the passions into the freedom allowed by the use of reason. While such language might strike us as somewhat mystical, the message is clear: if we come to understand the way in which the world works and the causal forces that play on us in determining our will, we will be free from the fears and discomforts that are the provenance of the passions. While Leibniz agrees with the Stoics to a certain point, he diverges from them in what exactly the overcoming of the passions can gain us:

> It is true that the teachings of the Stoics (and perhaps also of some famous philosophers of our time), confining themselves to this alleged necessity, can only impart a forced patience; whereas our Lord inspires thoughts more sublime, and even instructs us in the means of gaining contentment by assuring us that since God, being altogether good and wise, has care for everything, even so far as not to neglect one hair of our head, our confidence in him ought to be entire.[402]

Leibniz holds that the use of our reason can do more for us than the Stoics allowed. Far from having to maintain merely a tolerance or patience for the causal forces acting on us, he claims that we can achieve true happiness through the use of our reason. If we once again consider Leibniz's modal theory, we can perhaps see why it is that Leibniz would diverge from the Stoics on what our freedom can attain for us—if, in reflecting on our choices, we appeal to the other possible worlds and what our counterparts do in them, we can at one-

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[400] Ibid. §289, 303.

[401] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, Book II.xxi, trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), *Past Masters*, 175.

[402] Leibniz, preface to *Theodicy*, 54.

and-the-same-time bask in the freedom of our choices (given that fact that it could have gone otherwise) while realizing that, in the actual world at least, all of our choices and actions are determined.

It is striking that the counterparts in Leibniz's ontology are particularly useful here. One of the things that we realize in contemplating the alternate ways that things could have been is that those states of affairs, while making it true that I could have done otherwise, are actually happening to other individuals. Such a realization might perhaps be beneficial in that it makes us realize that, whatever the alternate possibility in question is, it is unattainable *for us*. So, we need not fret that the actual world is the way that it is; it is determined to be that way. Furthermore, because of the fact that the alternate possibilities are things that happen in a world, Leibniz's position has an advantage over that of someone like Spinoza who claims that all possibility claims are false—by appealing to thought experiments (that pick out actual occurrences in other worlds), we can learn from the experiences we discover in the alternate possibilities in much the same way that we learn from experience in the actual world. In both cases, we are learning from some state of affairs, which is something only Leibniz's modal realism allows for us to do; for a stoical philosopher like Spinoza, it is not clear that considering alternate possibilities can ever teach us anything, as all of our claims concerning alternate possibilities are false. For Leibniz, however, that the other worlds are just like the actual world allows us the opportunity to use them to gain a stoic perspective on life in much the same way that we use the actual world. Counterparts, and Leibniz's modal theory, account for much of the way in which adopting a *Fatum Leibnitianum* and the stoicism it endorses can help us lead a good and flourishing life.

Finally, while Leibniz's discussion of the good life is explicitly theistic,[403] if we recall from chapter two that much of Leibniz's theism drops out, we are still left with a view on which the use of reason to understand the way in which the universe works (i.e. God as the

[403] Which is unsurprising, given that he makes this claim in the context of the *Theodicy*.

source of all being, or "the universe") is what will lead us to happiness and the good life. Following Donald Rutherford, we may say that, on Leibniz's view:

> By conforming his will to the principle of universal justice, the pious person is able to ensure his own continued happiness and independence from fortune. The will to contribute to the greater perfection of the world, and the pleasure we take in the contemplation of that perfection, are goods of the soul that can be enjoyed whatever fortune brings. Restricting his conception of value to these 'true goods,' the pious person is not merely reassured about his fate, confident that his virtue will be rewarded in the future, but benefits from the continued enjoyment of the best sort of pleasure here and now.[404]

If we, Leibniz claims, exercise our freedom by conforming our will to our reason we can, even though we are determined at the end of the day, achieve happiness and the best of all possible lives.

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[404] Donald Rutherford, "Leibniz and the Stoics: The Consolations of Theodicy," in *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Elmar J. Kremer and Michael J. Latzer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 156.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the current work, I have attempted to motivate a particular reading of Leibniz. Beginning with the basic assumptions of his metaphysical system and appealing to the textual evidence to help develop the position, I hope to have shown that Leibniz's modal metaphysics was what we would today describe as a fairly extreme realism. While it may seem somewhat surprising to think that Leibniz would have endorsed modal realism (especially given the standard reading on which possible worlds are merely ideas in God's mind from which God then chooses one to actualize), if we begin with such principles as PSR and PII, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Leibniz held such a view. Moving from PSR and PII, we rather quickly arrive at PSP and from there CIC, so that the entirety of Leibniz's system can be formed from these two fundamental building blocks—indeed, it is PSR and PII that get us modal realism, especially if we allow Leibniz his comments that PSR applies just as well to the possible worlds as to the actual and that God changes nothing from his idea when he actualizes the world. On the basis of the first claim, PSR will entail PSP and CIC in every possible world, which should be no surprise given the necessity of PSR; on the basis of the second claim, PII entails that the actual world is identical to some one possible world as the two are qualitatively indistinguishable. Since all possible worlds are of the same sort, then all possible worlds must be just as real as the actual world (albeit they did not exist in the actual world). Leibniz, as I have argued, is a modal realist.

Given the claim that Leibniz is a modal realist, we must also make sense of why Leibniz also provided an infinite analysis account of contingency. While many scholars have argued that Leibniz's primary view on contingency was the infinite analysis account, I offer a way to make sense of how Leibniz could have held that the infinite analysis account was just another way of describing the possible worlds understanding of contingency. In particular, I argue that the inability to demonstrate a contradiction in a finite number of steps simply picks out those worlds that are possible-in-themselves, so that both accounts return the

same result. In addition, I responded to a few of the key objections to the claim that Leibniz endorsed possible worlds semantics as a way to overcome one of the key roadblocks for interpreting Leibniz as a modal realist. Once again, we see that Leibniz endorsed an extreme modal realism.

One thing of note that falls out of my reading of Leibniz is that much of the traditional interpretation of his philosophy has to be rejected. First and foremost, given his commitment to modal realism, Leibniz cannot have held that God created the world in any rich sense of the term, as the identity between the actual world and its "pre-created" state entails that God did nothing in actualizing the world; given the fact that God cannot violate PII, God had no control over the fact that we exist in the actual world nor that this world is the actual one. Therefore, the claim that our world is the best of all the possible worlds and that is the reason God created it cannot be taken literally. Instead, I have offered potential reasons that Leibniz makes the theological claims that he does, despite being committed to a vision of God more akin to Platonic Being than any traditional Christian conception. Following such famous scholars as Bernard Russell, I have argued that Leibniz's true philosophical system is rather different from his publicly espoused commitments, and if we keep the basic principles that he endorses in mind as we work through his metaphysics, it is clear that Leibniz was less concerned with defending traditionally theology than is often thought.

Using the modal realist account, I next developed Leibniz's compatibilist account of freedom of the will and demonstrated how it depends on his account of contingency. Once Leibniz is able to allow for alternate possibilities, he can then make sense of how we are free by focusing on the fact that our actions originate in us as a product of a conscious and intelligent choice we make that is sensitive to the reasons we have for making that choice. That is, Leibniz appeals to the dual criteria of spontaneity and intelligence to account for an action's being free. Because he accepts these latter two criteria, Leibniz is most akin to the contemporary semicompatibilist account. On the basis of Leibniz's compatibilist

sympathies, I have shown how Leibniz can help us respond to libertarian theories of free will by invoking PSR in our criticisms, as well as how he is able to aid the semicompatibilist in strengthening her position.

One of the upshots I hope we take away from the preceding chapters is that study of Leibniz is still a quite valuable pursuit in contemporary philosophy. On the one hand, in anticipating Lewis-style modal realism, Leibniz offers us additional reasons to accept it as the proper way to account for modality, and it would be interesting to develop more thoroughly his own arguments for the existence of alternate possible worlds that are of the same sort as the actual world as a way to develop Lewis' position in the contemporary literature. In particular, it is striking that Leibniz's Law seems to move us quite readily to the modal realist position, and it would be a valuable project to develop that story more fully. Additionally, a thorough study of Leibniz gives us more ammunition for the compatibilist cannon, as he offers the semicompatibilist a way to avoid having her theory be compatible with necessitarianism, and, in PSR, he gives us a justified way to respond to libertarians who attempt to argue that freedom consists in having an undetermined will.

The second upshot of the current work is that it offers a novel way of understanding Leibniz that is a result of rigorously following his metaphysical commitments to their logical end. That we arrive at the end we do is perhaps somewhat surprising, but the fact remains that Leibniz was a modal realist who explained contingency in terms of counterparts (at least in certain of his texts) and who understood a notion of free will that relied on just such an account of modality. Despite the fact that the standard view has Leibniz as a fairly conservative Christian theologian, it remains that Leibniz's metaphysical system takes him far away from the traditional picture and, despite the oddity painted by following his basic assumptions to their logical end, it remains that when we consider the nature of PSR and PII, the story that gets told is nevertheless, by way of logical entailment, the end.

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