

Modality in Leibniz's Philosophy

by

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Leibniz develops a metaphysical system according to which a person's nature includes traces of everything that happens in the universe. When I think about the important influences that shaped my dissertation it suffers the same feature, its origin including traces of all details of my life and the people in it. Accordingly recognizing all those influences worthy of acknowledgement feels like it requires an infinite analysis.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
List of Abbreviations	vi
Abstract	viii
Introduction	1
1 Necessitarianism	3
2 Modal Variantism and Leibniz’s Quasi-Modal Notions.....	9
3 Summary of Chapter 1	11
4 Summary of Chapter 2	14
5 Summary of Chapter 3	15
Chapter 1: Necessitarianism & Modality 1670-80	18
1 Introduction	18
2 Leibniz’s Letter to Wedderkopf.....	20
2.1 Leibniz’s Commitment to Necessitarianism	20
2.2 Divine Creation and Necessity	21
2.3 Necessity and God’s Freedom	25
3 On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom	27
3.1 Strategy One: Possibility and Imaginability.....	29
3.2 Strategy Two: Necessity of the Consequence	37
4 The Confession of a Philosopher	41
4.1 First Version (1672)	42
4.2 Second Version (1677?)	53
4.3 <i>Per se</i> Necessity and the Dreaded Doctrine of Necessitarianism	60
4.3.1 <i>Per se</i> Modality and Essences	60
4.3.2 <i>Per se</i> Modality and the Necessitarian _{NC} Argument	67

4.3.3	Returning to the “Confession”	73
5	Conclusion	75
Chapter 2:	Necessitarianism & Modality 1681-99	80
1	Introduction	80
2	Transitioning Away from <i>Per se</i> Modality.....	86
3	The Complete Concept Account, 1672-1686	94
3.1	Logical Foundations	94
3.2	Metaphysical foundations.....	101
4	The Complete Concept Account, 1686.....	107
5	Leibniz’s Problematic Account of <i>De re</i> Modality	115
5.1	Arnauld’s Worry	115
5.2	Three Rejected Proposals.....	118
5.2.1	Reduction to Truth in a World	118
5.2.2	Counterparts	120
5.2.3	Hypothetical Necessity	121
5.3	Criteria for an Account of <i>De re</i> Contingency	122
6	Two New Modal Accounts	124
6.1	Infinite Analysis.....	124
6.2	Possible Free Decrees	141
6	Necessitarianism	156
7	Conclusion	159
Chapter 3:	Necessitarianism & Modality 1700-1716	161
1	Introduction	161
2	Background: The <i>Theodicy</i> and Being a Cautious Metaphysician	164
3	Varieties of Necessity: Absolute, Hypothetical, and Moral	170
4	The Necessitarian Argument from Omniscience.	178
5	Possible Free Decrees in the <i>Theodicy</i>	181

6	The Necessitarian Argument from God’s Perfection.....	184
6.1	Premise 3: This World is Necessarily _{ATC} the Best.	185
6.2	God Necessarily Chooses the Best World	188
7	Freedom: Spontaneous, Intelligent, and Contingent Action	197
7.1	Divine Freedom.....	198
7.2	Human Freedom.....	202
8	Inclining ‘without Necessitating’.....	206
9	Leibniz’s discussion of other Necessitarians	210
10	Conclusion.....	213
	Conclusion	215
	Appendix: List of Key Works	217
	Bibliography	219

List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for primary texts frequently referred to in the text, keyed to the works in the Bibliography.

A = *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (Leibniz 1923)

AG = *Leibniz: Philosophical Essays* (Leibniz 1989)

CP = *Confessio philosophi: papers concerning the problem of evil, 1671-1678* (Leibniz 2005)

C = *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz. Extraits des manuscrits* (Leibniz 1961)

DSR = *De summa rerum: metaphysical papers, 1675-1676* (Leibniz 1992)

G = *Die philosophischen Schriften* (Leibniz 1875–90)

Grua = *Textes inédits d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale de Hanovre*
(Leibniz 1948)

H = *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom on Man and the Origin of Evil*
(Leibniz 1985)

J = *Oeuvres de Leibniz, Série II: Essais de Théodicée-Monadologie Lettres entre Leibniz et Clarke* (Leibniz 2006)

L = *Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters* (Leibniz 1969)

LA = *The Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence* (Leibniz 1967)

LOC = *Leibniz: The labyrinth of the continuum: writings on the continuum problem, 1672-1686* (Leibniz 2001)

NE = *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Leibniz 1996)

P = *Leibniz: Logical papers: a selection* (Leibniz 1966)

PW = *Philosophical writings of Leibniz* (Leibniz 1973)

Abstract

Leibniz analyzes contingency in terms of a range of different notions: hypothetical necessity, *per se* contingency, infinite analysis, possible free decrees of God, and moral necessity. These have been interpreted as attempts to retreat from the necessitarian view he adopts in his early work, but I defend the view that Leibniz's commitment to necessitarianism—the claim that all truths are necessary—is an important and unwavering feature of his system.

The core of Leibniz's modal theory is the thesis that the denial of a necessary truth is contradictory. Leibniz thinks that if we take all necessary truths into account, including the nature of God, God's understanding of essences, and his will to do what is best, then all things considered all truths are necessarily true. All truths are necessarily true because the denial of any truth contradicts some necessary feature of God. Instead of understanding Leibniz's subsequent theories of contingency as abandoning necessitarianism, I treat them as attempts to account for distinctions his interlocutors draw. Rather than eschew all talk of contingency, Leibniz offers and liberally invokes proxies for this notion.

I trace the development of Leibniz's various accounts of contingency from his early to mature work in order to illustrate that they are best understood in a necessitarian framework. I develop versions of his various accounts of contingency, including *per se* contingency and hypothetical necessity (Chapter 1), infinite analysis and possible free decrees of God (Chapter 2), and moral necessity (Chapter 3). The outcome of my project is a systematic treatment of Leibniz's surrogate or proxy theories of contingency within his necessitarian framework. It also establishes the character of Leibnizian possible worlds, which are key for the grounding of contingent truths in the goodness of God's will. Instead of representing all logical space, possible worlds represent alternative plans for God's world creation, and are thus constrained by metaphysical principles informed by God's nature.

Introduction

There is a vast, thorough, and rich literature detailing Leibniz's modal theory, invigorated by contemporary investigations into possible worlds and reductive accounts of modality. Leibniz's battery of notions of necessity and contingency—including absolute necessity, hypothetical necessity, *per se* necessity, imaginability, conceivability, infinite and finite analysis, God's possible free decrees, metaphysical necessity, and moral necessity—have each received careful analysis regarding their details and development. My aim is not to directly rehash the controversies in the secondary literature detailing each of these views, although I will take a stand on interpretations of each of them. Instead, my aim is to examine these views within the broader context of Leibniz's intellectual development throughout his work from the 1670s to 1716. Daniel Garber writes that in investigating Leibniz's views,

It is always tempting to ask what Leibniz really thinks, and to try to set out in clear and simple terms just what the Leibnizian philosophy comes to. And given the small number of texts that Kant and his contemporaries had available, this seems like a very reasonable project. But when we look at the larger context, the full complexity of his literary remains, Leibniz comes out as a very different kind of thinker. The project of reconstructing the doctrine that Leibniz held, explicitly or under wraps is fundamentally misguided. What we should be doing, instead, is trying to capture the complexity of his thought, its twists and turns, its hesitations and its affirmations.

What, then did Leibniz really think? On some issues, such as the relation between monads and bodies, perhaps that question does not even make sense to ask.¹

Our discussion will follow the twists, turns, hesitations and affirmations of Leibniz's modal theorizing. What emerges, or so I will argue, is that Leibniz is conscientiously and consistently a kind of necessitarian throughout his work. That is, Leibniz really thought that all truths are necessary because the origin and causes of all features of the world could not have failed to be just as they are. Establishing the character and justification of Leibniz's necessitarianism, which he maintains not only in the 1670s but also through to 1716, establishes a framework in which to reinterpret many of Leibniz's modal notions.

Despite his necessitarianism, he embraces talk of contingency and confirms its importance in philosophical and theological contexts. I will argue that Leibniz's many modal notions are attempts to make sense of talk of contingency within a necessitarian framework, which influences the aims, character, and criteria of successful notions of 'contingency' for Leibniz. He accepts that given all features of the world it could not be otherwise (and thus no truths are contingent) but our modal terms do not always track this feature of the world, and his modal theories are part of his strategy to explain what we are, in fact, talking about when we describe things as "contingent". The broader aim is to explore Leibniz's sophisticated necessitarianism that is distinct from the early modern necessitarianisms of, for instance, Spinoza and Hobbes, by his systematic treatment of quasi-modal notions of contingency.

¹ Garber 2009, 78.

The central idea of Leibniz's necessitarianism is that the content and truth-value of our contingency claims are relative to which considerations we restrict our attention to when conceiving of propositional terms. Leibniz thinks all things are necessary when we consider all fundamental features of God and the world but that in many contexts we are not, and should not, consider *all things* when we use modal language. I describe these notions as *quasi-modal* notions and not merely modal notions because they do not track modality at the most fundamental level, that is, they do not track the feature of reality that Leibniz himself ultimately picks out as modally fundamental: whether things could have failed to be as they are and whether their denial entails a contradiction. In examining Leibniz's various quasi-modal notions, it becomes clear that Leibniz is not all that permissive when considering candidates for explicating quasi-modal notions. In fact, we will see cases where Leibniz revises, restricts and rejects quasi-modal notions because they fail to carve out the right notion of contingency for his given purposes. The aim of following chapters is to establish that Leibniz accepts two theses:

1. *Necessitarianism*: All conditions considered, all truths are necessarily true.
2. *Modal Variantism*: Modal truths depend upon how we conceive of the terms and relations in the proposition.

To clarify each of these views, I will first turn to the argument for necessitarianism from Leibniz's texts, and then characterize the various quasi-modal notions that Leibniz recommends in light of necessitarianism.

1 Necessitarianism

According to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), for every truth there is a reason that explains why it is true. For Leibniz, this is grounded in treating features

of reality as conditional upon and determined by other guaranteeing conditions. Explanations for truths about the world thus appeal to the conditions that determine and guarantee the features of the world are as they are. It is not particularly radical to adopt an ontology that posits that mathematical, natural and divine truths are born out of dependency relations between properties and the subjects they adhere in, and the relations those subjects have to one another. However, when we examine Leibniz's detailed treatment of the nature of those sufficient conditions, and the conditioning relations, what emerges is that Leibniz is committed to necessitarianism. Necessitarianism certainly is a more radical view than substance-accident ontology.

With respect to the PSR, Leibniz's necessitarianism stems from his notion of *sufficiency* and also his notion of *reason*. First, sufficient reasons are sufficient conditions, and there is a necessary connection between a sufficient condition and its outcome. Leibniz treats conditionals expressing sufficient conditions as a matter of strict implication. However, postulating that for every feature of the world there is some set of sufficient conditions that guarantee those features does not yield necessitarianism. For even if the laws of nature, initial conditions and subsequent series of events are sufficient to produce the current state of the world, it does not follow that the current state of the world is necessary. The modal status of the laws of nature and initial conditions are importantly relevant, because if the laws of nature and initial conditions are contingent, then the current state of the world *follows* necessarily, but is *contingent*.

The additional notion that yields necessitarianism is Leibniz's notion of a reason. At the core of Leibniz's metaphysics are notions of natures or essences. These essences not only spell out the requisite features a substance must have to be a

creature of a particular type, but also constrain how properties and substances can be related to one another. The different ways that the world can be are a function of the different ways essences can be instantiated and related to one another. Essences, and their compatibilities and powers, offer reasons for features of the world. However, the collection of essences of creatures—or various possible series of things—does not contain the sufficient reasons for their own existence. Leibniz grapples with this issue when considering versions of the cosmological argument for the existence of God.² Even if previous states of the world can explain current states of the world, and even if there is an infinity of world-states in the past, we are left without a sufficient reason for the existence of this particular series of things as opposed to another. Having a coherent essence makes something a *prima face* candidate for existence and Leibniz’s commitment to the PSR includes stating that for every *prima face* candidate for existence there must be some reason why it exists, or does not exist. Leibniz recognizes that it seems as though there are different coherent series of things, and this world is merely one of them.³ Why *this* series of things *and not another* is not addressed, according to Leibniz, by merely appealing to the initial conditions and laws of nature (or an infinite chain of natural causes).

Because the features of the world are insufficient to explain why this world exists and not another, Leibniz appeals to God’s essential existence and nature to ground

² For example see LOC 117.

³ In his comments on Spinoza, “...Since the whole series can be imagined or understood by other means, a reason must be provided from outside t why this should be so. From these considerations a truly memorable thing also follows, that what is earlier in the series of causes is not nearer to the Reason for the universe, i.e., to the First Being, than what is later nor is the First Being the reason for the later ones as a result of the mediation of the earlier ones; rather it is the reason for all of them equally immediately” (LOC 117).

the dependent truths about the world. According to Leibniz, God's creation of this particular world is a function of divine intellect and will, and a comparison to other possible worlds. God's omniscience guarantees God knows all coherent ways of combining essences into worlds, and a comparison of the features of these worlds allows God to determine which of them is best. God's perfectly good will responds to the best of all options, subsequently willing the best of all worlds into existence. So the reasons sufficient for explaining features of the world that exists is a function of essences, how they can be combined, and God's features, including his existence, will and understanding.

What is distinctive about appealing to these reasons as sufficient conditions is that essences and how they can be combined *couldn't be otherwise*. For example, it is impossible for something that is a human to fail to have the capacity for rationality, because rationality is an essential feature of humans. Possible worlds exhaust the various different ways essences can be combined. Which of those worlds exists is a function of God's understanding and will. God's will is good essentially, it could not be otherwise, and God's understanding is a function of his omniscience, which could not be otherwise,⁴ and essences and their combinations similarly cannot be otherwise. Thus the sufficient reasons for features of the world ultimately are conditions that cannot be otherwise, rooted either in the essences of creatures or God's essence. So not only are the *connections* between features of the world necessitating, but also the ultimate reasons themselves could not be otherwise. To summarize, the current state of the world couldn't be different unless the laws and

⁴ God could not fail to be omniscient, however, it seems possible that the content of God's knowledge could be otherwise. As we will see Leibniz considers and rejects this possibility.

initial conditions were different, and those laws and initial conditions could not be different unless either they did not produce the best of all worlds compared to others or God is not perfectly good, but neither of those conditions could fail to happen, so the current state of the world cannot be different. So all truths are necessarily true—all reasons or conditions considered.

When Leibniz discusses modality, his most consistent claim is that the denial of a necessary truth entails a contradiction.⁵ The connection between this notion, and the above description of necessitarianism, is that Leibniz treats a conflict of essence as a contradiction. Leibniz thus describes a non-rational human as a contradiction. He builds the notion of rationality into the notion of the term ‘human’, so that the claim that there is a human who fails to be rational entails a contradiction. Leibniz’s system of definitions and concepts thus takes into account the nature and ontological relations of essences. Similarly, Leibniz treats God’s non-existence as contradictory because God essentially exists. Put in this way, Leibniz accepts a version of necessitarianism because the denial of *any* truth entails a contradiction when we include information about all essences, including God’s.

In his 1671 letter to Wedderkopf, Leibniz affirms that whatever follows from God’s creative activity “is best and also necessary.”⁶ Sleigh, in his translation of the “Confession of a Philosopher” notes that Leibniz introduces new notions of modality to “ward off the dreaded doctrine of necessitarianism,”⁷ and Adams notes that in Leibniz’s letter to Wedderkopf he has already “gone over the precipice” and affirmed

⁵ “The Confession of a Philosopher,” CP 69; “Discourse on Metaphysics” §13, AG 45; “On the Radical Origination of Things,” L 488; “Le Cause De Dieu” §21, J 368; “Letter 5 to Clarke” §4, LC 36.

⁶ L 227.

⁷ CP xi.

necessitarianism.⁸ However, both Adams and Sleigh read Leibniz as subsequently rejecting necessitarianism by developing modal accounts that make room for contingency. My suggestion is that none of these theories is meant to refute the argument for necessitarianism given above, but instead mitigate some of the consequences that seem to undermine theological and philosophical claims. That is—according to the fundamental structure of reality—God, creatures and the relation between the two, render all aspects of reality so that they couldn't be otherwise. But Leibniz does not want to say that what follows from that is that all talk of contingency is misguided. We can develop notions of contingency that vindicate our claims about contingent facts within a necessitarian framework. Of course this will not satisfy someone looking to reject the notion of necessitarianism presented above, but I don't think that was Leibniz's aim. Michael Griffin makes a similar observation in his recent work, reading Leibniz as a necessitarian in his early work through to the early 1680s.⁹ Griffin, however, does not offer an account of Leibniz's modal views beyond the early texts, leaving the status of Leibniz's necessitarianism after the 1680s, along with his theories of contingency, unexamined.

Thus there is much work to be done in developing Leibniz's early views on necessitarianism, so that we can follow them past the 1680s through to 1716. On my view, Leibniz offers, develops, and revises surrogate notions of contingency, and by following his intellectual development we can see what Leibniz thought made for a viable surrogate modal notion. Leibniz assigns different notions of contingency to different ways features of the world are necessitated. Some features are necessitated

⁸ Adams 1994, 11.

⁹ Griffin 2013, 3-6, 51-82.

by the essences of creatures, some by the combinations of essences into worlds, some by God's essence. Some of these conditions are infinitely complex, while others are finite; some depend on the goodness of God's will, while others are independent of God's goodness. We can develop notions for our modal language that latch on to features of the world that account for the differences between necessity and "contingency." Thus our modal claims depend upon how we conceive of the world, or relative to which conditions we take into account when asking whether something could be otherwise. This leads us to the second claim, modal variantism and Leibniz's quasi-modal notions.

2 Modal Variantism and Leibniz's Quasi-Modal Notions

Leibniz would likely treat being called a 'necessitarian' as an accusation. His dissent would stem from his view that our modal terminology is ambiguous, and different instances of modal terms—possible, necessary, contingent and impossible—call for different analyses. The adherence to necessitarianism and the ambiguity of modal terminology are importantly related, for by maintaining that there are various meanings of modal terminology Leibniz can deny that all truths are necessary for all meanings of 'necessary'. So, properly speaking, Leibniz is committed to a form of necessitarianism, one that maintains that once we trace all the conditions sufficient to render a proposition true, and all the conditions sufficient to make those true and so on, we will see that all truths are grounded in features of reality that cannot be otherwise. However, this does not stop Leibniz from affirming, genuinely, that there are non-actual *possible* worlds (whose nonexistence is 'contingent'), for often our investigations do not require the complete set of conditions that necessitate the

features of the world, but merely a subset of them. If we restrict the conditions we consider as part of our explanations, then not all truths are necessary. They are hypothetically necessary given their sufficient conditions, but often we are not considering the full set of jointly sufficient conditions. Thus, it does not follow that all truths are necessary on a more narrow consideration of conditions.

This second thesis, that modal truths depend on how we conceive of the relevant terms, captures how Leibniz develops modal notions that make room for the truth of contingent truths.¹⁰ Whether necessitarianism is true, on Leibniz's view, depends on the meaning of 'necessity', which Leibniz treats as sometimes picking out something other than whether things could be otherwise all things considered. However, if our conception of the terms is restricted, there is room to render many of our claims about contingency intuitive and true. This raises the question of exactly what are the legitimate ways of conceiving of terms for the purpose of rendering modal truths, and the developmental story that I will examine in the next few chapters advances an answer. For each of the legitimate ways of conceiving of objects and their properties, we can examine whether and to what extent they vindicate our modal judgments. Our investigation is thus not merely one that enumerates Leibniz's various modal notions, but for each such notion we will evaluate whether it does the job Leibniz wants it to do: does it divide propositions in the relevant areas in the ways he wants to for philosophical and theological purposes?

There are three criteria that I will develop from Leibniz's views for evaluating the success of quasi-modal notions of contingency. The first is whether the notion

¹⁰ See Newlands 2010 for a comparison of Leibniz and Spinoza on this point. I borrow the 'all things considered' terminology from Newlands.

captures the extension of ‘necessity’ and ‘contingency’, correctly dividing necessary and contingent propositions. Identity statements, arithmetical truths, truths about essences are all necessary propositions, while truths concerning the free actions of creatures, the laws of nature, and the non-existence of possible worlds are ‘contingent’. The second is the extent to which a quasi-modal notion captures the content or meaning of contingency in a satisfying way. Articulating what makes an account “satisfying” is not a straightforward task, but the contexts in which we use the word ‘contingent’ and its conceptual relation to free actions, laws and possible worlds gives us some clues about better or worse renderings of the conceptual content of contingency. The third criterion is the extent to which Leibniz’s system has the resources to supply a quasi-modal account.

3 Summary of Chapter 1

In the 1670s we find the introduction of the argument for necessitarianism, Leibniz’s increasing awareness about the problematic features of modal language, as well as a concerted effort to develop and clarify modal terminology. Here Leibniz first investigates the nature of necessity and possibility, identifying necessary truths with those truths that could not fail to be true, and whose denial entail a contradiction. This period also witnesses a number of Leibniz’s attempts to engage problematic features of necessitarianism. Here, hypothetical necessity and *per se* necessity are Leibniz’s central conceptual tools that he uses to distinguish necessary truths from so-called contingent ones.

In this Chapter I will trace four major developments in Leibniz’s thought, starting with the origin and nature of Leibniz’s necessitarianism. Here, I will argue this view stems from Leibniz’s views on essences, and that essences limit what

conditions are relevant. Essences play a key explanatory role, and Leibniz makes use of them when appealing to the Principle of Sufficient Reason. As noted earlier, there is a close connection between Leibniz's acceptance of the PSR and necessitarianism.

Second, in response to concerns about what necessitarianism entails, Leibniz actively develops modal notions needed for philosophical and theological discussions of God's creation of the world, the origin of sin, and the nature of moral responsibility. At the core of Leibniz's modal theory is the idea that necessary truths are those that could not be otherwise, or those whose denial entails a contradiction. However, Leibniz will emphasize that whether a contradiction can be reached varies depending on how robust or extensive our concepts are when we consider how features of the world necessitate particular truths. We thus see the origin of the suggestion that the modal status of propositions is relative to how we conceive of the world.

Third, different ways of conceiving of subjects and predicates of propositions, lead to an examination of what the modally relevant ways of conceiving of objects and their properties are. Early on, Leibniz identifies whatever is possible with what is imaginable or conceivable. He also acknowledges, however, that conceivability is often too broad a method of conceiving of substances, for it does not track their natures. Leibniz ultimately develops his *per se* modal account, which analyzes necessity in terms of essentiality. What it means to say that that a proposition is necessary, for example, that it's necessary that God exists, is to say that God essentially exists. Contingent truths are ones that predicate an accidental property of a subject; because existence is an accidental property of horses, horses contingently exist. However, *per se* modality is not Leibniz's primary notion during

this period, for, as noted above, Leibniz accepts that all truths are ultimately grounded in essences. While existence is an accidental property of horses, it is necessitated by God's essence and the combination of essences into worlds. Leibniz thus views the conditions sufficient to guarantee that horses exist as necessitating the fact that horses exist (and thus calls existence a necessary accident). This requires additional modal notions, such as all things considered necessity and hypothetical necessity.

Leibniz employs the notion of hypothetical necessity to capture the necessary connection between antecedent and consequent. This allows Leibniz to consider the modal status of propositions that are more complex than subject-predicate form, and further allows him to examine propositions that include distinct subject-terms, such as "If God exists, then Judas sins." There are texts where hypothetical necessity is entailment, so that hypothetical necessity is necessity of the consequence. And once we understand it as such we can see that Leibniz is interested in exploring whether different kinds of necessity are transmitted through entailment. He takes necessity all things (or sufficient reasons) considered to transmit, so that if it's hypothetically necessary that B, given A, and it is impossible for A to be otherwise then it's similarly impossible for B to be otherwise. So there is a type of necessity that is closed under entailment. However, as we shall see, *per se* necessity is not closed under entailment. Even if God's existence entails the existence of this world, the fact that God's existence is essential to God does not entail that the world's existence is an essential feature of the world. Much of our discussion will thus focus on the interaction between hypothetical necessity and *per se* necessity, and how these notions relate to Leibniz's necessitarianism. I will

emphasize that Leibniz develops these notions to help mitigate some of the counterintuitive aspects of necessitarianism, but not to reject all forms of it.

4 Summary of Chapter 2

In the 1670s Leibniz emphasizes the distinction between those properties that are essential, or result from intrinsic features of the nature of a substance, and those that result from additional external factors (which are *per se* contingent). This would serve as an acceptable rendering of ‘contingency’ if Leibniz’s views of the essence of individual creatures didn’t change. However, by the 1680s Leibniz became convinced that what makes an individual substance an individual is that it is a unique collection of properties, and that *all* a substance’s properties are required to distinguish it properly from all other possible substances. The result is that the essences of individuals are the totality of all of their properties. The necessary, and jointly sufficient, conditions to make a being Caesar are the totality of all of Caesar’s properties. *Per se* modality is only a viable quasi-modal notion of contingency if it can distinguish necessary from contingent properties of substances, and Leibniz’s new account of individual natures renders the *per se* account incapable of fulfilling that task.

Put another way, if the concept of an individual includes all of its necessary and jointly sufficient identity conditions, then denying any one of its features entails a contradiction. The result here is that Caesar, for example, has all of his properties necessarily. In Leibniz’s exchange with Arnauld he discusses this issue, and develops two accounts of how to distinguish necessary properties from contingent ones relative to the nature or essence of an individual. On the one hand, he emphasizes those truths that have finite proofs compared to those that would require an analysis that

requires an infinite number of steps to complete the proofs.¹¹ On the other hand, Leibniz distinguishes those truths that are based on God's possible free decrees from those that are not. This modal account takes advantage of the possible worlds framework introduced to explicate God's decision process in creating the world. Although the infinite analysis account has received more discussion both by Leibniz and in the secondary literature, I argue that the possible free decrees account renders a better quasi-modal notion of *de re* modal properties of substances. The evidence for this is bolstered within the necessitarian framework; neither the infinite analysis view nor the possible free decrees view offer a satisfying analysis of modality in general for Leibniz, but the possible free decrees view offers a superior quasi-modal notion. The main focus of this Chapter is thus Leibniz's account of the necessary and contingent properties of individuals, or *de re* modal claims. There are also texts during this period that re-affirm Leibniz's necessitarianism, and there is thus an emphasis and defense of Leibniz's necessitarianism in the wake of his infinite analysis and possible free decrees accounts. We will also touch upon Leibniz's developing views of hypothetical necessity, which do not play a prominent role in this period, but become very important in Leibniz's later work, especially in the *Theodicy*.

5 Summary of Chapter 3

This Chapter focuses on Leibniz's modal notions in his seminal work the *Theodicy*. This text, published during Leibniz's lifetime, is the culmination of his views of on God's creation of the world, freedom, and the origins of evil. This work

¹¹ This solution is emphasized more extensively in Leibniz's works "On Contingency," "Primary Truths," and "On Freedom."

also offers a variety of modal terminology, including absolute necessity, logical necessity, geometrical necessity, physical necessity, moral necessity, hypothetical necessity, blind necessity, and possible worlds. However, this is also a challenging text, for my view, because it features aspects of Leibniz's system that seem distinctively anti-necessitarian. There are four such features I focus on:

1. Leibniz develops an account of freedom that includes contingency as a requisite condition.
2. Leibniz distances his view from those of notorious necessitarians, including Spinoza, Wycliffefe, Abelard, and Hobbes.
3. Leibniz discusses "determining" reasons in place of "sufficient" reasons¹² and emphasizes that reasons incline without necessitating.
4. Leibniz explicates "contingency" in terms of hypothetical and moral necessity, and contrasts these notions with real necessity. Further he emphasizes that God's will is *merely* morally necessary, which invites interpretation of God's creation of the world as inevitable but not necessary.

My approach to Leibniz's modal notions in the *Theodicy* is two-fold: first, I will reconstruct a necessitarian argument from Leibniz's commitments in the *Theodicy*. Although Leibniz does not acknowledge that these views entail a necessitarian position directly, I will argue that he is cognizant of these results, particularly when divine and human freedom. Secondly, I will examine each of the plausibly anti-necessitarian claims 1-4 to show that none of them require the rejection of the necessitarianism all things considered that I attribute to Leibniz. Moreover, his treatments of divine and human freedom, reasons as inclining without necessitation, his emphasis on moral necessity, and criticisms of contemporary

¹² Although not in all places, Leibniz continues to discuss sufficient reasons and the Principle of Sufficient reason in the *Theodicy*.

necessitarians can and should be interpreted according to notions of quasi-modality that do not require the rejection of necessity all things considered. We will see that Leibniz extends his accounts of *de re* modality, including infinite analysis and possible free decrees, to accommodate notions of ‘contingency’ in divine and human action. The outcome is a consistent reading of Leibniz as a necessitarian in what is arguably one of his least necessitarian-friendly works. It gives us the opportunity to see the development and implementation of Leibniz’s quasi-modal notions to do important work in his philosophical system.

Chapter 1: Necessitarianism & Modality 1670-80

Per se Modality, Hypothetical Necessity

1 Introduction

For our purposes, the key text in Leibniz’s “early period” is “Confession of a Philosopher”—hereafter “Confession”—which chronicles the development of Leibniz’s modal theory over the fruitful years he spent in Paris (1672-77). The “Confession” was first written in 1672, and later revised by Leibniz as early as 1677.¹³ These revisions include additions to the main text as well as comments made by Steno—a Danish scientist and theologian—and responses to those comments by Leibniz. This grants us access to changes and clarifications Leibniz made to the main body of the text over time, in addition to the insights we gain from his specific responses to Steno’s concerns. To trace the origin of necessitarianism in the 1672 version of the “Confession” we will turn to texts written in the year before Leibniz travelled to Paris. First, we will look at his letter to Wedderkopf, which includes (although does not fully address) a statement of necessitarianism. There, Leibniz’s necessitarianism is closely tied to essences, and how essences condition what is and what could be. I

¹³ The exact date of the revisions, and even whether they were all done at the same time is not clear. They were clearly influenced by his interactions with Steno, which can be dated to 1677. See Sleight’s editorial remarks in CP Preface.

will clarify just what essences were for Leibniz during this time, and what he thinks the relevant essences are for yielding truths about reality.

Second, we will examine “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” where Leibniz begins to explicitly engage with some of the problematic features of necessitarianism, and introduces a first-pass account of modal notions. He develops the view that there are different ways of conceiving of subjects, and that modal language is sensitive to these considerations. Even though things could not have failed to be as they are (according to necessitarianism) we can conceive of subjects and their features in different ways, and these ways of conceiving of things render different modal truths. Leibniz’s texts also give us insight into which ways of conceiving of things are the legitimate ones for the purpose of modal theorizing. That is, although we can conceive of things in different ways, Leibniz thinks that not all ways yield tenable modal notions.

Finally we will examine the two versions of the “Confession,” particularly the later 1677 edition that includes Leibniz’s most developed account of *per se* necessity and possibility. *Per se* necessity is a variant of Leibniz’s view that the denial of a necessary proposition entails a contradiction. Leibniz identifies different ways a contradiction might arise, some internal to the subject of the proposition (as a result of its essence), and these are *per se* necessary, and others involving external factors (accidental features). My aim is to show that while *per se* necessity allows Leibniz to deny that all truths are (*per se*) necessary he maintains that all truths are *all things considered* necessary. This later suggestion, that Leibniz has multiple modal notions and that there is a robust version of necessitarianism that Leibniz accepts, is the topic of the final sections of the Chapter. I defend the view that on at least one of his notions of necessity all truths are necessary. I will draw on various texts from

this period, “Confession of a Philosopher,” “De Summa Rerum,” and Leibniz’s comments on Spinoza to evidence Leibniz’s continued affirmation of necessitarianism. Together these works depict the development of Leibniz’s necessitarianism, which remains throughout this period and ultimately throughout Leibniz’s late works.

2 Leibniz’s Letter to Wedderkopf

Leibniz’s letter to Wedderkopf¹⁴ introduces key features of his early thought on modality, including a commitment to necessitarianism, the grounding of necessity in God’s nature and relation to the world, and the compatibility of necessity with God’s freedom. However, Leibniz’s presentation of each of these issues is problematic in the letter, and recognizing and addressing these shortcomings is an important task of Leibniz’s work on modality in the 1670s.

2.1 Leibniz’s Commitment to Necessitarianism

In this letter Leibniz struggles with the origin of sin in God’s creation of the world. In the process of explicating God’s role in the creation of the best world, Leibniz claims that because this world is necessarily the best and God cannot create something other than the best, God *had* to create *this* world.¹⁵ This leads Leibniz to the necessitarian conclusion that “...whatever has happened, is happening, or will happen is the best and, accordingly, necessary”.¹⁶ However, Leibniz does not clarify

¹⁴ Magnus Wedderkopf (1637- 1721) was a professor of jurisprudence in Kiel.

¹⁵ Although this assertion of necessitarianism is restricted to the created world, Leibniz claims truths about God’s features and essences are necessary, which exhausts the domains of truth for Leibniz.

¹⁶ CP 3-4.

the notion of necessity that is at stake, leaving it an open question as to what the necessity the bestness of the world and God's good actions amount to. Early in the discussion he notes that what is necessary coincides with fate or what God decrees, but this does not clarify the nature of the necessity of God's creative activities. Offering an analysis of necessity, and its varying meanings, is a task left for Leibniz's subsequent work, the outcome of which will allow him to articulate and specify exactly what he is committing himself to when he claims that all truths are necessarily true. However, in the letter Leibniz locates the source of God's goodness and the bestness of the world in the natures or essences of God and creatures. What renders this world (necessarily) the best and God's actions (necessarily) good are the fundamental natures of God and creatures. The origin of possibility and necessity stems from the essential natures of beings, which we will turn to now.

2.2 Divine Creation and Necessity

God's knowledge of essences—the natures of creatures—and different ways of combining those essences gives God knowledge of possibilities. A comparison of alternative possibilities allows God to cognize which option is best. Because God is perfectly good and God always does what is best, God actualizes the best of these alternative possibilities. Subsequently “since God is the most perfect mind, it is impossible that he is not affected by the most perfect harmony and thus must bring about the best by the very ideality of things.”¹⁷ Possible existence is a function of coherent combinations of essence, and actual existence is a function of both what is best (or the most perfect harmony) and God's perfect mind and will. God's nature

¹⁷ CP 3.

and the essences of creatures (and various combinations of them) are the ground for not just what's true about the world, or actual, but what is *necessarily* true.¹⁸

Leibniz's reasoning on this point is guided by his commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason. He explains, "everything must be reduced to some reason, which process cannot stop until it reaches a primary reason."¹⁹ *Primary reasons* are ones that depend directly on essences themselves. Leibniz is thus committed to the view that in investigating the reasons for the existence of the world, we must examine the sufficient reasons for the existence of this particular series of events (or the details of the world), and the reasons for those reasons until we see how those reasons are grounded in essences.

What, therefore, is the ultimate basis of the divine will? The divine intellect. For God wills those things that he perceives to be the best and, likewise, the most harmonious; and selects them, so to speak, from the infinite number of all the possibles. What, therefore, is the ultimate basis of the divine intellect? The harmony of things. And what is the ultimate basis of the harmony of things? Nothing...this depends on the essence itself, i.e. the idea of things. For essences of things are just like numbers, and they contain the very possibility of entities, which God does not bring about, as he does existence, since these very possibilities—or ideas of things—coincide rather with God himself.²⁰

The primary reason for the existence of the world is its perfection, which depends upon the essences of things and their combinations (which determine how harmonious the world is). The world's perfection is not sufficient for its existence because God must know that it is the best of all worlds in order to select it. And further, because creation is a free action and not merely a divine cognition, the

¹⁸ Leibniz has still not clarified the sort of necessity he has in mind, but it seems to be the necessity of God's existence and nature (whatever that may turn out to be).

¹⁹ CP 3.

²⁰ CP 3.

world's perfection and God's understanding of its perfection are insufficient for this world's existence. Additionally, God's will must be perfect and select what is best. Thus the jointly sufficient reasons for this world's existence are its harmony that renders it the best of all possibles, God's understanding of this world as the best, and God's perfect will.

Notice too that God's understanding is not sufficient to explain the necessity of truths about the world. The modal status of God's knowledge is dependent on the *content* of that knowledge. Just as the fact that God knows that $2 + 2 = 4$ does not explain why this proposition true, the fact that God knows $2 + 2 = 4$ does not explain why it is necessarily true. For an explanation we must examine the nature of numbers and addition. So it is necessary that God understand all truths, and all essences (in virtue of God's necessary omniscience), but what renders or explains the necessity of God's knowledge are the essences themselves. The ideas of essences coincide with God's understanding, so God's essence grounds these truths insofar as God's essence coincides with and includes the essences. Appeal to God's knowledge alone does not ground the necessity of what God knows, without further information about why God knows it (i.e. based on the nature of essences).²¹

Just as Leibniz's notion of necessity in this letter is not explored, his notion of possibility is elusive too. On the one hand, Leibniz claims that God selects what to

²¹ In the letter to Wedderkopf Leibniz notes, "For example, no reason can be given for the fact that the ratio of 2 to 4 is that of 4 to 8, not even from the divine will. This depends on the essence itself, i.e., the idea of things. For the essences of things are just like numbers, and they contain the very possibility of entities, which God does not bring about..." (CP 3). In "Middle Knowledge" Leibniz says, "According to true philosophers and St. Augustine, the reason God knows the actions of things, necessary or free, absolute or conditional, is his perfect cognition of the nature of these things..." (CP 130).

create among *the possibles*, or ideas of essences and their different coherent combinations. This suggests that what is possible is exhausted by the vast array of different ways of combining essences. Something is thus possible if it is among groups of essences arranged in coherent series of things or worlds.²² On the other hand, God's perfect will necessitates the existence of the best, "it is *impossible* that [God] is not affected by the most perfect harmony," and what is best is necessarily the best because it is a function of essential properties.²³ If possibility is a matter of which combinations of essences are coherent, then any possible world other than the best is impossible because it does not cohere with God's perfect nature. In light of God's perfect nature, the world could not be otherwise—another world could not have existed in its place—and in this sense non-actual worlds are not possible. If we include the compatibility of all essences, including that of God, the only possibles are those that actually exist. Thus there is a problem: there is a tension between the idea that possibles are those coherent essences that God considers creating, ultimately creating the best one, and the idea that what is possible is what God does, for the only world that is possible is the one that coheres with God's perfect will. Thus it is unclear whether possibility is a matter of creaturely essences and combinations thereof, or whether it includes the coherence with the divine essence as well.

²² Leibniz says that "essences of things...contain the very possibility of entities" and that "the harmony of things" is a function of essence (CP 3-5). Different ways of combining entities is a matter of what Leibniz terms "compossibility". He does not mention compossibility here in the Letter, but the notion might very well be in the background when he discusses the compatibility of essences. We will examine compossibility in depth in Chapter 2.

²³ CP 3.

2.3 Necessity and God's Freedom

The necessity of this world's existence is seemingly at odds with God freely creating the world, for God is forced or compelled to create the best world, and compelled or forced action is not free. In his letter to Wedderkopf Leibniz reassures us, however, that the necessity of God willing the best does not impede God's freedom. Immediately after Leibniz confirms that God "must bring about the best," he acknowledges, "this does not detract from freedom. For it is the highest form of freedom to be forced to the best by right reason; whoever desires another form of freedom is a fool."²⁴ If what necessitates the existence of the best world, or what compels God's perfect will, is "right reason," then the necessity does not interfere with God's freedom. According to this notion of freedom, the character of one's will and one's reasons to act necessitates free action. Thus, the existence of the world has "a necessity that takes nothing away from freedom because it takes nothing away from the will and the use of reason."²⁵ Leibniz is asserting a notion of freedom where free action is compatible not only with determinism, but also necessitation.

To summarize, the key modal issues raised but not fully addressed in the Letter to Wedderkopf are:

1. An affirmation of necessitarianism, although not a precisification of what "necessity" means.
2. A tension between what is possible for the purposes of world creation and what is possible given God's will and possible essences (with the former suggesting a plurality of possible worlds and the latter suggesting the actual world is the only possible one).

²⁴ CP 3.

²⁵ CP 5.

3. The affirmation that as long as the sufficient reasons for the existence of the world are God's good will and God's understanding of the perfection of the best world, then the fact that these reasons are necessary does not interfere with God's freedom.

There is one last important feature of this letter, which explains why there are a number of unanswered questions regarding Leibniz's modal notions. Leibniz's focus is not directly on modality. Instead, Leibniz's aim is to discuss God's role in and responsibility for the creation of sin. Leibniz offers a solution to the problem of evil regarding sin, according to which sin is not absolutely evil, but only relative to the sinner. Leibniz argues that relative to God sins are not bad because they contribute to the greater good or harmony of the universe. Leibniz arrives at this solution by noting that if sins were absolutely evil, then God would want to eliminate sin. This is so because if an essentially good God wants to eliminate evil (including sin) but fails to, it must be either because God fails to be omnipotent, or because God fails to be omniscient. But, God cannot fail to be either of these things, so sin must not be absolutely evil. This is not tantamount to the denial that sin is bad, for Leibniz thinks that sin *is* bad, but only relative to the sinner. All things considered from God's perspective, sin is not evil (it does not prevent this world from being the best) and thus relative to God sins are not evil.²⁶ This approach to sin is important for our purposes because it is one Leibniz will ultimately apply to modal notions in his early work. That is, Leibniz will come to think of necessity and possibility as relative in

²⁶ Leibniz also maintains this solution in the next text we will examine, "On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom": "Now because the All-knowing God wills what he holds to be the best, and because he, as omnipotent being, does what he wills, it follows that sins must cease to exist, if he holds that to be best. But because they have until now remained in the world, this is a sign that God holds this to be best, and therefore wants to have them remain, and therefore wants to have sins in the world" (CP 21).

some cases, where something is possible relative to some object or agent, but not all things considered. This relativity is a function of how we conceive of truth and its sufficient reasons. We first see this approach in a fragment written at a similar time as the Letter, titled “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” to which we will turn now.

3 On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom

In an unfinished piece from 1671, “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” Leibniz reflects on the origin of the claim that all truths are necessarily true. Leibniz’s initial strategy here is to further develop notions of necessity and possibility so that he can clarify the proper entailments of statements employing modal language, including the claim that all truths are necessarily true.²⁷

...what does this mean: ‘it must be’?...it means, it is not possible otherwise or cannot be otherwise. What then does ‘possibility’ mean, or what does this mean: ‘can be’? What do we human beings understand by these words? They certainly mean something.²⁸

²⁷ “Now the possibility of a thing which needs no explanation, as, for example, the number three, is manifest; but the possibility itself must be explained in such a case, thus, in itself be able to be explained” (CP 11). The other conclusions Leibniz worries about have to do with free will, the status of sin as evil, God as the author of sin, and whether the fact that events in the world are determined by previous events and the laws of nature warrants the conclusion that events in the world are inevitable no matter what we do. God’s omniscience is related to arguments regarding necessity, and whether necessity is compatible with freedom, whereas God’s omnipotence is related to arguments regarding whether God is the author of and responsible for sin. The discussion of the latter issue is incomplete, and as a result how necessitarian arguments are related to issues of God’s power are not directly addressed. Leibniz will take up this line of thought in the “Confession” and address questions about necessitarianism, and its different forms, head on.

²⁸ CP 11.

At the core of Leibniz’s modal theory is the idea that what is necessary couldn’t be otherwise. The guide to what couldn’t be otherwise is whether the denial of something entails a contradiction. Whether the denial of a proposition entails a contradiction depends on the content of the concepts we use when we analyze the proposition. How we fill in the details of conceivability forms the basis of our modal theory, and also Leibniz’s treatment of modal language as relative to our conception of terms.

Beyond providing an account of modal notions, Leibniz wants to establish that the argument from God’s omniscience *fails* to establish the necessitarian conclusion, if by “necessary” we mean “unimaginable otherwise.”²⁹ Leibniz’s concern here, is whether God’s knowledge renders those truths necessary: “God sees all future states beforehand, sees that I shall be saved or damned; one of the two must be true, and so seen by him. If he sees it beforehand, then nothing else is possible—it must happen; if it must happen, then it will happen...”³⁰

Leibniz formalizes the argument that leads to necessitarianism from God’s omniscience as follows:

1. Whatever God foresees must happen or cannot not happen.
2. God foresees that I shall be damned (saved).
3. Therefore, my damnation (salvation) must happen or cannot not happen.³¹

²⁹ This serves as an example of a strategy whereby Leibniz fills in the details regarding concepts, in a way that shapes just which propositions are necessary and contingent. Despite the title of his work, Leibniz does not directly consider God’s omnipotence as a ground for necessity, which is in part the topic in his subsequent work the “Confession.”

³⁰ CP 9.

³¹ CP 11.

Call this the *omniscience argument for necessitarianism*. According to this argument, God's knowledge of my damnation (or salvation) entails the truth of that outcome. However, because God is omniscient, he knows all true propositions, and thus the conclusion generalizes beyond damnation and salvation. On this reasoning, from God's omniscience it follows that for any feature of the world, it must happen or cannot not happen.³²

Leibniz does not accept this argument, and examining exactly why he rejects it is instructive for his later discussion in the "Confession." Leibniz offers two strategies for criticizing the argument. The first strategy concedes that the conclusion follows from the premises, but claims that we need not accept the conclusion because the first premise, that whatever God foresees must happen, is false. Leibniz offers a definition of 'must' or necessity that renders the premise false. The second strategy is to argue that the inference from the premises to the conclusion is an invalid modal inference. He claims that the modal status of the second premise is not strong enough to render the necessitarian conclusion. I will turn to the first strategy first, because it exemplifies Leibniz's sentiments about the importance of properly defining necessity.

3.1 Strategy One: Possibility and Imaginability

Leibniz's attempt to defuse the omniscience argument for necessitarianism is instructive because it illustrates both what Leibniz takes to be at the problematic root of misleading claims about necessity, and how we should go about addressing

³² This is in part bolstered by Leibniz's notion of omniscience introduced in the letter to Wedderkopf. There, Leibniz confirms that what God's omniscience amounts to is the for any true proposition p , God knows p .

the main problem. He identifies part of the problem as a failure to settle on an account of modal terms and phrases like ‘must’ and ‘cannot not be’:

...one has to attribute all the darkness of the sciences to the manufactured or idiosyncratically used names of the philosophers, which they call terms. So, in the end, there is no other way of getting away from this problem than this: rather than invoking such words, which only renew the debate, embitter spirits, recall old squabbles, give rise to countless, embarrassing, incomprehensible distinctions, a person must use the simples, most common and clearest expressions, which the poorest peasant, constrained to give his opinion on the subject, would use, and a person must try to determine whether in such a way it is possible to say something that would be sufficient to explain the issue that nevertheless cannot be contradicted by anybody.³³

...this sophism [viz., the omniscience argument for necessitarianism] is based on an ambiguity prevalent in all nations and languages, an ambiguity resulting from such common and seemingly clear terms as ‘must’ and ‘cannot be otherwise’ and the like.³⁴

The first passage in particular emphasizes that it is not just a matter of disambiguating modal language, but doing so in a way that does not introduce further complications. Offering a rendering of modal terminology to capture what is true about everyday discourse is notable because it echoes Leibniz’s sentiment one year earlier in his introduction to his edition of Marius Nizolius’s “*Antibarbarus philosophicus*”.³⁵ In this introduction, Leibniz is concerned with how to appropriately introduce technical terminology when philosophizing. He comments on the way philosophers should develop terms: “Our judgments are thus rendered more reliable by this process of analyzing technical terms into merely popular ones; hence a

³³ CP 9.

³⁴ CP 11.

³⁵ Marius Nizolius was an Italian philosopher whose “*Antibarbarus philosophicus*” (original 1553) was edited by Leibniz in 1670. “On the philosophical style of Nizolius,” Leibniz’s introduction for the new edition, explains that philosophical endeavors should seek to capture the meaning of the way terms are used in everyday discourse (with some caveats). I understand his efforts in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom” as carrying out this strategy as applied to modal terms.

perfect demonstration merely carries out such analysis to the ultimate and best-known elements.”³⁶ Leibniz thinks that the philosophical terms we develop should be beholden to commonsense terms. However, this is not merely a suggestion about the *words* we use, but is a further suggestion about the meanings we capture and characterize in our philosophical endeavors. “The greatest clarity is found in commonplace terminology *with their popular usage retained*. There is always a certain obscurity in technical terms.”³⁷ Philosophers are not reflecting on subject matters inherently foreign to common discourse. “Therefore philosophers often think just what other [people] think but with attention to what others have neglected.”³⁸ Leibniz continues:

...it is obvious that the norm and measure for selecting terms should be the most compendious popularity or the most popular compendiousness. Hence wherever equally compendious popular terms are available technical terms are to be avoided. This is indeed one of the fundamental rules of philosophical style, though violated frequently, especially by metaphysicians and dialecticians.³⁹

Leibniz acknowledges that capturing the common usage will not always be possible, for there are some investigations involving terms that “the common people either do not understand...or dismiss it from their attention...as happens most frequently in mathematics, mechanics and physics or the matters dealt with in these sciences are not directly obvious to the understanding or in frequent common use.”⁴⁰ These investigations contrast with metaphysical subjects, which “occur commonly in the utterances, writings, and toughest of uneducated people and are met with

³⁶ L 191.

³⁷ L 190; emphasis added.

³⁸ L 192.

³⁹ L 194.

⁴⁰ L 194-5.

frequently in everyday life. Spurred on by this frequent demand, the people have as a result designated these subjects by special words that are familiar, very natural and economical.”⁴¹ The subject matter of metaphysics is not outside the scope of everyday discourse. Given this, Leibniz’s terminology and use of that terminology should capture, to some extent, common-usage. I take this to include issues of modal terminology.

However, Leibniz identifies possibility with imaginability in order to defuse the omniscience argument for necessitarianism:

Now we wish to apply such an explanation of possibility to our syllogism. The first premise runs thus: “Whatever God foresees must happen or cannot not happen.” If now our explanation of possibility is substituted for possibility, it runs thus: “Whatever God foresees, I cannot imagine not happening, that is, I cannot imagine it even if I want to.” But in this formulation the sentence is false. If I wish, I can imagine that not I but someone else is damned or saved; indeed I can imagine, if I wish, that there is neither heaven nor hell, which is also possible, for God can abolish them if he wishes. Therefore, though it is true that what God foresees will happen, it is not permissible to say that what God foresees *must* happen.⁴²

Leibniz rejects the first premise of the necessitarian argument from God’s omniscience because God’s knowledge, though guaranteeing the truth of what he knows because of the factivity of knowledge, does not render all false propositions *unimaginable*. We can deny that “Heaven exists” is necessary because I can imagine there not being a heaven. It’s possible (because we can imagine there is a heaven), but not necessary (because we can also imagine there not being a heaven).⁴³

⁴¹ L 194.

⁴² CP 13.

⁴³ An account of possibility in terms of imaginability does not analyze modal terms using non-modal terms, because “imaginable” is implicitly modal. Thus Leibniz is not offering a reductive analysis of modality, but is clarifying the character of modal terms.

On this reading, the omniscience argument for necessitarianism fails because the first premise is false when we substitute a definition of possibility in terms of imaginability. Leibniz's clarifying modal language thus leads to a restating of the omniscience argument from necessitarianism:

1. Whatever God foresees I cannot imagine not happening.
2. God foresees that I shall be damned (saved).
3. Therefore, I cannot imagine my damnation (salvation) not happening.

Call this new argument the *omniscience argument for necessitarianism*_{UNIM}.⁴⁴ The necessitarian conclusion is now specified according to a particular brand of modal notion, namely, modality in terms of imaginability. This renders the necessitarian_{UNIM} claim: for any true proposition p , it is unimaginable that p is false. We can distinguish this flavor of necessitarianism—necessitarianism *qua* unimaginability (or necessitarianism_{UNIM})—as a specific brand of necessitarianism that treats possibility in terms of non-contradiction. So Leibniz argues that we can reject necessitarianism interpreted as necessitarianism_{UNIM}.

This is a somewhat problematic strategy, however, because although Leibniz offers an analysis of possibility in terms of being consistent or not self-contradictory, he focuses on the cognitive aspect of imaginability to reject the necessitarian conclusion from God's omnipotence. The difficulty is that if I can imagine something that is contradictory (it need not be explicitly contradictory), then this notion of possibility as imaginability is at odds with his suggestion that what is

⁴⁴ The subscript indicates that necessity is understood in terms of what is unimaginable otherwise (necessary_{UNIM}).

possible is not self-contradictory. What is imaginable is in part a function of cognitive ability, and sensitive to individual differences in capacity to imagine. If an idea is not obviously contradictory I might very well imagine it successfully, and similarly I might not be able to imagine a 1000-sided polygon but chiliagons are nevertheless possible objects. Moreover, we cannot just build in any assumptions into our conception of relevant terms, or else we might draw a stronger conclusion than we are entitled to. For example, suppose I conceive of myself as a violin enthusiast, so much so that I do not have the capacity to imagine myself otherwise. According to necessity_{UNIM} it follows that it is impossible that I fail to be a violin enthusiast. Leibniz cautions us against confusing reasons for thinking something is true with reasons for thinking something is necessarily true, and thus in determining which truths are necessary, we need to restrict ourselves to concepts that are themselves necessary. Deriving a contradiction from some supposition should involve only those propositions that are necessary in some specified sense.⁴⁵

Leibniz needs some guarantee that imaginability tracks non-contradiction. Further, we might accuse Leibniz of failing to address the original worry, because he has asserted that my salvation is *imaginable* but failed to show it's not *self-contradictory*. Accordingly, Leibniz rejects the omniscience argument for necessitarianism_{UNIM}, but has not addressed necessitarianism qua non-contradiction.

However, Leibniz offers a more restricted notion of imaginability, closer to that of non-contradiction:

⁴⁵ Looking ahead to our discussion of the “Confession,” Leibniz will treat those features that are essential to a subject as those that are necessary.

How, then, does one show impossibility? Pay attention to the thoughts and speech *of the people*, and you will find out. That is to say, they concern themselves with explaining a matter whose possibility is in doubt. If something is now clearly explainable, and conceivable in all its intricacy, then one holds it to be possible; if one comes upon something that is in itself confused and self-contradictory, then one holds it to be impossible...Thus something is possible that allows itself to be clearly explained without confusion and without contradiction.⁴⁶

Leibniz's treatment of possibility in terms of non-contradiction does not require naively accepting that imaginability is always a good guide to what is possible.⁴⁷ This is underscored by Leibniz's discussion of the ontological argument for the existence of God.⁴⁸ According to Leibniz, Descartes's version of the argument presents God's existence as following from the fact that God is essentially the most perfect being. Leibniz notes that the problem with this argument is that Descartes has not yet show that the most perfect being is *possible*. Leibniz articulates this complaint clearly in a 1676 passage:

Descartes' argument for the existence of a most perfect being assumed that a most perfect being can be understood, or, is possible...But the question is, if it is in our power to suppose such a being, or, if such a notion really exists, and can be understood clearly and distinctly without contradiction. For opponents will say that such a notion of a most perfect being, or of a being that exist through its essence, is a chimaera.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ CP 13; emphasis added.

⁴⁷ Leibniz does not always explicitly distinguish merely imagining something from clearly imagining it.

⁴⁸ Leibniz comments on both Spinozistic and Cartesian versions of the ontological argument. In his work around the time of "On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom," Leibniz accuses Descartes of begging the question in arguing for God's existence. According to Leibniz, Descartes infers that it's possible that God exists from the fact that God does exist, then uses the possibility of God's existence to establish the actuality of his existence. Leibniz is not satisfied that Descartes has established the possible existence of the most perfect being without begging the question. See "An example of Demonstrations About the Nature of Corporeal Things, Drawn from Phenomena," L 225.

⁴⁹ "Whatever Can Exist Exists," DSR 103.

Leibniz thinks that the possibility of an idea or whether a proposition harbors a contradiction is not always obvious, even when that proposition is imaginable or conceivable in some broad sense. The most perfect being might seem conceivable, but that does not mean that it is possible, or not contradictory. This is because we can imagine and suppose things that entail contradictions. Some propositions initially seem plausible such as “there is a greatest number”, but turn out to be contradictory.⁵⁰ In fact, *reductio ad absurdum* argumentation proceeds by starting with some supposition or hypothesis that is conceivable (in some broad sense), and showing that it nevertheless entails a contradiction. This is why, when Leibniz offers an account of possibility in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” he adds the qualification that conceivability must be understood in terms of being *clearly explained and free from* (even implicit) *contradiction*. So although in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom” Leibniz speaks of possibility in terms of imaginability, he develops imaginability using a technical notion of “conceivable” that involves vetting a proposition through analysis and explanation to ensure that neither it nor its denial entails a contradiction. In fact Leibniz employs this notion too when he affirms that we must understand possibility in terms of the rational grounds:

But if you want to prove that something that neither is nor was can be or cannot be, then you employ not feeling but rather distinct rational grounds. Now if “possibility,” or “can be,” is something that is demonstrable by rational grounds, then it is something that ought to be so explained. For every demonstration that is not based on a perception or an experience, but rather illuminates even him who does not have

⁵⁰ See Leibniz’s treatment of this example in “On Mind, the Universe and God,” P 3.

experience of the matter by means of rational grounds, requires an explanation either of what one wants to demonstrate or how one wants to demonstrate it or both.⁵¹

This is a revisionary picture of imaginability as it is used in everyday discourse. Imagining, in the modally relevant sense, is not a matter of picturing a certain set of circumstances, but cognizing the core features of the relevant ideas and investigating the ground for their truth. However, if Leibniz presents a stricter notion of imaginability to ground possibility, he does not do enough to refute the omniscience argument for necessitarianism_{UNIM}, for he has not established that the denial of all truths fail to entail contradictions. Perhaps Leibniz is really trying to employ a broad notion of imaginability to address the omniscience argument for necessitarianism because he takes that to be the common notion when non-philosophers use modal terminology. But then necessitarianism remains unaddressed, since, for example, Leibniz has only given us reason to think we can imagine (in the broader sense) that there is no heaven, but he has not shown that this is non-contradictory, or imaginable in the restricted sense.

So Leibniz offers reasons to reject the omniscience argument from necessitarianism_{UNIM}, but does so using modal notions of imaginability that are not strict enough by his own lights. Leibniz needs to clarify what the modal constraints are for how we conceive of or imagine the relevant concepts.

3.2 Strategy Two: Necessity of the Consequence

However, Leibniz offers a second argument against the omniscience argument for necessitarianism.⁵² Here, he does not attack the conclusion of the argument, but

⁵¹ CP 11.

⁵² CP 11-17.

instead the inference to the conclusion. When Leibniz says that he *must* be saved, based on God's knowledge that he will be saved, what he means is that it is true he will be saved or inevitable. However, Leibniz notes that sometimes we (incorrectly) conclude that the "must" is a modal one relating to non-contradiction. If we interpret the first premise of the argument for God's omniscience as employing the 'must' of future contingent truth, then it reads, "What is foreseen by God, must happen" (where 'must happen' means "will happen"). Leibniz notes that while it is true that what God foresees will happen, it is not true that God's foreseeing some event necessitates it (in the sense that its denial entails a contradiction).⁵³

Here, Leibniz's notion of hypothetical necessity is important. Hypothetical necessity governs the connection between the antecedent and consequent of the conditional, and indicates whether the connection between the two is necessary, or impossible for the antecedent to be true and the consequent false.⁵⁴ He accepts that it is hypothetically necessary that I will be saved, if God knows I will be saved. That is,

⁵³ Leibniz also notes that it does not follow that because something is true, it will occur no matter what I do. Leibniz is committed to the view that truths are fixed by antecedent events, and if those events include my actions then behaving otherwise would prevent the true outcome. "If God has foreseen the end, he has also foreseen the means; if he knows that I shall be saved, then he also knows that I live a God-fearing life; if I am foreseen to be damned, then I am foreseen to sin. So, do I then have to sin? No, you sin and will sin, but you do not have to sin" (CP 11).

⁵⁴ Traditionally this is known as necessity of the consequence, and can be formally represented as, B is hypothetically necessary given A = $\Box(A \supset B)$. Hypothetical necessity is informed by Leibniz's treatment of conditionals, and his work on legal supposition in the 1665. Leibniz wrote "De Conditionibus" in 1665, which was later included in "Specimin Juris" in 1669 (A VI.i 367).

□ (If God knows that I will be saved, then I will be saved).⁵⁵

The necessity of the proposition, “I will be saved,” is dependent upon the necessity of the proposition, “God knows that I will be saved.” Without evidence that it is necessary that God knows that I will be saved, I cannot conclude that it is necessary that I will be saved. The fallacious inference that Leibniz is identifying is:

1. □ (If God knows that I will be saved, then I will be saved).
2. God knows that I will be saved.
3. Therefore, □(I will be saved.)

Leibniz’s point is that from the considerations presented to us, I can at best conclude that I will be saved, and not that necessarily that I will be saved. This naturally leads to the question of the modal status of the claim that God knows that I will be saved. Perhaps Leibniz would here argue that it is not necessary that God knows I will be saved, because it is not necessary_{UNIM} that God knows I will be saved. I can imagine God knowing that I will not be saved, because, for example, I can imagine sinning without repenting. On the other hand, perhaps Leibniz thinks it is sufficient to show that the inference is fallacious by showing that the modal status of the consequent depends on the modal status of the antecedent, which is still open for debate. As long as we do not have a demonstration of the modal status of the claim that God knows I will be saved, the inference does not succeed. As we

⁵⁵ Leibniz offers similar examples of hypothetical necessity in texts from this period (although from 1677, roughly 6 years later): “Hypothetical necessity is when a thing can be understood to be otherwise in itself, but *per accidens*, because of other things already presupposed outside itself it is necessarily such and such. For example: it was necessary for Judas to sin, supposing that God foresaw it...” (“Conversation with Steno Concerning Freedom,” CP 119).

shall see, in the *Confession* the necessity of God's knowledge will depend on the necessary features of the content of that knowledge. Because the content of God's knowledge could not be otherwise, God could not have failed to know that Judas sinned, and thus it will follow from God's omniscience *plus* the modal status of the proposition known that it is necessary that Judas sinned. But the important point will be that this derives from the essences or natures of things, and not God's knowledge alone.⁵⁶

So there are two fallacious sources of the claim that all truths are necessarily true from the argument from God's omniscience. The second one is that we use the term 'must' to describe events with fixed future truth-values. In this case it's true that what God foresees happening will happen, but from this premise it does not follow that what God foresees *must* (in a modal sense) happen. Thus sometimes we use 'must' non-modally and we have to take care not to confuse truth with necessary truth. Leibniz's first diagnosis is that we might accept the conclusion that all truths are necessary if we fail to appreciate that what we mean is that all truths are unimaginable otherwise. Because we can imagine those things that do, in fact, happen as not happening, they are not necessary, and so we should reject both the premise that claims that what God foresees is unimaginable otherwise, and the

⁵⁶ This point is not novel to Leibniz. For example, Boethius distinguishes what follows from God's knowledge from that which is non-hypothetically necessary "For that which is known cannot indeed be otherwise than as it is known to be, and yet this fact by not means carries with it that other simple necessity. For the former necessity is not imposed by the thing's own proper nature, but by the addition of a condition. No necessity compels one who is voluntarily walking to go forward, although it is necessary for him to go forward and the moment of walking. In the same way, then, if Providence sees anything as present that must necessarily be, though it is bound by no necessity of nature." (Boethius 2008, V.vi) Boethius will go on to suggest that God's knowledge is, in fact, contingent, whereas Leibniz's necessitarianism leads him to claims that there is a sense in which it is not.

conclusion that my damnation is unimaginable otherwise. Thus if we properly clarify our modal notions, we can undermine the omniscience argument for necessitarianism.

Leibniz also returns to his discussion of the origin of sin from the letter to Wedderkopf, and once again touches on some of the points that lead him to the necessitarian conclusion in that letter—that is, the fact that God is the causal basis of “the whole chain of causes back to the beginning of the world.”⁵⁷ However, the “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom” fragment ends before Leibniz can address the necessitarian claim stemming from the necessity of God’s good will as the ground of the existence of the world—a topic he takes up in the *Confession*. Moreover, Leibniz does not explain whether he accepts or rejects the necessitarian conclusion, which is something to which he devotes a large portion of the *Confession*.

4 The Confession of a Philosopher

The Confession was first written in 1672-3, then later revised by Leibniz as early as 1677.⁵⁸ The main difference between the two versions (excluding marginalia) is the addition of *per se* modal terminology in the second version, although I will argue that a less-refined version of *per se* necessity is present in the first edition. Nonetheless, Leibniz’s treatment of necessitarianism clearly evolves (as he identifies different strains of necessitarianism) along with his understanding and acknowledgement of the problematic entailments of various types of

⁵⁷ CP 21.

⁵⁸ The exact date of the revisions, and even whether they were all done at the same time is not clear. They were clearly influenced by his interactions with Steno, which can be dated to 1677. See CP Preface.

necessitarianism—which multiply in the second version. Between the first and second versions, Leibniz acknowledges an increasing number of threats from various necessitarian views and develops responses to address the threats.

4.1 First Version (1672)

In the *Confession* Leibniz seemingly commits himself to the necessitarian conclusion that all truths are necessarily true. If all truths follow from God’s existence, and God necessarily exists, then all truths about the world are necessarily true. Leibniz re-affirms the claim that necessary propositions are those whose denial entails a contradiction:

I will designate that as necessary, the opposite of which implies a contradiction or cannot be clearly conceived.⁵⁹

Much like in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” Leibniz is treating necessity and possibility in terms of non-contradiction and conceivability. Those truths that are contingent can be consistently conceived in affirming or denying the predicate of the subject. A truth is necessary if and only if its denial implies a contradiction. He subsequently presents a new necessitarian argument, which we can understand by employing his notion of necessity qua non-contradiction ($necessity_{NC}$):

1. The existence of God is necessary.
2. The series of things and all its details follows from the existence of God.
3. Whatever follows from something necessary is itself necessary.

⁵⁹ CP 55.

4. Therefore, the series of things and all its details are necessary.⁶⁰

I'll call this the *necessitarian_{NC} argument*.

Given Leibniz's philosophical commitments, he has reason to accept each of the premises, and the argument is valid. According to Leibniz, premise 1 is verified by his ontological argument for the existence of God. God—considered either as a necessary being or a perfect being—exists necessarily because denying existence is truly predicated of God contradicts God's nature.⁶¹ God exists necessarily because denying his existence entails a contradiction.

Premise 2 results in part from Leibniz's examination of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in the *Confession*. He begins by focusing on the PSR applied to existence claims.⁶²

Whatever exists, at any rate, will have all the requisites for existing; however, all the requisites for existing taken together at the same time are the sufficient reason for existing. Therefore, whatever exists has a sufficient reason for existing.⁶³

What renders some proposition about existence true is that all of the reasons or requisites for the existence of the being in question obtain. "Chloe exists" is true because the jointly sufficient conditions for my existence came to be. The connection between the totality of reasons and the existence of a being is very strong, for if those reasons obtain the being is guaranteed to exist. According to the necessitarian argument, God's existence is necessary for the existence of the particular world:

⁶⁰ CP 55.

⁶¹ For further discussions of Leibniz's treatment of the ontological argument for God's existence, see Griffin 2013, and Blumenfeld 1995.

⁶² Congruent with his approach in the letter to Wedderkopf.

⁶³ CP 34.

Take away or change the series of things, and the ultimate ground of things, that is, God, will be done away with or changed. It is not more possible that from the same ground—and a ground sufficient and entire, such as God is with respect to the universe—there should result opposed consequences, that is, that diverse things should follow from the same thing, than it is possible that the same thing should be different from itself.⁶⁴

According to Leibniz’s view, the sufficient reason (the totality of requisites) for the existence of the world are all grounded in God, whose essence and existence are both necessary.⁶⁵ What’s more, the version of the PSR that Leibniz accepts seems to be implicitly modal: it is necessary that if the totality of reasons for the existence of some being X obtains, then that being exists.⁶⁶ When put together with God’s necessary existence, the result is that this world exists necessarily. Thus premise 2 (“The series of things and all its details follows from the existence of God”) stems from Leibniz’s claim that the sufficient reasons for the existence and features of the world are contained in God. When the sufficient reasons for some result are themselves necessary, the result is also necessary (premise 3). What this reasoning reveals is that Leibniz thinks of the “follows from” relation as at least as strong as strict implication.⁶⁷ The connection between the sufficient reasons (or God) and the

⁶⁴ CP 45.

⁶⁵ Although Leibniz has not clarified what ‘necessary’ means, beyond that the denial of what is necessary implies a contradiction.

⁶⁶ Again, however, Leibniz has not told us more about what sort of necessity this is.

⁶⁷ There is some evidence that Leibniz does not automatically assume that all conditionals are cases of strict implication. In his “Specimen Juris” he examines various conditionals including conditional rights and promises, see A VI.i 367. However, it seems that in the “Confession” Leibniz takes the relevant conditionals to involve strict implication. This is suggested both by the reasoning below, and from Leibniz’s 1671-2 text “On the Demonstration of Primary Propositions”. There, in offering a demonstration of the PSR, Leibniz argues that the sum of sufficient requisites constitute a sufficient reason for a specific outcome, and that the only way that outcome could fail to occur is if one of those requisites failed to occur. I take it that if the only way the conclusion could fail to follow is if the

world is so strong that a difference in some feature of the world would require a change in God. Given all the features of God, this world must exist exactly as it does, and were anything about this world different (including its existence), God would have to be different, but God can't be different; thus, all truths about the world are just as necessary as truths about God. If Leibniz accepts the definition of necessity in terms of that which whose denial entails a contradiction, it follows that all true propositions are necessarily true and all false propositions are necessarily false (for the denial of any truth will contradict either God's will, God's understanding of possibilities, or truths about creaturely essences. We can thus further shorten the necessitarian_{NC} argument:

1. Necessarily, God exists
2. Necessarily, if God exists, then this series of events exists.⁶⁸
3. Therefore, necessarily this series of events exists.

In the original version of the *Confession* Leibniz concedes, "it follows that sins are necessary. Since the existence of God is necessary and sins are a consequence of the existence of God, i.e., of the ideas of things, even sin will be necessary."⁶⁹ The first problem is that not only are sins necessary, but all features of the world are necessary:

antecedent fails to be true, then the connection is one of strict implication (the connection could not fail). ("On the Demonstration of Primary Propositions," A VI.ii 483, translated in Dascal 1987, 151).

⁶⁸ We derive this premise from premises 2 and 3 of the previous version of the argument stating that the existence of this series follows from God's existence and further that this sort of "following from" is best represented as a necessary hypothetical statement.

⁶⁹ CP 49.

...you would conclude that all things are necessary, even that I am speaking and you are listening, for these situations also are included in the series of things, and accordingly, you would conclude that contingency is removed from the nature of things, contrary to the manner of speaking accepted by all mankind.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, this conclusion, that sins and the precise series of things are all necessary “*must not be conceded*, for it is contrary to the use of language.”⁷¹ Much like in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” Leibniz identifies the source of the (seemingly) problematic necessitarian conclusion to be terminological, due to

a twisted sense of words. From this source arises the labyrinth from which one cannot escape; from this source arises the calamity of our estate because the languages of all people have twisted into different meanings the words for necessity, possibility, and, likewise, impossibility, will, author, and others of this kind by a certain universal sophistry.⁷²

Ambiguous terminology can be cleared up by defining terms, but not any definitions will do, for Leibniz wants to rescue the fact that we do not describe sin and other features of the world as ‘necessary’. Leibniz notes that God’s existence is necessary, but we do not speak of the existence of the world as necessary, so we need some way to distinguish the modality of the proposition “God exists” from that of “this world exists.”

Leibniz seeks to make room amongst the necessary propositions for contingent propositions (or at least develop an account of this apparent distinction). Paradigmatic necessary truths include “three threes is nine” and “God exists”, in contrast with paradigmatically contingent truths “This world exists,” “Judas sins”

⁷⁰ CP 49.

⁷¹ CP 49; emphasis added.

⁷² CP 51.

and “Leibniz speaks”. According to Leibniz’s definition of modality in terms of non-contradiction, necessary truths are those whose opposite implies a contradiction, while the contraries of contingent truths do not entail a contradiction. This suggestion is consistent with his suggestion in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” where possibility is understood in terms of not entailing a contradiction when clearly and distinctly perceived.

In the *Confession*, however, Leibniz connects how we conceive of things with the concepts of those things “in themselves”:

Now I have defined the necessary as something whose contrary cannot be conceived; therefore, the necessity and impossibility of things are to be sought in the ideas of those very things themselves, not outside those things. It is to be sought by examining whether they can be conceived or whether instead they imply a contradiction.⁷³

If we treat beings as having concepts, then not implying a contradiction is a matter of having a coherent concept, and subsequently being a candidate for possible existence. Thus Leibniz continues:

Therefore if the essence of a thing can be conceived, provided that it is conceived clearly and distinctly (e.g., a species of animal with an uneven number of feet, also a species of immortal beast), then it must already be held to be possible, and its contrary will not be necessary, even if its existence may be contrary to the harmony of things and the existence of God, and consequently it never will actually exist, but will remain *per accidens* impossible. Hence all those who call impossible...whatever neither was nor is nor will be are mistaken.⁷⁴

Possible things are beings with coherent concepts or natures; an incoherent nature makes it impossible for such a creature to exist. Propositions attributing existence to impossible beings are necessarily false. Propositions attributing existence to

⁷³ CP 57.

⁷⁴ CP 57.

possible beings can be contingent or necessary. Necessary existential propositions result when their denial contradicts the nature of the subject in question.⁷⁵ We can generalize beyond existence claims, as Leibniz does in the above passage, noting that a species of animal with an uneven number of feet is possible but not actual, and thus contingently false. A clear and distinct understanding of the concept “animal” is consistent with both the concept of odd-footedness and the concept of even-footedness. Implying a contradiction is something we determine by analyzing concepts embedded in propositions. We can analyze the concept of the subject term and predicate term of a proposition to determine whether denying that predicate of a subject contradicts those features of concepts. In the above passage, Leibniz claims that animal species with an odd-number of feet are possible even though they may be contrary to the harmony of things and the existence of God. Leibniz describes those things that are not part of the best of all worlds, and whose existence is thus inconsistent with God’s will as impossible *per accidens*.

How does this help with the necessitarian_{NC} argument? God’s understanding—grounded in the essences of things—plus God’s will are the sufficient reason—the sum total of reasons—that determine that this world (or “series of things”) exists. Leibniz notes that if anything were different in the series of things, it would have to be reflected in a difference in the collection of sufficient reasons. This totality of reasons necessitates every feature of the world. If we base our modal distinctions on all of these sufficient reasons, then we get two categories of propositions (or of beings), necessarily true and necessarily false. A species of immortal beast is

⁷⁵ The sole necessary existential proposition is “God exists,” while contingent existential propositions do not imply a contradiction, nor does their contrary.

impossible if we take into consideration which world is the best, and that God wills the best necessarily (for such beasts are sadly not part of the best of all worlds). In this sense, it is necessarily false that there are species of immortal beasts, or necessarily true that immortal beasts do not exist.

However, Leibniz wants to offer an account of necessity and contingency that renders these sorts of propositions contingent, and his suggestion is that if we restrict which reasons we can consider in determining whether a contradiction is entailed, then we might be able to offer a greater variety of modal categories. That is, which reasons, in the totality of reasons, do the determining will make a difference for Leibniz.

I will designate that as necessary, the opposite of which implies a contradiction or cannot be clearly conceived. Thus it is necessary that three threes are nine, but it is not necessary that I speak or sin. For I can be conceived to be myself even if I am not conceived as speaking, but three threes which are conceived not to be nine are three threes which are not three threes, which implies a contradiction, and a calculation, i.e., a reduction of both terms in the definition to unities, shows it. Those things are contingent that are not necessary; those are possible whose non-existence is not necessary. Those are impossible that are not possible, or more briefly: the possible is what can be conceived, that is (in order that the word can not occur in the definition of possible), what is conceived clearly by an attentive mind; the impossible what is not possible; the necessary that whose opposite is impossible; the contingent that whose opposite is possible.⁷⁶

Recall from Leibniz's discussion of sin in his letter to Wedderkopf the view that sins are evil only relative to the sinners but not absolutely evil because they fail to be evil relative to God. Here, Leibniz is making a similar distinction, where something can be truly predicated of a subject, and is necessary, depending on how we limit which features we include in the consideration of the truth of the proposition. Thus "Horses exist" is contingently true relative to horses, because it can be clearly

⁷⁶ CP 55.

conceived that the non-existence of horses is possible. Relative to the concept horse, “horses exist” is contingent. However, if we include considerations beyond the concept horse, including that horses are part of the best of all worlds, and God must create the best world, denying that horses exist does entail a contradiction, ultimately with God’s nature. When everything is considered, the non-existence of horses is not possible, but relative to the notion horse non-existence is possible.

Here, I want to draw upon terminology that Samuel Newlands introduces in “The Harmony of Spinoza and Leibniz.”⁷⁷ Newlands argues that for Spinoza and Leibniz, “the modality of objects...can vary relative to how those objects are conceived.”⁷⁸ The concept of the subject of a proposition governs how we are conceiving of the being in question. That concept determines the range of reasons that ground truths about the subject. These reasons also influence whether we can derive a contradiction when trying to determine whether a proposition is possibly but not necessarily true. On the view that Leibniz is presenting, if we exclude considerations of which world is the best and of the fact that God wills what’s best, supposing three threes is not nine does yield a contradiction, while conceiving of myself not

⁷⁷ Newlands 2010.

⁷⁸ Newlands 2010, 64. Newlands’ discussion is in terms of the modal properties of beings or objects, whereas I am phrasing my discussion in terms of the modal properties of propositions and how the subjects and predicates are conceptually represented therein. I think that the suggestion that modal properties vary depending on how we conceive of the subject of a proposition is the right way to understand Leibniz’s development in the “Confession.” Newlands describes this position as “anti-essentialist” but I am reluctant to attribute this view to Leibniz. Leibniz is an anti-essentialist insofar as he claims that modal truths depend upon how we conceive of a subject (which is in line with Quine’s sentiment in “From a Logical Point of View”). However Leibniz does this while affirming that there are essences, and those essences are modally relevant (which is contra Quine’s view).

speaking does not entail a contradiction.⁷⁹ I like the *all things considered* terminology because ‘all’ can be contextually influenced to have a wider or narrower scope. If I say that “all the chocolate is gone” the ‘all’ can be restricted to the original candy bar I purchased, or all of the chocolate on my person, or all the chocolate at my home, or all the chocolate in Ann Arbor etc. Similarly, when considering the sufficient reasons that necessitate “horses exist”, ‘all’ the things I consider when determining whether this truth is necessary can be restricted to features of the concept “horse”. If all the features of “horse” are insufficient to guarantee the truth of “horses exist” then (as long as the notion of a horse is not itself contradictory) this truth fails to be necessary in a restricted sense.⁸⁰ So sometimes the ‘all’ in ‘all things considered’ is restricted to a particular subset of features of the relevant concept. When I claim that Leibniz is a necessitarian “all things considered” I mean “all” in the broadest sense, including the totality of reasons sufficient to render a truth. However, as we will see, Leibniz develops modal terminology that tracks subsets of the sufficient reasons for a truth, narrowing the scope of ‘all’ according to particular conceptions of creatures in the world. These restricted notions of necessity are *not* closed under entailment, so that even if one proposition necessary follows from another, it does not mean that the modal status of the first proposition transfers to the second proposition. If Leibniz can articulate a coherent notion of restricted necessity, then he can block the central inference in the necessitarian_{NC} argument.

⁷⁹ Thus Leibniz says “...it is necessary that three threes are nine, but it is not necessary that I speak or sin. For I can be conceived to be myself even if I am not conceived as speaking, but three threes which are conceived not to be nine are three threes which are not three threes, which implies a contradiction...” (CP 55).

⁸⁰ Newlands himself does not focus on essences but instead characterizes the *per se* features of beings as excluding information about other worlds.

Thus Leibniz says:

I reply [to the necessitarian argument] that it is false that whatever follows from something necessary is itself necessary. Certainly it is evident that nothing follows from truths except what is true; nevertheless, since a particular proposition can follow from purely universal propositions...why not something contingent from something necessary?⁸¹

Leibniz explains that he can define necessity to block the inference that what follows from something necessary is itself necessary,

Now I have defined *the necessary* as something whose contrary cannot be conceived; therefore the necessity and impossibility of things are to be sought in the ideas of those very things themselves, not outside those things.⁸²

Returning to the necessitarian_{NC} argument:

1. Necessarily, God exists.
2. Necessarily, if God exists, then this series of events exists.⁸³
3. Therefore, necessarily this series of events exists.

On the version of all things considered necessity, this argument goes through. However, suppose we restrict considerations to the concept of the subject of the proposition and its content. On this restricted notion what “necessity” means is that a truth is guaranteed by what is contained in the concept of the subject. For example, we can conceive of God as the most perfect conceivable being. Leibniz thinks that denying God’s existence entails a contradiction with the notion of being

⁸¹ CP 55-57.

⁸² CP 57.

⁸³ We derive this premise from premises 2 and 3 of the previous version of the argument stating that the existence of this series follows from God’s existence and further that this sort of “following from” is best represented as a necessary hypothetical statement.

the most perfect being, so “God exists” is necessary. However, even if God’s existence does entail the existence of this series of events, it does not guarantee that the reasons for the world existing are *contained within the notion of the world*. So the above inference is invalid, when we restrict our notion of modality, because existence following from the concept of the world is not entailed by God’s existence following from the concept of God. In that way Leibniz rejects the conclusion of the argument, on the restricted notion of necessity, because although the existence of the world follows from the existence of God, its existence does not follow from its concept alone. Thus the inference is invalid when we employ the restricted notion of necessity.

The main challenge that Leibniz faces in spelling out this view is to offer a principled or non *ad hoc* means of determining which considerations to exclude and which to include in determining whether the contrary of a proposition entails a contradiction. Leibniz needs to develop his theory of concepts relevant for modal theorizing. That is, if we can consider different sets of reasons when evaluating the ground of the truth of some proposition, what guides how we conceive of some subject? What guides the subset of reasons we consider in making our modal determinations? Leibniz makes it clear that he wants to exclude God’s good will, and which world is best, however in the first version of the “Confession,” he does not offer an explanation of why those factors are excluded. Leibniz supplies such a theory in his second version of the “Confession”, through *per se* modality.

4.2 Second Version (1677?)

The relevant additions to the later version of the “Confession” are, first the systematic introduction of the term ‘*per se*’ to Leibniz’s description of the sort of

necessity and contingency that follows if we restrict which considerations must come into play when considering what entails a contradiction. I will treat this as a precisification of Leibniz's solution to the earlier view, and I will try to develop this view as an account of *per se* properties as essential properties.

Leibniz can concede that all truths are necessary_{NC},⁸⁴ but we can nevertheless distinguish truths according to what makes them necessary. Some are necessitated merely by features internal to the essence of the subject, while others require additional factors external to the essence to guarantee truths (these fail to be *per se* necessary and are instead necessary *per accidens*).⁸⁵ I think the most salient suggestion for a non ad-hoc way to guide how we conceive of objects is to extrapolate from Leibniz's example of God. "God exists" is *per se* necessary because all of the sufficient reasons for God's existence (according to Leibniz) are internal to God's essence. The fact that Leibniz, in the first version, already contrasts this with impossibility *per accidens* seems to suggest that he is already considering essences to be a principled way to guide how we conceive of the subject of propositions when trying to determine its modal properties. So, moving forward to the second version of the "Confession", the challenge for Leibniz is, given that our modal judgments vary according to how we conceive of the subject of the proposition in question, to spell out a non-*ad hoc* principle of how we ought to conceive of beings when making modal judgments.

Per se modality is born out of Leibniz's recommendation that we conceive of substances in terms of their essences. Essences spell out features that could not be

⁸⁴ This is not Leibniz's own terminology; I have added this for clarity.

⁸⁵ *Per se* contingency is equivalent to *per accidens* possibility; see CP 57.

otherwise without destroying the nature of the object. On this view “necessary” is equated with “essential”.⁸⁶ Those propositions that are necessary are those that predicate an essential feature to a subject. Contingent truths are those that predicate an accidental property of a subject. Thus, for example, *God exists* is necessarily true because God essentially exists. On this view, relations of necessity and contingency reduce to the relations substances bear to their essential and accidental properties, respectively. We restrict our considerations to those essential to the subject of the proposition when considering contingency, on this view.

This coheres nicely with the role of sufficient reasons in motivating the necessitarian_{NC} view in Leibniz’s system. The sufficient reasons for all truths are ultimately found in God’s will and intellect, so all things (reasons) considered all truths are necessary. However, of those truths some are true just in virtue of features internal to the concept or essence of the subject. If the sufficient reasons for some truth are all contained within the concept or essence of the subject of a proposition, then that proposition is *per se* necessary, and is otherwise *per accidens* necessary.

The origin of this view is in Leibniz’s letter to Wedderkopf where he describes sins as evil relative to the sinner, but not absolutely evil because they are not evil to God when considering which world is the best. When sins are considered in themselves, God appreciates that they are evil and can further appreciate that they are evil relative to the sinner. However, relative to the best series of things, or the

⁸⁶ Leibniz’s views here are very close to contemporary views that reduce modality to essence. See Fine 1994 and Dasgupta 2014 for contemporary views that are close to Leibniz’s (particularly Dasgupta’s in connection to the Principle of Sufficient Reason).

best of all worlds, sins are not evil, and God's will is disposed towards them *qua* essential features of the best of all worlds.

This use of the *per se* terminology gives us some insight into how he employs the idea of considering something "in itself." Here, Leibniz treats an item as *per se* if it abstracted away from the particulars that result from it being embedded in the series of things, or a particular world. This is relevant for our discussion of the "Confession" because it gives some clues about how he's using '*per se*' specifically applied to modal notions.

Let's stipulate that the modal view Leibniz is developing distinguishes the *per se* features of a subject from those that are *per accidens*. A proposition is *per se* necessary if and only if what is attributed to a subject is either a *per se* feature of the subject or entailed by only *per se* features of the subject. However, a proposition is *per accidens* necessary if and only if what is attributed to a subject is not entailed by the subjects *per se* features alone. On this view, the relevant modal features when deriving a contradiction are the *per se* features of a subject. What we are thus looking for as we develop a *per se* modal theory is an explanation of which features of a subject are *per se*. As we will see those features turn out to be the essential features of the subject, or those features that are intrinsic to the essence of the subject.

Leibniz introduces *per se* necessity into the second edition of the "Confession", which he develops, refines, and utilizes to render commonplace claims about contingency true.⁸⁷ First, Leibniz aims to develop a notion of contingency that

⁸⁷ To supplement the 1677 version of the "Confession," I will examine some of Leibniz's correspondence with Spinoza and his 1675 work on the arguments for the existence of God.

confirms that at least some features of the world are contingent. He claims that those theories that deny that there is any sense in which some truths are contingent

necessarily destroy the difference between truth and possibility, necessity and contingency, and, having twisted the meaning of the words, they oppose themselves to the ordinary use of words. Therefore sins, damnations, and the other elements of the series of contingent things are not necessary...⁸⁸

Leibniz's primary modal goals in the "Confession" are to explain how the existence of the actual world is contingent, how non-actual worlds possibly exist, and how certain elements of the series of worldly events are not themselves necessary. In "On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom," Leibniz offers an account of possibility in terms of imaginability, but, as we saw, while this might conform to common usage of modals, it does not meet Leibniz's more rigorous standards of conceivability. In the "Confession" Leibniz works towards a notion of possibility that is different from imaginability but that nevertheless captures the sense in which some truths are contingent. In Leibniz's earlier work, he focuses on the relation between necessity and God's foreknowledge. However, in the "Confession" he focuses on the question of whether features of the world are necessary because they are grounded in God's necessary nature. This allows him to formulate the necessitarian argument from God's nature:

Take away or change the series of thing, and the ultimate ground of things, that is, God, will be done away with or changed. It is not more possible that from the same ground—and a ground sufficient and entire, such as God is with respect to the universe—there should result opposed consequences, that is, that diverse things should follow from the same thing, than it is possible that the same thing should be different from itself.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ CP 59.

⁸⁹ CP 45.

Any change or difference in the truths of the actual world would require that God is other than he is—“different from himself”—but God cannot be different from himself, so the world cannot be otherwise. Let’s examine this argument more closely against Leibniz’s development of modal terminology in the first version of the “Confession”.

As in the case of his strategy in “The Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom,” Leibniz offers an account of “necessary” that renders false the claim that all truths are *per se* necessary. Recall the necessitarian argument:

- (i) That which follows from something necessary is necessary.
- (ii) The existence of the world follows from God’s existence.
- (iii) God’s existence is necessary.
- (iv) Therefore, the existence of the world is necessary.

Leibniz argues that according to the *per se* view of necessity we can deny premise (i) by realizing that the necessity here is *per se*:

- (i)’ Everything that follows from something [*per se*] necessary is [*per se*] necessary:

I reply that it is false that whatever follows from something that is necessary <*per se*> is itself necessary <*per se*>.⁹⁰

According to Leibniz, even though God’s existence is necessary (both *per se* necessary and necessary all things considered), and the existence of the world follows from God’s existence, we can deny that the existence of the world is *per se* necessary.

⁹⁰ CP 55. The “<...>” indicate that texts that were added to the original 1672 version.

<For in this place we call necessary only what is necessary *per se*, namely, that which has the reason for its existence and truth in itself. The truths of geometry are of this sort. But among existing things, only God is of this sort; all the rest, which follow from the series of things presupposed--i.e., from the harmony of things or the existence of God--are contingent *per se* and only hypothetically necessary, even if nothing is fortuitous, since everything proceeds by destiny, i.e., from some establish reason of providence.>⁹¹

Per se necessity is a matter of the idea or concept of the subject of a proposition containing the reason(s) for the truth of that proposition. A natural suggestion is that what the concept of a subject contains is that subject's essential features. This reading is encouraged by the fact that Leibniz treats our concepts of beings as representing their essence:

if the essence of a thing can be conceived, provided that it is conceived clearly and distinctly...then it must already be held to be possible, and its contrary will not be necessary...⁹²

So a proposition is *per se* necessary if the concept of the subject of that proposition, which represents the subject's essence, entails that the predicate of the proposition applies to the subject. Applied specifically to the case of God's existence, it's *per se* necessary that God exists because existence follows from God's essence. However, it is not *per se* necessary that this world exists, because its existence isn't determined by its concept (or the series of things) alone. Additionally, to show this world exists we must appeal to the fact that it's better than the other conceivable worlds and that God wills the best. So if we restrict our considerations to the concept of this world alone, we cannot show it is *best* (because that requires a comparison to other worlds) and we cannot show God must will the best (because the concept of the world does not include the requisite information

⁹¹ CP 57.

⁹² CP 57.

about God’s nature). Thus it is *per se* contingent that the world exists. So Leibniz continues to accept that the existence of the world follows from the existence of God, but argues that just because God’s existence follows essentially it doesn’t mean that the world’s existence follows essentially (from the concept of this world).

4.3 *Per se Necessity and the Dreaded Doctrine of Necessitarianism*⁹³

4.3.1 *Per se* Modality and Essences

Leibniz’s usage of *per se*, “in itself”, roughly captures the sort of necessity/contingency distinction he is developing in the first version of the “Confession”. The issue I highlighted is whether there is some principled way to think about things *per se*. Although Leibniz focuses on existence claims in the above passages, he also mentions the truths of geometry (which are *per se* necessary on this view), including propositions like “triangles have three-sides”. So this account of *per se* necessity can generalize to propositions other than existential ones. Leibniz does not restrict his talk of requisites to those things required for the existence of a being, but includes also those things part of a being’s definition, “....a definition is nothing but an enumeration of requisites”.⁹⁴ The suggestion that *per se* modality is the modality of essences represented by the concepts in God’s understanding offers one such principle to determine which features we must include when considering whether a proposition is impossible, necessary or contingent.

⁹³ Sleight explains that Leibniz uses “the *per se* modalities to ward of the dreaded doctrine of necessitarianism” in the Introduction to his translation of the “Confession,” CP xxv. I am much indebted to Sleight’s discussion here.

⁹⁴ CP 69. Thus the Principle of Sufficient Reason does not merely state that there is a reason why each being exists, but a reason for every truth.

Moreover, because essences constitute the natures of beings, they are things that could not be otherwise, and which Leibniz takes to be characteristic of modal necessity. *Per se* modality offers a principled distinction that makes room for contingent propositions, and delivers many of intuitively correct modal judgments: it's (*per se*) necessary that God exists, and that the angles of a triangle add to 180 degrees, while it's (*per se*) contingent that this world exists, and, importantly (*per se*) contingent that other worlds don't exist. Just as existence does not follow from the concept of this world, non-existence does not follow from the concept of other worlds. Thus *per se* contingency offers a way to render it true that other worlds are possible. They are possible because their concepts in God's understanding do not imply a contradiction (excluding considerations of features outside the concept of those worlds). This is consistent with the goodness of God's will, and the resulting fact that he will create the best of all worlds, from rendering non-actual worlds impossible (or *per accidens* impossible).

This view puts a lot of pressure on Leibniz's notion of an essence, and the connection between concepts in God's understanding and the essences of creatures. This is particularly interesting in the case of individuals, such as Judas and Caesar, and even individual bodies. For it raises the question of whether individuals qua individuals have distinct essences, or more generally how we conceive of the essences of individuals. After all, they certainly are the subjects of propositions, and we will need an account of their essences to render our modal theory. Importantly, Leibniz's views on individuals, what individuates them and how to conceive of them,

undergoes a number of changes in his early work.⁹⁵ In the “Confession”, Leibniz treats the world, or series of things, as individuals as embedded in spatial and temporal relations (among other relations) that Leibniz treats describes as ‘external’ to these individuals. Here, my suggestion is that ‘external’ means non-essential:

There you have it, what may amaze you, the principle of individuation, outside the thing itself. For between these eggs no difference can be assigned either by an angel or, I have the audacity to say, by God (given the hypothesis of the greatest similarity possible) other than that at the present time this one is at place A, and that one is at place B...

[Theologian]: But what do you infer from that concerning souls?

[Philosopher:] ...Just this: souls, or as I prefer to call them, minds, are also individuated, or, as it were, become these, by place and time. This being posited, the entire question vanishes. For to ask why this soul rather than another is subjected from the beginning to these circumstances of time and place (from which the entire series of life, death, salvation, or damnation arises), and why, consequently, it passes from one set of circumstances to others---the series of things external to itself bringing things forth in this manner---is to ask why this soul is this soul. Imagine that another should began to exist in this same body (that is, a body located at the same time and place) at the same time and place as that in which this one had begun; then this very should that you call another will not be another but will be this one.⁹⁶

Place is sufficient for distinguishing the otherwise qualitatively identical eggs, which, according to Leibniz, places the principle of individuation outside the eggs in themselves. Moreover, the circumstances that come with being embodied—relations of time and space, constitute the identity of a soul. So propositions about Judas and Caesar, for example, for modal purposes, are evaluated according to the essences of Judas and Caesar which are not constituted by spatial and temporal relations, and relations (for those are external to the individuals). Thus the

⁹⁵ For thorough examinations of the development, and variation, in Leibniz’s views here see Mugnai 2001, Mare and Ariew 2015.

⁹⁶ CP 105-7.

conditions in which Judas and Caesar find themselves in are *per accidens* necessary and not intrinsic to their essences.

However, there is an important complication here, for I have been treating ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ as terms relative to the essence of a being. So my ‘intrinsic’ features are my essential ones and ‘extrinsic’ ones are those that are not essential. However, ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ lend themselves to an alternate definition, whereby an intrinsic property is one that is not merely essential but also a requisite for an individual’s identity.⁹⁷ At least some spatial and temporal relations are intrinsic to individuals in this sense, so that there are some accidental or contingent features of individuals that make up their principle of individuation. We see this result as Leibniz emphasizes that to ask why a soul should endure the material circumstances it does is to ask why that soul is that soul. He goes as far as to say that had a different soul been placed in those very circumstances as the original soul, it would be identical to that soul. So we here see Leibniz affirming both that the circumstances of time and place that a soul experiences are external to that soul and also that they constitute the soul’s identity.

If someone is indignant that he was not born of a queen, and, on the other hand, that his own mother did not give birth to a king, then he is indignant that he himself is not another.⁹⁸

However, being in those circumstances might be sufficient to be that very individual but Leibniz does not commit himself to the view that *all* extrinsic properties are part of the individuating principle. (or necessary to be that person).

⁹⁷ This is how Sleight defines ‘intrinsic’, which is appropriate for discussing Leibniz’s 1680s views but is a shift from his earlier views; see Sleight 1990, 60, 68-72.

⁹⁸ CP 107.

Thus, for example, in a passage we saw earlier Leibniz notes that were he not speaking right now he would nevertheless still be himself:

[F]or I can be conceived to be myself even if I am not conceived as speaking...⁹⁹

There are some features of individuals that an individual can lack and nevertheless be that very individual. My point here is that we need to distinguish those properties essential to an individual from those that individuate the individual. When I describe Leibniz as offering an account of *per se* modality based on features intrinsic to a subject, I mean intrinsic to the subject's essence and not individuating properties.¹⁰⁰ Leibniz describes the principle of individuation as external to the subjects, i.e., the result of the material conditions of the world and their subsequent relations. This is all to suggest that Leibniz treats *per se* modality as a matter of essential features of the subjects, and for subjects that are individuals this includes their essential properties, which do not exhaust their individuating properties. So these passages are interesting because they suggest that Leibniz treats spatial and temporal relations as external to souls, but also as importantly individuating. I take it that Leibniz is committing himself to an account whereby individuals have contingent or merely *per accidens* necessary properties that nevertheless ground their identities as individuals. Leibniz is likely relying on a notion of essence similar to species, where Caesar and Judas thus have the same essence but differ in their spatial and temporal features.

When Leibniz discusses the nature of concepts of individuals in the "Confession," he highlights their essential features, so the concept of an individual need not specify

⁹⁹ CP 55.

¹⁰⁰ In the next chapter we will see Leibniz endorsing the collapse of these two categories.

all of its properties. The notion of a substance need not extend to all predicates of that substance, and further what accounts for the numerical identity of subjects is their embodiment or circumstances of time and place. Thus part of what makes Leibniz's *per se* account viable is that it allows him to articulate how individual substances have contingent properties. Thus because Caesar is essentially human, "Caesar is human" is necessary, but because Caesar's crossing the Rubicon is dependent on material conditions of the world (for example, there being a Rubicon) "Caesar crosses the Rubicon" is contingent.

However, Leibniz's *per se* account does not perfectly account for the necessity and contingency of propositions, for there are some intuitively necessary propositions it renders contingent. For example, Leibniz claims that comprehending the number nine is merely a matter of comprehending nine units:

If you consider nine units displayed before you, then you have comprehended completely the essence of the number nine. However, even if you had knowledge of the material basis for all its properties, you would nevertheless not have knowledge of their form or reflection. For even if you do not observe that three times three, four plus five, six plus three, seven plus two, and a thousand other combinations are nine, you have nonetheless thought of the essence of the number nine.¹⁰¹

If I can grasp the essence of nine by clearly and distinctly perceiving nine units, then when I analyze the concept of nine and restrict it to considerations of essence I need not appeal to things beyond nine units. Leibniz seems to suggest that the relations nine has to other numbers is external to its essence. Yet if I deny that three times three is nine, Leibniz claims that here I will have a contradiction, one that renders this proposition necessary. It seems that in order to derive that contradiction, I

¹⁰¹ CP 43.

must search outside the notion or essence of nine, making three threes are nine contingent.¹⁰²

So while essences offer a principled way to include or preclude considerations from entering into our determinations about necessity, they may not capture the intuitive pattern of modal predicates for all propositions. Non-essential but necessary features of subjects (such as nine being identical to three threes) pose problems for Leibniz's view. Leibniz does not develop a notion of essence in the "Confession" that gets him the division of contingent and necessary propositions that he's looking for. So we can understand the development of *per se* necessity and contingency as resulting from Leibniz looking for a principled way to exclude and include consideration of the sufficient reasons for a truth when making modal determinations. While essences offer one such principle, they do not do so unproblematically. Perhaps this is what encouraged Leibniz to further develop his notion of conceptual containment, so that he might account for necessary relationships between notions other than those between the concepts of essences and the predicates included therein. In fact, in many of Leibniz's logical works during this time he emphasizes that a proof that a proposition is necessary is a matter of reducing it to an identity statement. Such a reduction is achieved by substituting definitions to analyze the key terms, and some of those definitions could go beyond the mere relations between essential properties. If this is so, then Leibniz's development of conceptual containment can be understood as a way to capture

¹⁰²Perhaps Leibniz treats nine as essentially 3 x 3 because the essence of 3 is 3 units, making the essence of 3 included in the essence of 9. This works for this example, but I'm not sure it will work in cases where the essence of one of the numbers is beyond that of the subject, for example $9 = 12 - 3$. The essence of 9 doesn't include the essence of 12.

necessary relationships other than those internal to an essence, perhaps including the relationships between essences, such as God’s essence including knowledge of all possible essences.

4.3.2 *Per se* Modality and the Necessitarian_{NC} Argument

The introduction of *per se* necessity is an augmentation of necessity_{NC} and contrasts with necessity *all things considered* (necessity_{ATC}). *Per se* modality is not meant to be the univocal interpretation of necessity_{NC}. Leibniz seems to acknowledge as much in some of his work between the two versions of the “Confession”. For instance, in a 1675 text, Leibniz says:

“Impossible” is a two-fold concept: that which does not have essence, and that which does not have existence, i.e., that which neither was, is nor will be because it is incompatible with God, or, with the existence or reason which brings it about that things exist rather than do not exist.¹⁰³

Leibniz treats modal notions as ambiguous: sometimes something is “impossible” based on consideration of its essence alone, and other times something is impossible not because of its essence, but because of some incompatibility with beings external to its essence. Our discussion of Leibniz’s pre-“Confession” work illustrates the connection between these two notions; when considering necessity_{NC}, there is unrestricted consideration of sufficient reasons (or requisites), while *per se* necessity results from restricting consideration to requisites internal to the essence of the subject. If the requisites that render a proposition true include features external to the essence of the subject, then the truth is *per accidens* necessary, or contingent.

¹⁰³ “On Mind, the Universe, and God,” SR 7.

According to this reading there are (at least) two versions of the necessitarian_{NC} argument:

Per se necessity

- (i) That which follows from something *per se* necessary is *per se* necessary. **(False)**
- (ii) The existence of the world follows from God's existence.
- (iii) God's existence is *per se* necessary.
- (iv) Therefore, the existence of the world is *per se* necessary. **(False)**

Leibniz rejects the conclusion of this argument by rejecting that the "follow from" relation preserves *per se* necessity. However, this leaves the all things considered necessitarian argument unaddressed.

All things considered Necessity

- (i) That which follows from something *all things considered* necessary is *all things considered* necessary.
- (ii) The existence of the world follows from God's existence.
- (iii) God's existence is *all things considered necessary*.
- (iv) Therefore, the existence of the world is *all things considered* necessary.

Leibniz accepts the conclusion of the all things considered necessary and concedes that all truths are necessary_{ATC}. That is, Leibniz does accept the necessitarian claim when it is interpreted all things considered, but rejects the *per se* conclusion. Leibniz thus distinguishes two kinds of necessity: there is *per se* necessity restricted to the essence of the subject of the proposition, and there is *all things considered* necessity. This is what Leibniz is expressing in the passage regarding two notions of impossibility:

“Impossible” is a two-fold concept: that which does not have essence, and that which does not have existence, i.e., that which neither was, is nor will be because it is incompatible with God, or, with the existence or reason which brings it about that things exist rather than do not exist.¹⁰⁴

Leibniz is an *all things considered* necessitarian but not a *per se* necessitarian. My interpretation features two claims that require defense, first, that Leibniz introduces *per se* necessity to supplement his modal theory and not to function as his sole modal analysis. Second, that Leibniz maintains necessitarianism *all things considered*.¹⁰⁵

These suggestions face a textual challenge that comes from Leibniz’s later reflections on his views at this time. In 1689 Leibniz, considering his early work, acknowledges:

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.

But the considerations of possibles, which are not, were not, and will not be brought me back from this precipice. For if there are certain possibles that never exist, then the things that exist, at any rate, are not always necessary, for otherwise it would be impossible for others to exist in their place, and thus, everything that never exists would be impossible.¹⁰⁶

Robert Adams offers a careful reading of these passages, arguing that “Leibniz has already slipped over the edge of the precipice in this letter [to Wedderkopf]. He states flatly and without qualification that everything that ever happens is necessary”.¹⁰⁷ Adams claims that the Letter to Wedderkopf commits Leibniz to a

¹⁰⁴ “On Mind, the Universe, and God,” DSR 7.

¹⁰⁵ Examples of authors that deny both of these claims include Adams 1994, Sleigh 1990 and 2012. Michael Griffin endorses and defends both of these claims in Griffin 2013, 58-82.

¹⁰⁶ “On Freedom,” AG 94.

¹⁰⁷ Adams 1994, 11.

necessitarian view, which Leibniz subsequently seeks to rescind. Sleigh agrees, noting that on the letter to Wedderkopf Leibniz added “I subsequently corrected these remarks, for it is one thing for sins to occur infallibly, another for them to occur necessarily.”¹⁰⁸ All this lends plausibility to the narrative that Leibniz was once a necessitarian but, in his efforts in the “Confession,” sought to reject this view. This is bolstered by Leibniz’s preoccupation in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom” with demonstrating that God’s knowledge does not generate legitimate necessitarian conclusions. Leibniz’s comment about coming back from the precipice, especially since he offers criticisms of the necessitarian argument from omniscience, is suggestive of the view that Leibniz was once close to claiming that all truths are absolutely necessary but then thought better of it.

However, there is a reading of the above passage that Leibniz does not commit to the claim in his letter to Wedderkopf that all truths are necessary, simply to retract this claim later. The place to start is Leibniz’s comment that “he was very close to the view of those who think that everything is absolutely necessary.” The claim that all truths are absolutely necessary is the necessitarian doctrine Leibniz is rejecting. I think there are two plausible readings of what ‘absolutely necessary’ means here. First, Leibniz could treat absolute necessitarianism as the view that all claims attributing contingency to events are false. Thus when Leibniz retracts his claim about absolute necessity, he is claiming that there is at least one legitimate notion of “necessity” according to which the argument in the “Confession” fails to go through. On this reading, when Leibniz says he was close to the view of absolute necessity, he

¹⁰⁸ CP, 144. Also see CP 5.

is saying that he was close to the view that there is no legitimate sense of ‘contingency’ that renders claims about contingency true. Leibniz’s precipice is having a modal account that commits one to revise all modal language, that he was pulled back from by developing a viable notion of possibility, *per se possibility*, that can capture the fact that non-actual worlds exist merely contingently.

The second plausible explanation of what ‘absolute necessity’ is, is the view that all propositions are necessary_{NC} regardless of how we restrict the considerations of requisite conditions that ground the truth. This reading is encouraged by Leibniz’s denial that sin is absolutely bad in his Letter to Wedderkopf. If sins fail to be absolutely bad because there are some agents relative to which the sins are not bad (for example, relative to the bestness of the actual world) then similarly what it is for a truth to be absolutely necessary is for it to be *per se* necessary. On this view, Leibniz is pulled back from the precipice by successfully articulating a non-*ad hoc* way of distinguishing *per se* properties in such a way that he can characterize the sense in which non-actual worlds and creatures are possible. Because there are ways to qualify our modal claims by restricting our considerations to essence, and because not all truths follow from the essential features of the subject of the proposition, this version of absolute necessitarianism fails.

On either reading, Leibniz is *not* renouncing the view that all truths are necessary_{ATC}. He is instead observing that he can salvage modal language (rendering some of our claims about modality true) by developing a viable notion of contingency in terms of accidental properties. Leibniz accepts that “it is impossible that God create another world,” so searches for ways to mitigate some of its undesirable consequences. If we closely examine the above passage we will see that necessitarianism_{ATC} is not Leibniz’s immediate target.

Returning to the passage from “On Freedom”:

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.

But the considerations of possibles, which are not, were not, and will not be brought me back from this precipice. For if there are certain possibles that never exist, then the things that exist, at any rate, are not always necessary, for otherwise it would be impossible for others to exist in their place, and thus, everything that never exists would be impossible.¹⁰⁹

Leibniz identifies three claims to which he does not want to commit:

1. The view that freedom is merely a matter of being uncoerced;
2. The view that what is infallible or known certainly is necessary; and
3. The view that everything that never exists is impossible.

The challenge is to explain how Leibniz comes to reject each of these claims without rejecting the *all things considered* necessitarian claim. In order to see how he addresses numbers 1 and 3 we will have to return to his discussion in the “Confession”. However, his discussion in “On the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God and Human Freedom” already gives us insight into how to reject 2, that is, how he might distinguish what is known certainly from what is necessary. Leibniz thinks that part of what is problematic about the omniscience argument for necessitarianism is that it treats God’s knowledge as not merely entailing truth but entailing necessary truth. God’s foreknowledge of p ensures that p is true, but—without further argumentation—does not guarantee that p is necessarily true. When Leibniz notes that he failed to properly distinguish necessity from certainty, it is not a retraction of the necessitarian_{ATC} conclusion, but an expression of the fact

¹⁰⁹ “On Freedom,” AG 94.

that he failed to appreciate that the necessitarian conclusion cannot be reached by appealing to God's omniscience alone. Put another way, accepting that the world is deterministic does not entail accepting that all truths about the world are necessary. Acknowledging that what is certain is distinct from what is necessary need not require Leibniz's rejection of *all things considered* necessitarianism.

4.3.3 Returning to the "Confession"

Now, we can examine Leibniz's rejection of claims 1 and 3, the former being the view that freedom is merely a matter of being uncoerced, and the latter being the view that everything that never exists is impossible. In the "Confession", Leibniz characterizes freedom as "spontaneity with choice".¹¹⁰ Spontaneity ensures that the actions of the agent originate in the agent, so that the "principle of action is in the agent".¹¹¹ However, not just any principle of action will do. Leibniz emphasizes that the principle of action must involve a rational and deliberative process, which is sensitive to reasons. Such reasons are a function of the various outcomes of the actions available to the agent. It is important for Leibniz's account of God's freedom that God choose to create this world because it is the best of all worlds. If all non-actual worlds are impossible, then God created this world because it was the only possible world and not because it is the best of all possible worlds (or it is the best of all worlds only in the trivial sense that it is the only world). According to Leibniz, this threatens God's freedom because it threatens choice. To characterize God's free creation of this world, Leibniz wants to find a way to reconcile the necessary_{ATC} existence of the actual world with the fact that God made a choice to

¹¹⁰ CP 69.

¹¹¹ CP 69.

create this world out of all the possible worlds. In this sense, *per se* contingency can vindicate the notion of possibility for the purposes of God's choice. For what is required for God to make a choice is that God understand the array of options that are possible *per se* and that God's will be inclined towards one of those options because of the relative goodness of that option. So all we need is a way of spelling out how worlds are possible, before we consider the fact that God must choose what is best. Each world, considered by itself, is a coherent or non-contradictory collection of substances. These worlds are possible because they have coherent concepts, and are merely *per accidens* impossible given that God will only create what is best. Each world is thus *per se* contingent, even though the actual world exists with *all things considered* necessity, and non-actual worlds are *all things considered* impossible. So the internal consistency of different ways the world could be represented in God's understanding is sufficient to ensure the reality of God's choice in creating this world. We can understand the sense in which possible worlds are possible if we understand that their non-existence is *per se* contingent, i.e. determined by factors beyond consideration of their features.

Now, we can also see how claims 1 and 3 are related to God's freedom and the status of non-actual worlds. Leibniz is acknowledging that in the letter to Wedderkopf he failed to see how the necessitarian conclusion threatens God's freedom, for in the letter he maintains that God is free as long as God is not coerced by external factors.¹¹² We see in the "Confession" that freedom from external compulsion is insufficient, for free acts further require deliberating and acting to

¹¹² Here "external" factors include essences even though they coincide with God's understanding of them.

produce what appears to be best. Acknowledging that God's freedom requires more than the absence of coercion is not a retraction of the necessitarian view. And finally, the notion of *per se* necessity helps to explain the sense in which possible worlds are possible. Possible worlds are only impossible *per accidens*, so even though they will never exist they are not *per se* impossible because, considered in themselves, there is no sufficient reason guaranteeing their non-existence. The necessity of their non-existence does not follow unless we consider factors external to each world, like the relative goodness of other worlds and the nature of God's creative will. So the development of *per se* modal notions need not replace the notion of *all things considered* necessity in Leibniz's system. Instead, we can understand that it is derived from his notion of $\text{necessity}_{\text{ATC}}$ by restricting which necessitating reasons we are considering to render our modal judgments.

5 Conclusion

According to my narrative, Leibniz diagnoses many of the problems surrounding necessity and free will as terminological. He sets out to resolve the disputes by defining 'impossible', 'possible', 'necessary' and 'contingent'. His goal in defining modal terms is to capture our intuitive and everyday use of such terms, but also render viable terms for philosophy and theology. He starts by developing an understanding of possible and impossible in terms of imaginable and unimaginable. These definitions required further refinement, however, to avoid problematic reasoning regarding conditionals, and to avoid things that are imaginable in some broad sense but are ultimately contradictory. Leibniz wants to develop the idea that what is possible is that which is coherent or non-contradictory, and that which is impossible is contradictory, but we need a principled way of determining which

factors are important when determining whether something entails a contradiction. All things considered all true propositions are rendered necessary grounded in the will of God or the essences represented in God's understanding. In the "Confession" Leibniz offers a refinement and an addition: whether something is internal or external to the essence of the subject of a proposition offers a way to understand how some propositions are (*per se*) contingent while others are (*per se*) necessary. Understanding necessity in terms of what is determined by the essence of a being alone is an advancement on Leibniz's original suggestion that we can restrict our considerations when trying to determine whether a proposition is true necessarily or merely contingently. I think he sees this as a terminological advancement that can capture how we talk about modality because it rescues propositions like "this world exists" from being necessary (in the *per se* sense). However, while Leibniz seems optimistic that this also designates "Judas sins" as (*per se*) contingent, it is less clear that Leibniz is successful in articulating a notion of essence that cleaves necessary and contingent truths in the right way.

There are two important comments to make about the relation between different types of necessity, $necessity_{ATC}$ and *per se* necessity. First, I do not think that Leibniz saw *per se* modality as replacing *all things considered* necessity. We should resist the conclusion that the *per se* account is Leibniz's main account, because without the broader version of what implies a contradiction Leibniz cannot account for hypothetical necessity. Hypothetical necessity is the necessity by which a consequent is necessitated by the antecedent of the conditional. As I noted earlier in the chapter, all of the conditionals he describes as hypothetically conditional are those of strict implication. According to strict implication, if the antecedent is

necessarily true, then the consequent is necessarily true. However, if Leibniz's main modal account is in terms of *per se* necessity, then he cannot make sense of hypothetical necessity, for, as he notes in the "Confession" what follows from something that is *per se* necessary is not itself *per se* necessary. Because *per se* necessity is insufficient to account for hypothetical necessity, and yet Leibniz employs hypothetical necessity in his arguments, he did not replace (or he had reason not to replace) *all things considered* necessity.¹¹³ Necessity all things considered is closed under entailment, and Leibniz understands hypothetical necessity in terms of entailment. Moreover, Leibniz characterizes necessity in terms of what cannot be otherwise, if *per se* modality is his only modal notion then there are contingent truths that cannot be otherwise. I take this to be the distinguishing feature of necessary truths, and thus *per se* modality is an insufficient account by Leibniz's own standards.

I do not take *per se* modality to be equally fundamental as *all things considered* necessity, and thus hold that the former is a quasi-modal notion, because *all things considered* necessity constitutes the connection that grounds created things to God's being. Because *per se* modality is about what is intrinsic to an essence, and the created world is extrinsic to God's essence, *all things considered* necessity forms the central connection between God and his creations, which I thus take to be a more fundamental notion.

¹¹³ Moreover, German logic textbooks from the early 1600s favored multiple definitions of contingency, and encouraged bifurcated theory of meanings of terms. According to Roncalgia 2003, Christoph Scheibler's "Opus Logicum" contains at least a three-fold distinction in different notions of possibility, including one that overlaps with necessary truths.

Thus what I am attributing to Leibniz is a semantic reply to the necessitarian; if *per se* necessity is meant to undermine the necessitarian_{NC} argument, Leibniz is guilty of changing the subject. Leibniz, however, is not trying to change the subject, but acknowledge that our commitments regarding the existence and nature of God, as well as the Principle of Sufficient Reason, lead us to the conclusion that all truths are necessarily true *all things considered*. Given that this notion of necessity does not make the familiar modal distinctions among propositions, and further does not offer a means of account for the sense in which non-actual worlds are possible, Leibniz looks to develop finer modal distinctions within the necessitarian framework. While Leibniz does accept some form of necessitarianism, he nevertheless makes progress in rescuing the usage of our everyday modal terms. Thus we can accept the necessitarian argument without accepting that our everyday modal language is always mistaken.

Leibniz develops a coherent account of *per se* features by treating those features as internal to the subject's concept, or essence, as necessary, and those truths that depend on features external to a subject's essence, including accidental features and the features of other beings, as contingent, or necessary *per accidens*. This allows Leibniz to distinguish "God exists" from "This world exists," because existence is a *per se* feature of God but a *per accidens* feature of the world. I presented two main motivations for Leibniz's development of this view: to articulate the sense in which those propositions we intuitively call contingent differ from those we treat as necessary, and to explain how non-actual worlds are possible to preserve God's freedom. Further, I argued that Leibniz does not offer *per se* necessity as a replacement of *all things considered* necessity, but instead employs it to supplement his modal theory. I motivated this view by arguing that the negative consequences

of necessitarianism that Leibniz picks out are not direct consequences of necessitarianism, and can instead be resisted without resisting *all things considered* necessitarianism. Despite this success, in the 1680s discussion of the *per se* view almost all but disappears, and Leibniz introduces the infinite analysis account of contingency. These two views, *per se* and infinite analysis, are not incompatible with one another, but as we will discover, the infinite analysis view is developed in response to a crisis in the *per se* view brought on by changes in Leibniz's views on substances and their individual concepts and nature.

Chapter 2: Necessitarianism & Modality 1681-99

Substances, De re Modality, and Possible Worlds

1 Introduction

The textual evidence from the 1670s supports reading Leibniz as a necessitarian, all things considered, in his early work. In *Leibniz, God, and Necessity*, Michael V. Griffin defends the view that Leibniz is a necessitarian. Griffin's discussion is focused primarily on necessitarianism in relation to Leibniz's work in the 1670s, and does not consider Leibniz's accounts in the 1680s.¹¹⁴ In his review of Griffin's book, Michael Futch emphasizes the importance of addressing the relation of Leibniz's middle period views, spanning the 1680s and '90s, to his necessitarianism—if one is to successfully defend the view that Leibniz was consistently a necessitarian.¹¹⁵ The following discussion, aims to bolster the plausibility of this view by addressing developments in Leibniz's thought during the 1680s.

¹¹⁴ Griffin notes, "Leibniz bases this [the claim that this world is the best] on his 'infinite analysis' theory of contingency. I will not pursue this theory here." (Griffin 2013, 85). Griffin does not return to the infinite analysis view in his discussion but instead focuses on the *per se* account.

¹¹⁵ Futch comments "Of even greater concern is [Griffin's] book's almost complete silence about much of the complex and varied conceptual repertoire of which Leibniz avails himself in explicating the distinction between necessary and contingent truths. For example, beginning with texts from the 1680s, Leibniz avers that metaphysically necessary truths can be demonstrated in finitely many steps and are grounded upon the principles of identity and contradiction, whereas contingent truths cannot be demonstrated, even by God, because they involve an infinite analysis." See Futch 2013.

In the late 1670s, Leibniz develops his logic of categorical propositions, and accordingly turns his attention to his theory of truth. In “General Inquiries about the Analysis of Concepts and Truths”, Leibniz defines a *true* proposition as that which can be reduced to an identity statement (such as $A = A$), or whose denial entails a contradiction.¹¹⁶ Later, in the same work, Leibniz similarly defines a *necessarily true* proposition as one that can be reduced to an identity (or whose denial entails a contradiction).¹¹⁷ Thus Leibniz renders *truth* coextensive with *necessary truth*, apparently leaving no room for contingent truths. If my reading of Leibniz as a necessitarian, all things considered, is accurate, we should expect him to embrace this outcome, and offer a quasi-modal notion of contingency. However, there are many passages where Leibniz worries about how he might make room for contingency.

Recognizing the contingency of things, I further considered what a clear notion of truth might be, for I hoped, and not absurdly, for some light from that direction on how necessary and contingent truths could be distinguished. Now, 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...but this seemed only to increase the difficulty, for if the notion of the predicate is in the notion of the subject at a given time, then how could the subject lack the predicate without contradiction and impossibility, and without changing that notion?¹¹⁸

Instead of explicitly embracing necessitarianism, Leibniz offers what seems like a more optimistic solution to the problem, one that might make room for genuine contingency:

¹¹⁶ P 57.

¹¹⁷ P 70.

¹¹⁸ “On Freedom,” AG 95.

At last a certain new and unexpected light shined from where I least expected it, namely, from the mathematical considerations on the nature of infinity...a most profound distinction between necessary and contingent truths was revealed...truths are, in turn, of two sorts, for some can be resolved into basic truths, and others, in their resolution, give rise to a series of steps that go to infinity. The former are necessary, the latter contingent. Indeed, a necessary proposition is one whose contrary implies a contradiction...[b]ut in contingent truths, even though the predicate is in the subject, this can never be demonstrated...but the resolution proceeds to infinity.¹¹⁹

Leibniz emphasizes his infinite analysis account of contingency during this period, claiming that thinking about mathematical proofs leads to insight about why the denial of a contingent truth does not imply a contradiction.¹²⁰ All this is suggestive of two important claims (that I want to resist):

1. In the 1680s, Leibniz rejects necessitarianism.
2. Leibniz makes room for genuine contingency through his infinite analysis account of contingent truth.¹²¹

However, I will argue that Leibniz rejects each of these because he remains a necessitarian_{ATC} throughout this period. Leibniz's infinite analysis view is a quasi-modal notion that Leibniz emphasizes in part for its ingenuity, and in part because it cleaves the distinction between necessary and 'contingent' truths, and explains the epistemology of necessary and contingent truths in a compelling way. Furthermore, despite the frequent appeals to the infinite analysis view, this account is not

¹¹⁹ "On Freedom," AG 95-6.

¹²⁰ For other texts that express similar optimism see "On Freedom and Possibility," AG 19; "The Source of Contingent Truths," AG 98-99; "Discourse on Metaphysics" §13, AG 45; "On Contingency," AG 28-29.

¹²¹ Robert Sleight makes a good case for treating infinite analysis as Leibniz's solution to necessitarianism in connection with the Principle of Sufficient Reason in Sleight 1983. I nevertheless have reservations about the success of the infinite analysis view as an account of contingency, ones that Leibniz seemed to share, which I think is suggestive that Leibniz's enthusiasm for this view is as a quasi-modal notion.

Leibniz's primary notion of quasi-contingency in the 1680s. Instead, Leibniz favors the possible free decrees account of "contingency," particularly for distinguishing essential from accidental features of individual substances.

The 1680s is an important period to examine Leibniz's treatment of modal distinctions because it is marked by a change in the accounts of "contingency" he appeals to most frequently. As we saw in Chapter 1, in the 1670s he develops the *per se* account of contingency. The *per se* view treats necessary properties as those that are intrinsic to the concept or essence of the subject of a proposition. On this view, humans are *per se* necessarily animals because being an animal is included in or intrinsic to the essence or concept of being human. However, during the same period Leibniz develops an account of individual substances according to which all features of a substance are intrinsic to that substance's nature. When paired with the *per se* view, this renders all properties necessary or essential to an individual. This is unacceptable for Leibniz insofar as he wants to hold that there is a distinction between those properties a substance has necessarily and those it has "contingently." The inconsistency of the *per se* view and Leibniz's account of substances coincides with the disappearance in the 1680s of the *per se* view in Leibniz's discussion of modality and the introduction then of alternate accounts of *de re* contingency.

In the 1680s, one of Leibniz's primary aims is to account for *de re* modal distinctions, or the modal relationships between things and their properties. Having developed a new account of individual substances, Leibniz reflects on different ways predicates are contained in the concepts of substances or individuals. He wants to capture the intuitive distinction between those features an individual has to have, and those that an individual happens to have. In a necessitarian framework, this distinction seems to fall away. If all truths are necessarily true, then this includes

truths about all of the properties of individual substances. In his correspondence with Leibniz, Antoine Arnauld presses this issue, claiming that Leibniz is not able to distinguish the contingency of Arnauld's being a theologian from the necessity of Arnauld's being a thinking thing or something capable of rationality. Subsequently, Leibniz develops two accounts of *de re* quasi-modality in the 1680s. Arnauld's focus is not on the necessitarian argument Leibniz considers in the early work, but instead on the necessitarian implications of the complete concept theory of substance. Leibniz develops two main notions of quasi-contingency in this period. The first, more prominently featured in Leibniz's texts, is modality based on analysis. On this view, a truth is contingent if its proof—i.e., analysis of the relevant concepts of the proposition—generates an infinitely long or non-terminating analysis. Necessary truths are those that can be demonstrated in a finite number of steps.

The second account, which appeals to God's possible free decrees, plays a prominent role in Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld (1685-86). On this view there is a quasi-modal difference between those properties that depend on the laws of the world and those that do not. The former are "contingent" properties, and the latter are necessary. If we consider the range of possible worlds God considers when creating, the laws of nature at each world are represented as possible free decrees God would make if that world were actualized. Those features or properties that depend upon God's free decrees are contingent, and those that depend on essences rather than on God's free decrees are necessary. Some truths hold in virtue of essences, which do not vary depending on the laws of nature. On the possible free decrees account, Arnauld is necessarily a thinking thing because this follows from the essence of humanity, but he is only contingently a theologian because that property depends on the conditions of the world informed by the laws of nature.

The infinite analysis view has received more attention in the secondary literature, but I argue that the possible free decree view offers what, from Leibniz's perspective, is a superior account of modal terminology compared to that of infinite analysis.¹²² Moreover, the possible free decree view depends upon Leibniz's conception of possible worlds as hypothetical plans for world-creation. Thus in articulating why exactly the free decree view offers a better analysis of contingency, I will spell out the role of possible worlds in this analysis, and show how Leibniz's account of possible non-actuals is consistent with his necessitarianism_{ATC}. The analysis of possible worlds will continue into Chapter 3, for Leibniz's introduction of the complete concept account of substances not only fundamentally challenges his *per se* account of quasi-contingency, but also requires changes in his view of the structure and composition of possible worlds.

In what follows, I trace the origin of Leibniz's attempts to account for *de re* modality, looking both at his early *per se* account as well as his *Discourse on Metaphysics* and related correspondence with Arnauld. We will see how his account of individual substances offers a number of challenges for accounting for *de re* modal terminology, and then examine Leibniz's two best attempts to account for the distinction between necessary and contingent features of substances. We will see that the infinite analysis view offers an epistemic explanation of contingency and

¹²² For illuminating discussion of the infinite analysis view see Adams 1994, 25-30; Sleight 1990, 83-89; Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lodge 2011; Merlo 2012; Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne 2000; Carriero 1993 and 1995; McNamara 1990; and Hacking 1974. While some of these authors discuss the free decrees view, for example in Adams 1994 and Sleight 1990, they do not identify it as his most promising account. Carriero examines the promise of the possible free decrees view along side the infinite analysis view. His conclusions diverge from mine, in part because he does not claim that Leibniz is a necessitarian.

necessity, and does not offer a satisfying metaphysical analysis. Possible free decrees root “contingency” on what varies world-to-world. Although this view is not an account of metaphysical contingency all things considered, it is Leibniz's most promising route for explaining how, although all truths are necessary all things considered, and although all properties of an individual are intrinsic to its nature, necessary and contingent properties of substances can be properly distinguished.

2 Transitioning Away from *Per se* Modality

In the “Confession,” because God's existence, understanding of essences, and good will are sufficient for the existence of this world, and because God necessarily exists with this understanding and will, this world exists necessarily. How exactly God's existence entails the existence of this world is noteworthy. God's existence entails the existence of this world because of God's creative activity, which is founded in God's intellect and will. God's intellect includes an understanding of the internally consistent representations of series of temporally and spatially ordered substances (or worlds). The perfection or goodness of each of these worlds is a result of their organization,¹²³ and by comparison one of these is the best. God's will necessarily chooses what is best, and accordingly God necessarily wills the best into existence. God's creation of this world thus depends, first, on his understanding of the features of each world that determine their goodness relative to one another, and thus that determine which world is the best, and second, on the fact that his will yields what's best. The nature of this world does not include the requisites for its existence (which

¹²³ The relevant organization is the harmony of the world, which is “unity in multiplicity, and it is greatest in the case where it is a unity of the greatest number of things disordered in appearance and reduced, unexpectedly, by some wonderful ratio to the greatest symmetry” (CP 45).

include the relative goodness of other worlds and the nature of God's will), whereas God's nature includes all the requisites for his existence (*qua* having all perfections). Leibniz develops the *per se* view to capture this distinction, namely, between those truths whose requisites are contained exclusively in the definitional concept or essence of the subject of that truth, on the one hand, and those that appeal to additional requisites beyond the subject, on the other. According to the *per se* account, necessity and contingency track the differences between truths with requisites solely internal to a subject, and truths with external requisites.¹²⁴ Leibniz utilizes *per se* modality to make room for contingent truths.

The existence or non-existence of worlds is determined by requisites found outside of individual world-concepts, so the existence of a world is *per se* contingent.¹²⁵ *Per se* necessity is not closed under entailment, so even though God's existence entails that this world exists, God's *per se* necessary existence does not guarantee the world's existence is similarly *per se* necessary. Leibniz nevertheless denies that non-actual worlds are possible, in another sense (all things considered), because the existence of those worlds is incompatible with God's perfect will. Thus, the *per se*

¹²⁴ This raises some tricky questions about the dependency relations between God's intellect and the essences represented therein. There is a sense in which God's nature contains those representations, they constitute part of God's knowledge and understanding, but God's nature does not determine the content of those representations. Instead, God has those representations because they exhaust all the different ways to instantiate essences in worlds. So the content of God's knowledge in a sense depends upon those concepts but only because those concepts constitute God's knowledge. On the other hand, those concepts depend on God's intellect for their existence.

¹²⁵ Here I do not mean "world-concept" as a technical term, but however a world is represented in God's mind. Leibniz describes worlds as series of things that can be conceived without contradiction (see Grua 390, and A II.ii 47) so I take it that worlds have concepts, at least in the mind of God.

account describes worlds as *possible* in that requisites for their existence are external to their concepts, but the all things considered account renders them impossible because those requisites obtaining are inconsistent with God's perfect will. The *per se* view accounts for the contingency of the existence of this world, and the non-existence of non-actual worlds, which makes room for God's choice to create this world. The early Leibniz was optimistic that this vindicates our talk of the contingency of truths about human actions. He treats the essence of humans and their definitional concept, as the relevant factor in considering the requisites for action, which are contingent because those actions depend on requisites external to the individuals, such as their material circumstances and relations to other substances in the world. So although human action is not Leibniz's primary focus in the "Confession", he suggests that the *per se* view can account for the contingency of properties, including actions.

Despite Leibniz's initial satisfaction with this view, in the 1680s and '90s it almost all but disappears.¹²⁶ The exception is an early 1680 text "On Freedom and Possibility," where Leibniz reaffirms that worlds are possible relative to their own natures but not relative to God's will:

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. "But God cannot will it to exist." I concede this, yet, such a thing remains possible in its nature, even if it is not possible with respect to the divine will, since we have defined as in its nature possible anything that,

¹²⁶ Robert Adams describes the *per se* analysis of contingency as Leibniz's "principal (and most confident) solution to the problem of contingency" (Adams 1994, 12-20). According to Adams, this is not only Leibniz's primary account of contingency, but one he maintained throughout his lifetime. However, much of the evidence for this claim comes from later texts (including the *Theodicy*) and textual evidence in favor of this view during our period is much more scant (excluding "On Freedom and Possibility" above).

in itself, implies no contradiction, even though its coexistence with God can in some way be said to imply a contradiction. But it will be necessary to use unequivocal meanings for words in order to avoid every kind of absurd locution.¹²⁷

We see the foundation for Leibniz accepting the two-fold notion of impossibility, which distinguishes between those things that are *per se* impossible (or impossible in themselves) and those that are impossible because they are inconsistent with God's will (and thus impossible only all things considered).

In this text Leibniz connects what counts as a subject's nature, or what it is “in itself,” to both essences and definitions:

Except for the existence of God alone, all existences are contingent. Moreover, the reason [*causa*] why some particular contingent thing exists, rather than others, should not be sought in its definition alone, but in a comparison with other things.¹²⁸

Existences are contingent because existence does not follow from the nature or definition of created beings (existence is *per accidens*), but instead requires additional factors, including compatibility with other creatures and ultimately compatibility with God's good will. Here, Leibniz continues to treat ‘possible’ in the *per se* sense, with respect to what is contained in the concept of the subject.

Therefore I say: a possible thing is something which some essence or reality, that is, something that can distinctly be understood.¹²⁹

Further, Leibniz continues to be committed to the view that all truths are necessary truths in the all things considered sense because it is necessary that God wills what is best.

¹²⁷ AG 21.

¹²⁸ AG 19.

¹²⁹ AG 21.

God produces the best not by necessity but because he wills it. Indeed, if anyone were to ask me whether God wills by necessity, I would request that he explain what he means by necessity by adding more detail, that is, I would request that he give a complete formulation of the question. For example, you might ask whether God wills by necessity or whether he wills freely, that is, because of his nature or because of his will[...]we must say that God wills the best through his nature. "Therefore," you will say, "he wills by necessity." I will say, with St. Augustine, that such necessity is blessed.¹³⁰

The opening sentence of this passage seems to affirm that God does not will the best by necessity. However, Leibniz goes on to qualify that claim: it is not *because* this world is necessary that it exists, but it exists because God wills it. However, he also affirms that God wills the best as a result of his nature, which means God necessarily wills the best. Because the best world has all of its best-making features necessarily, it follows that God creates that world necessarily. Because this necessity is not derived from the essences of created things, or God's understanding of them, but additionally stems from the goodness of God's will, the necessary existence of the best world is "blessed". Leibniz continues to be committed to two modal accounts in this text, one according to which this world is necessary (all things considered, including God's nature), and the other quasi-modal account according to which this world exists contingently (*per se*). This latter notion of contingency he exploits to secure God's freedom, arguing that the requisites for the existence of the world are not solely contained in its concept and importantly include God's understanding and will working together to make a deliberative choice. The *per se* possibility of worlds is enough to secure an array of options for God's will.

Despite the similarities, Leibniz's presentation in "On Freedom and Possibility" differs from his discussion in the "Confession". First, Leibniz explicitly connects

¹³⁰ AG 20.

necessary truths to the principle of non-contradiction, “that whatever implies a contradiction is false” and contingent truths to the principle of perfection “whatever is more perfect or has more reason is true”.¹³¹ The principle of perfection is a specific instance of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. It says that there is a reason for all of God’s actions, and that reason is that that action is the best. We can demonstrate that a truth rests on the principle of contradiction by showing that the denial of that truth implies a contradiction.¹³² Contingent truths, on the other hand, “are necessary only on the hypothesis of the volition of God or of some other being” and “rest on the latter principle”.¹³³

This can be assimilated into Leibniz’s all things considered and *per se* views. With respect to the former, the denial of any truth entails a contradiction if we include all considerations—God’s will and his understanding of possible worlds. The principle of perfection is itself a necessary truth (grounded in the nature of God), and thus too based on the principle of non-contradiction. With respect to the *per se* view, the key difference between necessary and contingent truth is whether the requisites are entirely internal to its essence or definitional concept of the subject of the truth. If the denial of a proposition results in a contradiction just by appealing to factors internal to the essence of the subject of the proposition, then it is necessary. However, if the denial of a truth results in a contradiction because of

¹³¹ AG 19. Leibniz already identifies necessary truths as those whose denial entails a contradiction in his early work. But formulating this claim in terms of what is based on the principle of non-contradiction in contrast with what is true in virtue of the principle of perfection is a change in comparison with his early work.

¹³² As I indicate below, the contradiction must result from features that are themselves necessary.

¹³³ AG 19.

factors external to the subject of the proposition, then it is contingent. So the difference between *per se* necessary and contingent truths is not whether their denials entail a contradiction *simpliciter*, but instead, whether the source of that contradiction is internal or external to the essence of the subject in question. So the *per se* account is integrated into Leibniz's comments about truths that rest on the principle of non-contradiction and those that also rest on the principle of perfection. Leibniz's notion of a contradiction here is more robust than it might seem. For example, denying that a human is rational is a contradiction, although it is not obviously of the form p and not- p .¹³⁴ The notion of a human that is not rational is a contradiction, both because the concept of "human" includes rationality, and because humans are rational essentially. Properties and property attributions that are contrary to essential properties thus express contradictions.

The *per se* view is markedly absent from Leibniz's 1680s texts that explicitly address the notion of contingency.¹³⁵ This shift has not gone unnoticed in the literature, and the status of the *per se* account as part of Leibniz's modal theory has come into question. For example, Robert Sleigh highlights the fact that the *per se* defense of contingency is almost non-existent in Leibniz's "Discourse on Metaphysics" and "Correspondence with Arnauld."¹³⁶ According to Sleigh, "...once Leibniz convinced himself of the benefits of the doctrine of infinite analysis [to account for contingent truths] it is not clear to me that he continued to subscribe to the [*per se*] defense...it strikes me as plausible to suppose that Leibniz was eschewing the [*per se*]

¹³⁴ See McFarlane 2000, 102, for a discussion of how this notion of "formal" fits into the history of logic.

¹³⁵ These texts include "On Contingency," "The Source of Contingent Truths," "Primary Truths," and "Discourse on Metaphysics."

¹³⁶ Sleigh 1990, 80.

defense...”¹³⁷ According to the infinite analysis view, contingent truths are those propositions whose demonstration through the analysis of concepts would continue indefinitely.

The absence of the view in the 1680s and ‘90s is significant. As Sleigh notes, Leibniz primarily emphasizes his infinite analysis account of contingency, but this proclivity stems from a crisis that Leibniz faced in spelling out the *per se* view. This crisis is important to acknowledge if we are going to understand Leibniz’s appeal to a *per se* account in his early work, as well as his account of possibility in his later work. In the mid-1680s Leibniz settles on an account of individual substances whereby their definitional concept specifies all predicates that will ever be true of that substance. If a definitional concept specifies all features that will ever be true of a substance, then on the *per se* view all properties of a substance are *per se* necessary, or internal to the definitional concept of the individual substance. The disappearance of the *per se* view is a function of his changing views about individual substances and what they are “in themselves.” In the 1680s, Leibniz came to see individual substances as fundamentally constituted by *all* of their properties. This renders actions, including free actions, internal to a substance as much as essential properties. This leaves Leibniz without an account of the quasi-contingent properties of substances. Thus, the *per se* view disappears in the ‘80s and ‘90s because Leibniz thought it could not account for some contingent truths, namely the contingent truths about substances.

¹³⁷ Sleigh 1990, 82.

3 The Complete Concept Account, 1672-1686

Leibniz's views on substantial individuation, identity, and concepts all develop between the time of the "Confession" and that of the "Discourse on Metaphysics" and Correspondence with Arnauld. By examining the logical and metaphysical commitments that lead Leibniz to this view, we can see how he was limited in his recourse to address problematic features of the *per se* view, and thus was led to the infinite analysis account of contingent. The logical commitments, namely, Leibniz's theory of truth and examination of the formal properties of propositions, influenced his views about the concepts of substances. These considerations, however, are not sufficient to account for his views on individuation, which derive from his thoughts about substances and their attributes. I will trace the changes in each of these together from the "Confession" to the "Discourse on Metaphysics," so we can see why Leibniz withdraws the *per se* account and how he thinks the infinite analysis view fares better.

3.1 Logical Foundations

I will start with the logical commitments that shape Leibniz's complete concept theory.¹³⁸ It is helpful to see the ways in which Leibniz's views about substance might follow from his views about the logical structure of propositions and his theory of truth, although ultimately I will argue that his views about substance are informed by his metaphysical commitments as well. This is also Adams' view:

¹³⁸ These are emphasized by Robert Adams in tracing the development of Leibniz's complete concept theory. Adams observes that in "Discourse on Metaphysics" §8; "...Leibniz uses the idea of completeness to provide a purely logical characterization of individual substance. He virtually defines an individual substance as a thing whose definitive concept is complete..." (Adams 1994, 72).

The richly deserved prestige of Bertrand Russell's and Louis Couturat's works on Leibniz set a fashion of trying to see his philosophy as principally derived from his logic and his philosophy of language. Much in Leibniz's own work seems to invite this approach. But the deductive order in which Leibniz presents his doctrines, especially in his writings of the 1680s, is misleading. An adequate foundation of the system---or even a fully adequate explanation of his having held it---cannot be found in his philosophy of logic.¹³⁹

Leibniz's treatment of logic and the structure of propositions explains the development of his views on concepts, but leaves open the question of how those concepts related to the world, and those objects that those concepts are about. Leibniz treats propositions as the bearers of truth, where the truth of a proposition is a function of the relationship between the concepts that make up the proposition. This forms the core of his Conceptual Containment Theory of Truth:

An affirmative truth is one whose predicate is in the subject; and so in every true affirmative proposition, necessary or contingent, universal or particular, the notion of the predicate is in some way contained in the notion of the subject.¹⁴⁰

Leibniz expresses the key relations between concepts in terms of containment, which is clearest in the case of affirmative universal statements of the form *all As are Bs*. In such cases the proposition is true if the concept of the predicate, *B*, is contained in the concept of the subject, *A*.

[W]e can know whether some universal affirmative proposition is true. For in this proposition the concept of the subject, taken absolutely and indefinitely, and in general regarded in itself, always contains the concept of the predicate. For example, all gold is metal; that is, the concept of metal is contained in the general concept of gold regarded in itself, so that whatever is assumed to be gold is by that very fact assumed to be metal. This is because all the requisites of metal (such as being homogeneous to the sense, liquid when fire is applied in a certain degree, and then not

¹³⁹ Adams 1994, 75. Sleight 1990, 90, makes a similar suggestion.

¹⁴⁰ "Necessary and Contingent Truths," P 96.

wetting things of another genus immersed in it) are contained in the requisites of gold...¹⁴¹

Because the concept of *A* (e.g. gold) contains the concept *B* (e.g. metal), all the essential features of metal are also essential features of gold. Moreover, this entails that all those objects that fall under the concept gold (or are gold) also fall under the concept metal (all gold-things are metal-things). However, the containment relation is a little more complicated for affirmative particular propositions. In the case of particular affirmative propositions, such as *some As are Bs*, the containment of the concept of *B* in the concept of *A* cannot be the same as in the case of universal statements. This is because containment guarantees that all objects that fall under a concept exemplify all the contained properties, so it wouldn't be possible for it to be the case both that *some As are Bs* and that *some As are not Bs* are true. Instead, Leibniz says that the concept of *B* is “in some way” contained in the concept of *A*, although not when the concept is considered “itself and absolutely”:

But in the particular affirmative proposition it is not necessary that the predicate should be in the subject regarded in itself and absolutely; i.e. that the concept of the subject should in itself contain the concept of the predicate; it is enough that the predicate should be contained in some species of the subject, i.e. that the concept of some instance or species of the subject should contain the concept of the predicate, even though it is not stated expressly what the species is.¹⁴²

The containment involved in particular affirmative proposition, in contrast to universal propositions, is one where the containment is grounded in further specification of concepts in the subject. Leibniz continues to trade upon the distinction between what is contained in the nature of the subject “itself” versus what is external to it.

¹⁴¹ P 22.

¹⁴² P 23.

Consequently, if you say, ‘Some experienced man is prudent’, it is not said that the concept of the prudent man is contained in the concept of the experienced man regarded in itself. Nor again, is this denied; it is enough for our purpose that some species of experienced man has a concept which contains the concept of the prudent man, even though it is not stated expressly just what that species is.¹⁴³

Thus in the above passage Leibniz distinguishes what is contained in the concept EXPERIENCED MAN “regarded in itself” from what is included through some additional specification to yield the inclusion of the concept PRUDENT. This same distinction, which is also the foundation for the *per se* view, is based on the idea that beings have natures constituted by the essence and specified by the definitional concept, but these essential features do not exhaust all the features of a concept.¹⁴⁴

The conceptual containment theory of truth can be extended to negative propositions, such as *no A is B* and *some A is not B*, by treating the negated predicate as included in concepts. So in the universal case, *no A is B* means that the concept A includes the concept not-B, and in the particular case *some A is not-B* means that the concept A, with some further specification, includes the concept not-B.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ P 23. Also see P 19: “...thus the concept of gold, regarded in itself and taken absolutely, involves the concept of metal, for the concept of gold is ‘the heaviest metal’. But in a particular affirmative proposition, it is enough that the inclusion should hold with some addition. The concept of metal, regarded absolutely and taken in itself, does not involve the concept of gold; for to do so, something must be added. This ‘something’ is the sign of particularity; for there is some certain metal which contains the concept of gold.”

¹⁴⁴ Thus Leibniz offers an account of the definitional concepts of certain terms (often species terms) where the definitional concept is incomplete i.e. does not include every feature that objects falling under that category have. See Rutherford 1995, 119-24, for an insightful discussion of the connection between incomplete and complete concepts.

¹⁴⁵ AG 11. Here Leibniz is not clear whether “not-B” is included explicitly as “not-B” or instead implicitly by including something that entails being not-B. For example, if it is true that no emeralds are blue, then on Leibniz’s view this means that the concept of emerald

Later, in 1686, Leibniz considers whether propositions with terms picking out individuals in the subject position (singular propositions, such as Socrates is mortal) should be treated as universal propositions or particular propositions. These sorts of propositions are not obviously universal or particular in character, because universal and particular propositions treat the relationship between categories of things. And it is not clear whether the concept of an individual subject is a type of category (for example, a category that has only one member). Because Leibniz is committed to the conceptual containment theory of truth, he aims to integrate singular propositions using the logical resources he developed for universal and particular propositions. One of the constraints is that affirmative and negative singular propositions are contradictories. For example, Caesar crosses the Rubicon, and Caesar does not cross the Rubicon are contradictories. If Leibniz identifies singular propositions as universal statements, then they are of a special sort because universal affirmative and universal negative statements are *not contradictories*, because they can both be false. For example, all swans are black and no swans are black are both false. Leibniz is inclined to treat singular propositions as a type of universal proposition, but he does not want to concede that it is possible for both Caesar crosses the Rubicon and Caesar doesn't cross the Rubicon to be false. For singular propositions to be formally treated as universal propositions where the affirmative and negative versions are contradictories, Leibniz must further develop the associated concept of the individual. Accordingly, the concepts of individuals must contain a predicate or the negation of a predicate for each possible predicate,

contains the concept "not-Blue". It's not clear, however, whether the content of the concept is merely "not-Blue" or instead "green" which entails "not-blue".

so that when the affirmative is true the negative is false, and vice versa. This means that for any predicate, no further specification is required to ensure that either the concept of a predicate or the negation of that predicate is included in the concept. The result is that singular propositions are a special type of universal proposition¹⁴⁶, but because the concepts of individuals are fully specified, affirmative and negative versions of the same singular propositions are contradictory. As Leibniz explains the point:

Some logical difficulties worth solution have occurred to me. How is it that opposition is valid in the case of singular propositions---e.g. ‘The Apostle Peter is a soldier’ and ‘The Apostle Peter is not a soldier’---since elsewhere a universal affirmative and a particular negative are opposed? Should we say that a singular proposition is equivalent to a particular and to a universal proposition? Yes, we should[...]. For ‘some Apostle Peter’ and ‘every Apostle Peter’ coincide, since the term is singular.¹⁴⁷

Thus in order to ensure that the concepts of individual subjects render the logic of conceptual containment consistent with universal and particular propositions, Leibniz treats the concept of an individual as complete not merely because it specifies properties of an individual subject, but because for any possible feature it specifies whether that feature is contained in it or not.¹⁴⁸ So for any feature, a properly complete concept will indicate whether that feature is included in the concept or not. The complete concept view thus allows singular propositions to be assimilated into the framework of universal and particular categorical propositions.

¹⁴⁶ There is a sense in which this analysis of singular propositions renders them a special type of particular proposition. First, because the contradictory of a universal affirmative is a particular negative.

¹⁴⁷ P 115.

¹⁴⁸ For a further discussion of the logical basis for the complete concept view, see Adams 1994, 60-63.

Individual concepts can be treated as a type of category, as long the inclusion or exclusion of each possible property in that category is specified.

However, even if the logic of propositions explains why singular concepts are *complete*, it does not establish that the complete concepts must be the concepts of *substances*. If we concede that the conceptual containment that renders particular propositions true holds in virtue of further specifications of the subject term, we might also treat “Caesar crosses the Rubicon” as true in virtue of further specifications of Caesar. Now this would mean that “Caesar crosses the Rubicon” and “Caesar does not cross the Rubicon” are not contradictories without further specification of the concept CAESAR. But we need to know why, according to Leibniz, we shouldn't treat the concept of the substance CAESAR as something that requires further specification, so that crossing the Rubicon need not be included in Caesar's concept. Just as the containment involved in particular propositions is the result of conceiving of the subject not absolutely and in itself, but with further specifications, substance terms, such as “Caesar” could be conceived as concepts that require further specification. However, Leibniz does not treat substance-terms like the subject-terms of particular propositions. Instead, Leibniz identifies substances with *complete* concepts, or fully specified concepts. But the logic of propositions does not tell us why we should be committed to the view that denying and affirming the same predicate of a subject that is an individual must yield a contradiction from the content of the concept of the individual alone. So the logic of singular propositions is insufficient to explain why complete concepts should be adopted as an account of substances and their properties. The answer to this question is that during the late 1670s to mid-80s Leibniz was developing not only his conceptual containment theory of truth, but also his theory of substances. To see why complete

concepts are appropriate definitions of substances, we must turn to that development.

3.2 *Metaphysical foundations*

In the *Discourse on Metaphysics* §8 Leibniz presents his account of substances. He endorses Aristotle's account of substance, but claims it does not supply a proper definition of substances as individuals:

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 explanation is merely nominal. We must therefore consider what is to be attributed truly to a certain subject.¹⁴⁹

Nominal definitions, for Leibniz, are definitions that uniquely specify some object or category of objects, but fail to specify all of the necessary and sufficient conditions required to be that particular object or fall under that category.¹⁵⁰ Put another way, nominal definitions offer ways to identify and distinguish objects that have a certain feature, but fail to capture the essence, or full nature of a being:

The purpose of nominal definitions is to give marks sufficient for recognizing things. For example, assayers have marks by which they distinguish gold from any other metal, and even if a person had never seen gold, he can be taught theses infallible marks for recognizing it, should he encounter it one day.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ “‘Discourse on Metaphysics’ §8, AG 41. Aristotle’s view is that “A substance—that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all—is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse” (Categories 5.12).

¹⁵⁰ “‘Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas,’ AG 24-26; “‘Discourse on Metaphysics’ §24, AG 57.

¹⁵¹ “‘On What Is Independent of Sense and Matter,’ letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia, AG 186.

Leibniz adds to Aristotle's definition "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 this notion is attributed."¹⁵² As we saw in the previous section, the logic of singular propositions alone does not explain why complete concepts should serve as the definition of individual substances. Below, we will explore the metaphysical considerations that lead Leibniz to adding to Aristotle's view.

In the "Confession", Leibniz claims that circumstances external to a substance serve as the principle of individuation. He entertains the possibility that there are two numerically distinct eggs that do not differ in any observable way except their spatial location.¹⁵³ He extends these considerations to numerically distinct souls, treating their distinguishing features as a function of their material conditions in the world—or conditions of time and place.¹⁵⁴ Leibniz emphasizes that to ask why a soul endures the material circumstances it does is to ask why that soul is that soul. He goes as far as to say that had a different soul been placed in those very circumstances as the original soul, it would be identical to that soul. This affirms both that the soul's circumstances of time and place are external to the nature of that soul but also constitute the soul's identity. He suggests that (at least some of) these conditions are necessary for the identity of that soul:

¹⁵² "Discourse on Metaphysics" §8, AG 41.

¹⁵³ Leibniz repeats this comment in his 1680 "Metaphysical Definitions and Reflections:" "Now with the aid of time and place we can also distinguish individuals, and decide which are the same and which are difference; for example, if I have two eggs in front of me that are similar and equal throughout, and I want to distinguish them..." (LOC 243).

¹⁵⁴ CP 106-7.

If someone is indignant that he was not born of a queen, and, on the other hand, that his own mother did not give birth to a king, then he is indignant that he himself is not another.¹⁵⁵

While this passage does not confirm that all of a subject's external circumstances or attributes are necessary for being that particular individual, it does confirm that at least some of them are. Moreover, Leibniz might well have committed himself to the stronger claim that all external material conditions constitute identity:

For neither God nor anyone blessed would be blessed, nor would even exist, unless the series of things were as it is.¹⁵⁶

So Leibniz is operating with a notion of what is internal versus external to a subject, where the spatial and temporal relations and circumstances count both as external and individuating for subjects. When Leibniz discusses the nature of concepts of individuals in the “Confession”, he highlights their essential features, so the concept of an individual need not specify all of its properties. So, conceptually, the definitional notion of a substance need not extend to all predicates of that substance, and further need not extend to what accounts for the numerical identity of subjects—their embodiment or circumstances of time and place.

Leibniz's views on individuation develop with his consideration of the causal histories of entities. In April 1676, he worries that if there can be numerically distinct entities that are intrinsically identical, we can have perfect knowledge of their intrinsic properties (i.e. perfect knowledge of the entities as effects) even though they have different causes. Such cases would violate the principle that

¹⁵⁵ CP 107.

¹⁵⁶ CP 101.

knowledge of the effect yields knowledge of the cause.¹⁵⁷ For example, we can construct intrinsically identical squares (squares with the same side-length), using different construction procedures: first by joining two triangles and second by joining two rectangles. In this case the effects (the squares) are intrinsically identical and yet their productive histories diverge, that is, they have different causes. The lesson he takes away from the consideration of the squares is that individuals, genuine individuals, must differ intrinsically in some way, for those individuals have distinct causes which cannot be discerned if they are intrinsically identical. Leibniz concludes that there is some intrinsic feature of the nature of the individual that reflects its causal history, and serves as a principle of individuation.

During Leibniz's early work, he accepts that the principle of individuation can be external to an individual substance. On my reading Leibniz associates the specific reason for an individual with what is *per se* necessarily true of it, but does not

¹⁵⁷ "We say that the effect involves its cause; that is, in such a way that whoever understands some effect perfectly will also arrive at the knowledge of its cause. For it is necessary that there is some connection between complete cause and the effect. But on the other hand there is this obstacle: that different causes can produce an effect that is perfectly the same. For example, whether two parallelograms or two triangles are put together in the appropriate way (as is evident here) the same square will, as is clear, always be produced. Neither of these can be distinguished from the other in any way, not even by the wisest being. So, given a square of this kind, it will be in the power of no one---not even the wisest being---to discover its cause, since the problem is not determinate. The effect, therefore, seems not to involve its cause" (DSR 51). The problem that Leibniz is raising here is that if what individuates a substance are features external to its nature, then knowledge of its nature will not yield knowledge of its cause.

include its full individual nature in its *per se* properties because that is founded in things external to the individual.¹⁵⁸

In my view a substance, or, a complete being, is that by which itself involves all things, or, for the perfect understanding of which the understanding of nothing else is required. A shape is not of this kind; for in order to understand from what shape of such and such a kind has arisen, we need to have recourse to motion. Each complete being can be produced in only one way; the fact that figures can be produced in various ways is a sufficient indication that they are not complete beings.¹⁵⁹

Leibniz's sentiments here are not immediately clear, but I think we can fill them out in a plausible way that foreshadows the view he holds in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* 10 years later. Originally, Leibniz treats the causal history as individuating, rendering the individuating principle as external to the individual. Eventually, he came to assimilate the causal history of the substance into the very nature of that substance. Thus instead of an entity resulting from an external causal process, complete entities include and are constituted by (an internal) causal processes. Leibniz takes those processes to be unique, and the unique causal histories can in turn be understood to constitute the unique identity of the substance itself. Thus Leibniz continues to accept that causal histories individuate, but ultimately decides that those causal histories are internal to a substance and part of its nature as an individual, which is part of what it means to be 'complete'.

Leibniz develops his views of the concepts that correspond to substances as specifying the complete nature of those substances, capturing what individuates

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Leibniz's claim: "It will also follow that the effect does not involve the cause in accordance with its specific reason, but in accordance with its individual reason, and therefore that one thing does not differ from another in itself" (DSR 51; emphasis added).

¹⁵⁹ DSR 115.

them. In propositions where a substance-term appears, the corresponding concept is a substance's complete concept. As Leibniz explains in a 1679 text:

[I]f the same thing is B and C and D and E, etc., and this is due to the fact that this very thing is A, then A will be a substance or a complete term. Therefore, in a complete term nothing inheres by accident, i.e. every predicate of it may be deduced from its nature ... From all this the principle of individuation, about which many scholastics have disputed in vain, becomes evident. Titius is vigorous, learned, handsome, fifty years old, a sentient being, rational, etc. But the concept from which there follow all those things that can be said of him is the concept of his singular substance.¹⁶⁰

By 1679, then, we have the development of a complete concept, which serves as the principle of individuation for substances.¹⁶¹ There is a distinctive development in Leibniz's treatment of the concepts of individuals as complete, but the justification for treating those concepts as the defining feature of substances has to do with the development of his views on substances and their natures as complete. When Leibniz shifts from an external principle of individuation to an internal principle, the nature of that very substance comes to include explanations for all their features, which are all internal to the nature of the substance and necessary and sufficient for their individuation.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ A VI.vi 306.

¹⁶¹ In fact, there is evidence of the complete concept account of substance as early as 1676: "In my view a substance, or, a complete being, is that which by itself involves all things, or, for the perfect understanding of which the understanding of nothing else is required...each complete being can be produced in only one way; the fact that figures can be produced in various ways is a sufficient indication that they are not complete beings." ("Notes on Metaphysics," DSR 115)

¹⁶² This is not a complete philosophical defense of Leibniz's view here. For Leibniz assumes it is the totality of extrinsic features that individuate, before he comes to understand those features as internal to a substance. Here I have not offered a defense of why all of those features should be individuating as opposed to a subset of them.

4 The Complete Concept Account, 1686

In §8 of the “Discourse on Metaphysics,” Leibniz offers an account of substances and their corresponding concepts:

[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 this notion is attributed.¹⁶³

Individual substances each have a notion or concept and that complete concept specifies all the predicates or features of the subject. This, in and of itself, is not a particularly robust philosophical principle. It is connected to God’s omniscience, for if we accept that a complete concept serves as God’s representation of a substance in his intellect and God is omniscient, and thus knows all properties that will inhere in a substance, then the complete concept will specify all of the properties of a substance¹⁶⁴ However, God’s omniscience does not mandate the complete concept view, for one can accept that God knows everything about a substance—or all truths are represented in God’s intellect about a substance—without the concept of the substance including all of those features. Instead, God could know all truths about a substance derived from some facts about the substance plus facts about the world the substance is in. Thus, there is no need to say that a substance’s concept must be complete in order for God’s cognitive representation of that substance to be complete. What we will see, however, is that because worlds are composed of substances, knowledge about the world will supervene on knowledge about

¹⁶³ AG 41.

¹⁶⁴ “It could be said that it is not in virtue of this notion or idea that he must perform this action, since it pertains to him only because God knows everything” (“Discourse on Metaphysics” §12, AG 45).

substances. This is not an argument for the view, but an explanation of how it fits into Leibniz's system. What renders the complete concept theory a robust philosophical principle is that Leibniz claims that not only do substances have complete concepts but further those concepts account for that individual substances *haecceity* or *thisness*, or what makes that substance numerically distinct from other substances.

God, seeing Alexander's individual notion or *haecceity*, sees in it at the same time the basis and reason for all the predicates which can be said truly of him, for example, that he vanquished Darius and Porus; he even knows *a priori* (and not by experience) whether he died a natural death or whether he was poisoned, something we can know only through history.¹⁶⁵

Leibniz commits himself to something even stronger than the claim that the complete concept accounts for a substances *haecceity*. For Leibniz identifies the *haecceity* of a substance with the whole complete concept, thus ruling out that a mere subset of predicates included in the concept account for the numerical uniqueness of a substance. He asserts that since all the properties are specified by a complete concept, a substance is numerically distinct from any other substance. The complete concept not only accounts for why a substance is an individual, it accounts for why the substance is that individual, i.e. has a specific identity. The complete concept spells out the identity of a substance by specifying all of the properties a substance must have. Leibniz's complete concept account of substances includes 3 principles regarding the character and role of substantial concepts:

1. *Complete*: A substantial concept specifies all predicates that will ever be true of a substance.

¹⁶⁵ "Discourse on Metaphysics" §8, AG 41.

2. *Individuation*: A substantial concept accounts for the *haecceity* of a substance; a substance with a complete concept is numerically distinct from any other substance.

3. *Identity*: A substantial concept specifies all the properties necessary and jointly sufficient in order to be that substance. Thus, for example, the concept of Adam specifies all the properties such that if some substance x lacks one of those properties, then x is not identical to Adam. Further if some substance has all the properties specified by Adam's concept, then that substance is identical to Adam.¹⁶⁶

These principles need not be accepted together (although accepting 3 entails accepting 2), and they serve as theses about the specificity of concepts, what makes a substance an individual and what makes a substance that particular individual. From these theses Leibniz concludes;

[I]t follows that it is not true that two substances can resemble each other completely and differ only in number [*solo numero*], 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...¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ This principle is composed of two theses that need not be accepted together. The first has to do with the necessary identity conditions, and the second with the sufficient identity conditions. One could accept that the concept specifies sufficient but not necessary conditions for identity. Leibniz seems to accept both these principles, in accordance with his view that jointly necessary conditions constitute a sufficient condition.

¹⁶⁷ "Discourse on Metaphysics" §9, AG 42. Thomas Aquinas defines 'lowest species' as a species that cannot be divided into further species: "...in order for things in the same genus to differ specifically they must have contrariety of differences while being undivided," i.e., when they are not further divided into species, as the lowest species, "And these are said to be undivided inasmuch as they are not further divided formally. But particular things are said to be undivided inasmuch as they are not further divided either formally or materially" (Aquinas 1995, Lect. 10, 2123). According to Aquinas some individuals in the same species result from form applied to parcels of matter. However, this account of individuation does not work for angels because angels do not have a material component. Aquinas argues that angels are not individuals of the same species, but instead each their own species. I take

According to Leibniz, his complete concept view entails that no two numerically distinct substances can share all the same properties (or have the same complete concept).

The complete concept view has other important implications for his metaphysics. Leibniz no longer thinks of substances as being spatiotemporally related to other substances, but instead thinks of a substance as a being that brings about the changes in its representation of the world.¹⁶⁸ Individual substances are structured by the series of changes they undergo, which represents the series of things in the world.

[I]t is very true that the perceptions or expression of all substances mutually correspond in such a way that each one, carefully following certain reasons or laws it has observed, coincides with others doing the same—in the same way that several people who have agreed to meet in some place at some specified time can really do this if they so desire.¹⁶⁹

Each substance has not merely an aggregate of states, but a progression of states guided by the original state of the substance and the law of development of that substance.¹⁷⁰ As an analogy, consider choreographed group dance. Each dancer knows the series of moves, according to the music and timing, such that even if the group did not have time to practice together, each could follow their own script about their series of movements, and as the result dance together as a whole.

Leibniz to identify with Aquinas's view insofar as Leibniz claims that the concept of a substance cannot be realized or instantiated in multiple parcels of matter, thus you cannot have numerically distinct creatures with one and the same complete concept.

¹⁶⁸ Leibniz describes substances as perceiving the world from a particular point of view, but here I do not want to issue a decision regarding whether substances are fundamentally mind-like, or whether there are corporeal substances as well. For a discussion of these issues in connection to the complete concept view, see Garber 2009, 181-224.

¹⁶⁹ "Discourse on Metaphysics" §14, AG 47.

¹⁷⁰ The phrase 'law of development' is introduced by Sleigh 1990, 53.

Leibniz thinks of substances in the same way, each proceeding according to their own script, which, like the dancers, can result in a coordinated effort even if no one substance is interacting with another. The important question, the one that I will explore especially with respect to possible free decrees, is just how coordinated do the unfolding natures of substances have to be for them to form a world?

To start answering this question, it is important to recognize the role of laws in structuring the events that unfold as substances endure different states. First, as noted above, each substance is an individual and differs in at least one feature from every other individual. Leibniz explains that each individual experiences the world from their own perspective, constrained by the time and place of their body and subsequent perceptual experiences. We all experience roughly the same world, but since we experience it in different ways, individual substances are not identical. Each substance has a unique developmental law, one that dictates every single feature that is part of their nature.

Thus a thing not only remains in the state in which it is, insofar as it depends on itself, but also continues to change when it is in a state of change, always following one and the same law. But in my opinion it is in nature of created substance to change continually following a certain order which leads it spontaneously...through all the states which it encounters, in such a way that he who sees all things sees all its past and future states in its present. And this law of order, which constitutes the individuality of each particular substance, is in exact agreement with what occurs to every other substance and throughout the whole universe.¹⁷¹

The law of development connects past and future states of a substance. The law of development for an individual constitutes its essence, and is thus *per se* necessary. The development law includes all things that the substance will undergo, including miracles or those events that go beyond the natural powers of the individual

¹⁷¹ L 493.

substance. There are two other important categories of laws. First, there is the general law of order for a world, which includes a law for the series of things that occur at that world, including miracles. Leibniz explains that all substances must reflect this general law in their nature in order to “enter into this same universe.”¹⁷² However, there are also laws of nature that are subsets of the general law of a universe. By reflecting the same general law, and subordinate laws, substances are coordinated with one another. For example, at this world our veridical perceptions of bodily motions indicate that they follow the law of conservation of momentum.¹⁷³

The transformation of Leibniz’s notion of substance has two important results for his accounts of modality. First, the complete concept view of substances renders *per se* modality problematic when applied to individual substances. If all features of a substance make up the essence or concept of that substance, then all features of a substance are *per se* necessary. In the “Confession”, Leibniz holds that only incomplete concepts specify essences. But in the 1680s, complete concepts of substances introduce an exception, for they specify the essence of individual substances. Thus, Alexander's kingship is *per se* necessary because it follows from the concept or essence of Alexander as an individual substance. Trying to make sense of our modal terminology in terms of the intrinsic features of a subject fails to

¹⁷² LA 51. See also “Discourse on Metaphysics” §7, AG 40.

¹⁷³ See “Discourse on Metaphysics” §17, AG 49, for a discussion of the law of conservation of momentum. There is much more to be said here about other laws of substances, including those that govern the correlation between physical and mental phenomena. I am not yet decided on just how many laws must overlap for substances to be part of the same world, but it cannot be so strong that all of the subordinate laws overlap, for that leaves little room for there to be different amounts of harmony in different aggregations of substances. These laws need not be restricted to physical laws but could include morality and other normative rules.

account for the distinction between the contingent and necessary properties of substances, or *de re* modality.

The second result is that possible worlds are constituted by possible substances, and a transformation in the nature of substances has corresponding effects on the constitution of possible worlds. In his early work, Leibniz treats worlds as “series of things”, so that events in a world are constituted by substances and their relations. When substances bear spatio-temporal relations to one another, it is clear how the existence of one (in a particular time and place) can exclude the existence of another (in that same time and place). In the 1680s, instead of thinking of substances as entities that are causally related, Leibniz starts to think of created substances as causally isolated from other created substances. This stems from the complete concept theory of substance, which entails that all of the features of a substance originate from its own nature, and not causally from other substances. If a substance’s features depended on the causal activity of other substances, then the complete concept would make reference to other substances. This is an unacceptable sort of dependence between substances for Leibniz, who claims that,

[E]ach substance is like a world apart, independent of all other things, except for God; thus all our phenomena, that is, all the things that can ever happen to us, are only consequences of our being.¹⁷⁴

Call Leibniz’s claim about the independence of substances his *world apart* view.¹⁷⁵

On this view, causal relations among objects are reinterpreted as grounded in individual substances perceiving the world as though there are relations between

¹⁷⁴ “Discourse on Metaphysics” §14, AG 47.

¹⁷⁵ I will offer a further interpretation of the World Apart claim when discussion possible free decrees and compossibility. For further discussion of this doctrine see Sleight 1990, 143-44.

these objects. There continue to be genuine causal relations in the world, but those relations are internal to substances and do not hold between substances. Accordingly, substances no longer depend on other substances for their properties. For example, a prince is not a prince in virtue of being born to a queen. A prince is a prince because he experiences the world as though he were born to a queen. In this case, the prince does not causally depend on the queen for existence. Or further consider having a conversation with the person operating the cash register at the grocery store. According to Leibniz, the cashier does not place the change in your hand by transferring coins onto your palm, but instead, each of you experiences the interaction from your own perspective, with the appearance of coins in my palm the result of the series of events that follow from my very nature. The history and development of these changes in Leibniz's views are vexed in many ways, but the key insight introduced into Leibniz's metaphysics is the idea that the most fundamental units of reality are individual substances that have experiences as if there is a causally interacting material world.¹⁷⁶ The features of a substance no longer depend upon other substances, and instead the explanation for the origins of those features must be internal to a substance (excepting their creation and conservation by God). Accordingly, the nature of a substance includes everything that will ever happen to that substance.

Understanding substances as causally isolated changes the possible patterns of co-existence, or co-instantiation, of substances in worlds. According to Leibniz, patterns of co-instantiation are captured by what he calls *compossibility*. Two

¹⁷⁶ See Mugnai 2004 for an enlightening discussion of the origin of Leibniz's view of substances.

substances are *compossible* if they can co-exist. Two substances are *impossible* if the existence of one excludes or is incompatible with the existence of another. When Leibniz introduces a causally isolated version of substances, it seems to make room for the possibility that all substances are compossible. If substances do not causally interact, and if spatio-temporal relations are grounded in features internal to substances, then it is not clear how the existence of one substance could exclude the existence of another. This issue is of deep importance for understanding the structure of possible worlds, for worlds are shaped by compossibility relations.

These questions about the structure of possible worlds are particularly acute because I will argue that Leibniz's best account of quasi-contingency, possible free decrees, is based on the notion that the nature of substances is structured according to laws, and these laws vary from world to world. I will turn to Leibniz's account of *de re* modality, to clarify his notion of substances and their *de re* properties, which, or so I will argue, depend upon variations in subordinate laws world-to-world. Once we clarify the quasi-modal features of substances we will return to the structure of possible worlds and the nature of compossibility.

5 Leibniz's Problematic Account of *De re* Modality

5.1 *Arnauld's Worry*

In February of 1686, Leibniz sends Arnauld the titles of each section of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*. The title to §13 explains:

Since the individual concept of each person contains once for all everything that will ever happen to him, one sees in it the *a priori* proofs or reasons for the truth of each event, or why one event has occurred rather than another. But these truths, though

certain, are nevertheless contingent, being based on the freewill of God and of creatures.¹⁷⁷

Arnauld worries that the complete concept account of substance precludes the distinction between necessary and contingent properties:

But I find it merely strange that all human events are as necessary by hypothetical necessity from this single supposition that God wished to create Adam, as it is necessary by hypothetical necessity that there was in the world a nature capable of thought from the supposition alone that he wished to create me.¹⁷⁸

Arnauld's reservation is that the complete concept theory of substance undermines the modal difference between “Caesar crosses the Rubicon” and “Caesar is a thinking thing” relative to Caesar's existence. Thus each of the following hypotheticals are necessary:

If Caesar exists, then Caesar crosses the Rubicon.

If Caesar exists, then Caesar is a thinking thing.

Leibniz, in the *Discourse* acknowledges just this problem:

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.¹⁷⁹

Here, “the difficulty” Leibniz is observing is that if we define necessary properties according to *per se* necessity, then all features of a substance are *per se* necessary because all features of a substance follow from the concept or essence. Leibniz's

¹⁷⁷ LA 5.

¹⁷⁸ Arnauld to Leibniz, LA 26.

¹⁷⁹ AG 45.

worry is not that all features of a substance are necessary_{ATC}, for, on my view, he has already conceded that is true in virtue of necessitarianism. Instead, his worry is that he has failed to offer an account of whatever distinction we are tracking when we consider the contingent features of a substance. We can state this problem with respect to each:

Version 1: Argument from Conceptual Containment¹⁸⁰

1. If a truth follows from the concept of a thing alone, then it's necessarily true.
2. That Caesar crosses the Rubicon follows from Caesar's complete concept.
3. Therefore it is necessary that Caesar crosses the Rubicon.

Version 2: Argument from Essential Containment

1. If a truth follows from the essence of a subject alone, then it is necessarily true.
2. That Caesar crosses the Rubicon follows from Caesar's essence.
3. Therefore it is necessary that Caesar crosses the Rubicon.

The problem is that if we accept that the best account of what we mean by “contingency” is what is not intrinsic to the concept or essence of the subject, then there are no contingent features of substances.¹⁸¹ The *per se* proxy account thus fails to account for this distinction. Arnauld identifies a similar problem, not because

¹⁸⁰ In contemporary terms this is an argument from analyticity. If all truths are analytically true, and all analytic truths are necessary, then all truths are necessary. Thus if it's analytically true that Caesar crosses the Rubicon, then it is necessarily true.

¹⁸¹ Except, perhaps, existence or non-existence.

Arnauld is directly committed to the *per se* view, but because he accepts that necessary truths are those that are entailed by conceptual containment. Arnauld worries about the necessary connection between being Arnauld and being a theologian, so that Arnauld's being a theologian is hypothetically necessary relative to Arnauld's existence. Before turning to Leibniz's explanation of the sense in which it is not necessary that Caesar crosses the Rubicon, it is helpful to examine three proposed *de re* modal accounts that are inadequate for Leibniz's purposes: accounting for *de re* contingency via reduction to truth in a world, via counterparts, and via hypothetical necessity.

5.2 *Three Rejected Proposals*

5.2.1 Reduction to Truth in a World

One way to differentiate properties modally is to identify essential properties as those properties that a substance has at every world that includes it. Accidental or contingent properties are thus those properties that a substance has in at least one world that includes it, but not at all such worlds. On this view Caesar's crossing the Rubicon is contingent because there are some worlds where Caesar crosses the Rubicon and there are other worlds where Caesar fails to cross the Rubicon.

Leibniz cannot accept this solution because of his strict notion of identity of substances, according to which all properties included in the complete concept are requisites for being identical with that very substance. For example, Leibniz thinks that even free actions, including sinning, can form part of the identity of a substance.

But someone else will say, why is it that [Judas] will assuredly commit this sin? The reply is easy: otherwise it would not be this man. For God sees from all time that

there will be a certain Judas whose notion or idea (which God has) contains his 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?¹⁸²

If the notion of crossing the Rubicon is contained in Caesar's concept, then a substance that fails to cross the Rubicon is not Caesar. Thus Caesar crosses the Rubicon at all worlds that include Caesar. Treating *de re* contingency in terms of truth in a world does not yield a distinction between necessary and contingent properties.

In the correspondence, Arnauld resists the idea that all features of a substance constitute its identity:

Since it is impossible that I should not always have remained myself, whether I had married or lived in celibacy, the individual concept of myself contained neither of these two states...That is why, Sir, it seems to me that I must consider as contained in the individual concept of myself only that which is such that I should no longer be me if it were not in me...¹⁸³

Arnauld points out that Leibniz's complete concept account of substance renders all of a substance's properties essential for its identity. Leibniz does not recoil at this suggestion. Instead, he affirms that an individual cannot lack a single property and remain that very individual. Leibniz agrees with Arnauld that the concept of an individual specifies the very nature of that individual, and even further agrees that the nature of an individual includes all those features that an individual must have in order to exist. However, Leibniz claims that only *all* of an individual's properties meet this requirement.

¹⁸² "Discourse on Metaphysics" §30, AG 61.

¹⁸³ LA 30.

5.2.2 Counterparts

In his correspondence with Arnauld, Leibniz countenances the idea that there are an infinite number of possible Adams:

When one considers in Adam a part of his predicates, for instance that he is the first man, placed in a garden of pleasure, from whose rib God draws forth a woman, and similar things conceived in a general way[...]and that the person to whom these predicates are attributed is called Adam, all this is not enough to determine that individual, for there can be an infinite number of Adams, that is to say of possible people differing one from another, who fit that description.¹⁸⁴

If we employ an incomplete concept of Adam, holding fixed features like “first person placed in the garden of pleasure”, then we can subsequently identify different Adams included in other possible worlds. By treating the concept of Adam as incomplete, we can identify the sense in which Adam contingently sins by pointing to the fact that there is some substance in an alternative possible world that was placed in the garden of pleasure but (unlike the Adam under consideration) fails to sin. On this view, properties are contingent as long as there is some counterpart, picked out by an incomplete concept, that is part of some possible world and fails to have the property in question.

This strategy is promising, not only because Leibniz employs incomplete concepts in his exchange with Arnauld, but also because those concepts seem to offer a plausible route to distinguish contingent properties from necessary ones.¹⁸⁵ Leibniz does seem to accept that in some cases what we express by “Adam” is an incomplete

¹⁸⁴ LA 46.

¹⁸⁵ This account of contingency is defended in Mondadori 1973 and 1975. Mondadori focuses on Leibniz's later texts, including the *Theodicy*. Mondadori makes a compelling case, particularly in Leibniz's later texts, but Leibniz's comments in the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence indicate that this is not the route Leibniz had in mind in the 1680s.

concept. However, Leibniz does not offer a counterpart theory to account for contingency.

[M]y supposition is not simply that God wished to create an Adam of whom the concept is vague and incomplete, but that God wished to create a particular Adam sufficiently determinate for an individual. And this complete individual concept in my opinion embraces relationships with the whole succession of things...¹⁸⁶

Leibniz thus does not endorse the incomplete concept account of individual substances. He emphasizes that although we might treat the concept of a substance as incomplete in some contexts, the concept of a substance is complete and fully specific. Analyzing substance-terms with incomplete concepts is a type of linguistic solution, according to which substance-terms in propositions are treated in terms of incomplete concepts for modal judgments. This offers the promise of a counterpart view, but this view does not address a deeper metaphysical question about just what it is about the *properties* of Caesar—as an individual whose nature and concept entail those properties—that makes them contingent in some cases and necessary in others. Pointing out that there is some substance similar to Caesar in another world that fails to have the relevant contingent property in question does not offer a full enough story about what differences there are, internal to Caesar's nature or concept, that grounds this difference.

5.2.3 Hypothetical Necessity

A third option is to notice that we can accept that the conditional, if Caesar exists, then Caesar crosses the Rubicon, is necessary without accepting that it is necessary that Caesar crosses the Rubicon. Whether this conclusion is necessary

¹⁸⁶ LA 39.

depends upon whether it is necessary that Caesar exists. If we can maintain that Caesar's existence is contingent, then there is no need to accept the conclusion that it is necessary that Caesar crosses the Rubicon.¹⁸⁷

However, pointing to the mere hypothetical necessity of Caesar crossing the Rubicon does not secure the *de re* distinction Leibniz is searching for because it renders all properties of Caesar contingent. As Arnauld points out, Caesar's being capable of thought follows with equal necessity from his existence as Caesar's crossing the Rubicon does. If we establish that Caesar's existence is contingent, we have made room for *de re* contingency at the expense of accounting for *de re* necessity.

5.3 *Criteria for an Account of De re Contingency*

What these failed solutions reveal is what Leibniz's surrogate accounts of contingency must do in order to adequately account for the distinction between *de re* modalities:

1. Render some properties of the substance contingent, including free actions such as Caesar's crossing the Rubicon.
2. Render some properties of the substance necessary, such as Caesar's capacity for thought, and also for the necessity of identity statements such as *Caesar is Caesar*.
3. Explain the relevant difference in properties by pointing to features internal to the substance or individual in question.

¹⁸⁷ See Curley 1972 for a discussion of existence as the root of contingency in Leibniz's thought.

In the “Discourse on Metaphysics,” Leibniz emphasizes that the connection between the subject and the predicate differs for necessary and contingent properties:

To address it firmly, I assert that 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 hypothetically and, so to speak, accidentally, but is contingent in itself, since its contrary does not imply a contradiction. And this connection is not based on purely on ideas and God’s simple understanding, but on his free decrees and on the sequence of the universe.¹⁸⁸

As emphasized at the opening of the passage, the nature of the connection between a substance and its properties is a key aspect of a *de re* modal analysis. An incomplete concept counterpart theory does not explain how these connections are both internal to the substance and account for *de re* modal distinctions.

The above passage highlights two features of modality that Leibniz develops. On the one hand, it emphasizes the fact that necessary truths involve *deduction*, or finite proof. This sets up the infinite analysis view, where the distinction between necessary and “contingent” truth is understood as the difference between those truths that have finite proofs and those that do not. On the other hand, it emphasizes that reality is structured according God’s possible free decrees (laws), and that contingent truths are conditioned by the laws that structure reality specific to a world. This suggests the distinction between those truths that are true in virtue of the essences of species, or “God’s simple understanding,” and those that are additionally conditioned by the laws that hold at a world, which involve “[God’s] free decrees and on the sequence of the universe”. Using the criteria we have just

¹⁸⁸ “Discourse on Metaphysics” §13, AG 45.

developed, we can compare the infinite analysis and possible free decree accounts of modality. I will conclude that the possible free decrees analysis a superior account of *de re* modality.

6 Two New Modal Accounts

In the mid-1680s, two new accounts of modality emerge. The infinite analysis view appears in “Discourse on Metaphysics,” “Necessary and Contingent Truths,” “Primary Truths,” and “On Freedom.” The possible free decrees view is mentioned in the “Discourse” and featured in Leibniz’s correspondence with Arnauld, as well as “Necessary and Contingent Truths”. But the pressure to offer an account of *de re* modality is not restricted to the correspondence with Arnauld, since it also stems from the shortcomings of Leibniz’s views in his early work. The rejection of the *per se* view, and the introduction of the possible free decrees and infinite analysis views is an opportunity to extract the principles that guide Leibniz in developing accounts of quasi-contingency. The *per se* view fails to track *de re* modal distinctions, and it turns out that the possible free decrees account is Leibniz’s most viable replacement. However, this is not to suggest that Leibniz’s infinite analysis account of quasi-contingency plays a vestigial role in Leibniz’s system, I will turn to each of these accounts to establish their details.¹⁸⁹

6.1 *Infinite Analysis*

Returning to “General Inquiries about the Analysis of Concepts and Truths,” Leibniz explains:

¹⁸⁹ For example, in Chapter 3 I will argue that infinite analysis is an important component of voluntary human action.

A true necessary proposition can be proved by reduction to identical propositions, or by reduction of its opposite to contradictory propositions; hence its opposite is called 'impossible'.¹⁹⁰

In the same work, earlier, Leibniz defines truth in the same way,

A 'true proposition' is one which...can be reduced to this primary truth. [an identity statement].¹⁹¹

Leibniz is aware that this renders truth and necessary truth co-extensive, and so he distinguishes ways in which true propositions are proved

That is true, therefore, which can be proved, i.e. of which a reason can be given by analysis; that is false of which the contrary holds. That is necessary which is reduced by analysis to an identical term, that is impossible which I reduced by analysis to a contradictory term. A term or a proposition is false if it contains opposites, however they are proved; it is impossible if it contains opposites which are proved by a reduction to finite terms. Therefore $A = AB$, if the proof has been made by a finite analysis, must be distinguished from $A = AB$, if the proof has been made by an analysis *ad infinitum*, from which there arises what has been said about the necessary, possible impossible and contingent.¹⁹²

According to Leibniz's analysis account of modality, a truth is necessary if and only if it has a finite demonstration, whereas a truth is contingent if and only if there is no *a priori* demonstration of the truth because the analysis requires an infinite number of steps. According to Leibniz, analysis proceeds via the reduction of a proposition to an identity statement, or a statement that reveals that the concept of the predicate-term is contained in the concept of the subject-term. *A priori* demonstrations proceed via analysis, or the substitution of *definiens* (or *analysans*) for *definiendum* (or *analysandum*) until it is revealed that the subject and predicate coincide by being at least partially composed of the same basic components.

¹⁹⁰ P 77.

¹⁹¹ P 59.

¹⁹² P 77.

For to demonstrate is merely, by an analysis of the terms of a proposition and the substitution of the definition or a part of it, for the thing defined, to show a kind of equation or coincidence of predicate and subject in a reciprocal proposition, or, in other cases, at least an inclusion of the one in the other, so that what was concealed in the proposition or was contained in it only potentially is rendered evident or explicitly by the demonstration.¹⁹³

Leibniz's favorite examples of finite proofs are arithmetical. For example, the proposition that every multiple of twelve is a multiple of six is necessary because it has a finite proof. The definition of “multiple of twelve” is multiple of two and two and three. The definition of “multiple of six” is multiple of two and three. By substituting these definitions into the original proposition we can generate a proposition that reveals that “multiple of six” is contained in “multiple of twelve” because a multiple of two and two and three is a multiple of two and three. This not only demonstrates the proof of the *truth* of the proposition, but the method of proof (a finite analysis) shows that it is a *necessary truth*.¹⁹⁴

In the case of necessary truths, the containment of the predicate in the subject can be revealed in a finite number of steps. However, in the case of contingent

¹⁹³ “On Freedom,” L 264.

¹⁹⁴ “For example, if we understand by a ternary, a senary, and a duodenary, numbers divisible by 3, 6, and 12, respectively, we can demonstrate this proposition: Every duodenary is a senary. For every duodenary is a binary-binary-ternary, since this is the reduction of a duodenary into its prime factors, or the definition of a duodenary. But every binary-binary-ternary is a binary-ternary (this is an identical proposition), and every binary-ternary is a senary (by the definition of a senary). Therefore every duodenary is a senary” (“On Freedom,” L 265). A non-arithmetical, but nevertheless mathematical, example that Leibniz offers is a proof that “the whole is greater than its part”. He notes that the definition of “less” is that which is equal to a part of the other (the greater). He argues as follows: “the part is equal to a part of the whole (a part is equal to itself, via the axiom of identity, that each and every thing is equal to itself), and what is equal to a part of a whole is less than the whole (from the definition of “less”). Therefore the part is less than the whole.” (“Primary Truths,” AG 31).

truths, this sort of substitution procedure always has further steps required for the proof.

Truth is containment of the predicate in the subject. It is shown by giving a reason [for the truth] through the analysis of both terms into common notions...if the analysis proceeds to infinity and never attains completion then the truth is contingent, one which involves an infinite number of reasons, but in such a way that there is always something that remains, for which we must, again, give some reason.¹⁹⁵

For our purposes there are three important observations to make about the infinite analysis view. First, it is not clear exactly how analyses of contingent truths begin, and furthermore, it is not clear what definitions are employed to reveal the containment of subject in predicate. Leibniz does not give a direct example, but instead a metaphor: “so the distinction between necessary and contingent truths is the same as that between lines which meet and asymptotes, or between commensurable and incommensurable numbers.”¹⁹⁶ Incommensurable numbers (irrational numbers) are those that cannot be represented as the ratio of rational numbers or fractions such as π . Trying to render such numbers digit by digit results in an infinite process. In the same way, in explaining the reason for a contingent truth or the connection between the subject and predicate of such truths, there will always be some further feature that requires analysis.

This mathematical analogy seems to hurt Leibniz's claim that there are no finite *a priori* proofs of contingent truths, for truths of mathematics are paradigmatic necessary truths. If truths about incommensurable numbers are necessary, then why not also truths infinitely complex features of the world? There are cases in which we

¹⁹⁵ “The Source of Contingent Truths,” AG 98-99.

¹⁹⁶ P 77.

can cognize infinite mathematical series in ways that allow us to demonstrate their features *a priori*. Leibniz acknowledges this:

But a difficulty stands before us. We can prove that some line--namely an asymptote--constantly approaches another and (also in the case of asymptotes) we can prove that two quantities are equal, by showing that will be the case if the progression is continued as far as one pleases; so human beings also will be able to comprehend contingent truths with certainty.¹⁹⁷

Similarly, we can calculate the sum of an infinite series, by finding the right rule relating the members of the series. For example $1/1 + 1/3 + 1/6 + 1/10 + 1/15\dots$ is equal to 2, because the members are related by the function $2/t(t + 1)$ for $t > 0$,¹⁹⁸ where t represents the position of the member in the series. Thus, mathematical examples, contrary to what Leibniz originally suggests, indicate that infinitely complex series can be understood by finding the right rule. What is it about the subject of contingent truths that renders such analyses infinite, where we are in principle incapable of offering an *a priori* proof?

This question becomes particularly acute when we review how Leibniz describes substances and worlds in the “Discourse on Metaphysics.” Recall that worlds have an infinity of parts that express the laws of the world, and substances have an infinite number of states unified by an internal law of development. According to Leibniz, the mechanism by which a substance's states are produced is according to a law, so that subsequent states of a substance are produced by the previous states of the substance in accord with the internal law. If we had access to these laws and the right epistemic capacities, we could derive the features of the substances, just as we are able to know features of infinite series by employing the right rules that relate

¹⁹⁷ P 78.

¹⁹⁸ This example is from Levey 1998.

their members. Leibniz's mathematical analogy threatens this account of contingency if we cannot explain how the infinity of mathematics can be grappled with *a priori* while the infinite of substance drives analysis to infinity.

Leibniz addresses this problem by maintaining that, while we can come to grasp the laws for infinite series, we can never grasp the laws that govern the internal production of states in substances.

That this stone tends downwards when its support has been removed is not a necessary but a contingent proposition, nor can such an event be demonstrated from the notion of this stone by help of the universal notions which enter into it, and so God alone perceived this perfectly. For he alone knows whether he will suspend by a miracle that subordinate law of nature by which heavy things are driven downwards; for others neither understand the absolutely universal laws involved, nor can they perform the infinite analysis which is necessary to connect the notion of this stone with the notion of the whole universe, or with absolutely universal laws.¹⁹⁹

The “absolutely universal laws” dictate not only the states of the substance according to natural laws of physics; these laws also include miraculous events. Because the world is infinitely complex, and includes miracles, we cannot generalize from particulars to reach more general laws of nature by starting with inferences from the specific states of substances. Given that we cannot cognize the most general laws that govern the states of substances, the infinity of reasons that ground contingent truths cannot be cognized or employed in *a priori* proofs.

The second important feature of the infinite analysis view is that Leibniz is not offering a purely epistemological account of modality, although it does have a number of implications for the epistemology of modality. Recall that in the 1686 “General Inquiries,”

¹⁹⁹ “Necessary and Contingent Truths,” PW 100.

[E]very true proposition can be proved; for since...the predicate is in the subject, or, the concept of the predicate is involved in the concept of the subject when that concept is completely understood, then it must be possible for a truth to be shown by the analysis of terms into their values, i.e., those terms which they contain.²⁰⁰

In both necessary and contingent truths, the concept of the predicate is contained in the concept of the subject, so that the denial of a truth contradicts the relevant concepts. Leibniz treats both necessary and contingent truths as identities, where the identity can be made explicit for necessary truths, but for contingent truths analysis “constantly approaches identical propositions, but never reaches them.”²⁰¹ The length of the analysis, or the procedure through which we analyze a truth, is an epistemic feature relative to humans.²⁰² If all truths are based on identity statements, then denying the truth is contradictory, even if we cannot demonstrate the contradiction in a finite number of steps. If contingent truths are covert identity statements then they couldn't be otherwise, just as necessary truths couldn't be otherwise. Denying a truth involves a contradiction, even if finite minds cannot produce it via an analysis procedure in the finite number of steps. This makes the infinite analysis account seem like an epistemological solution. On the one hand, this is an upside of the view, for it offers a procedure by which we can identify and distinguish necessary from contingent truths. This is a procedure that Leibniz himself follows, for when he cannot offer a finite analysis of a truth he does not

²⁰⁰ P 77.

²⁰¹ P 77. See also “Primary Truths:” “The primary truths are those which assert the same thing of itself or deny the opposite of its opposite...all remaining truths are reduced to primary truths with the help of definitions, that is, through the resolution of notions; in this consists *a priori* proof, proof independent of experience” (AG 30-31).

²⁰² “In God, only the analysis of his own concepts is required, and in him, the whole of this occurs at once. So he knows even contingent truths, whose complete proof transcends every finite intellect” (P 77).

commit to its modal status as necessary.²⁰³ So the infinite analysis view offers a helpful suggestion about how we gain access to which truths are necessary and which are contingent. However, on the face of it, it does not offer a deeper explanation of what constitutes *de re* modal distinctions.

But the worry is that offering a superficial distinction is *all* it does, and indeed without further specification, it seems as though Leibniz is not offering an account of how contingent predicates are contained in the subject in a way that does not render them necessary. My best suggestion as to the metaphysical ground for the infinite analysis view is that it is not having a finite proof itself that makes a truth necessary, it is the structure and type of reasons that render the proposition true. On this view, what makes a proposition *contingently* true is that it has an infinity of reasons that render it true:

[N]or is there any truth of fact or any truth concerning individual things that does not depend upon *the infinite series of reasons*; whatever is in this series can be seen by God alone.²⁰⁴

But if the analysis proceeds to infinity and never attains completion then the truth is contingent, one which involves *an infinite number of reasons*.²⁰⁵

That the reasons for a truth are infinitely complex is an objective feature of the concepts of worlds and substances, and not relative to the epistemological

²⁰³ For example, Garber offers an account of the modal status of the equality principle: the whole cause and the entire effect have the same power, from 1671-1715. Garber explains that early on Leibniz was optimistic that the equality principle is necessary in virtue of the concepts of cause and effect. However, Leibniz struggled to discover a finite proof of these truths. This encouraged him to come to think of the equality principle as contingent, and based on divine choice. See Garber 2009, 237-246.

²⁰⁴ "On Freedom," AG 95.

²⁰⁵ "The Source of Contingent Truths," AG 99; emphasis added.

perspective of humans with finite minds. Nor is whether there is an infinity of reasons contingent on Leibniz's notion of a proof procedure.²⁰⁶ The infinite analysis view is not just a thesis about what we can prove, but it points to the structure of reasons or causes that ground a truth. This structure or ground generates infinite proof when finite intellects offer a demonstration through analysis via definitions. Leibniz identifies three (non-equivalent) ways in which the analysis of a contingent truth requires an infinity of steps. First, because tracing the series of events in the world generates an infinite regress that involves all parts of the universe, and there is an infinity of parts in the universe. Second, explanation of the features of material bodies requires an analysis of all their parts and material bodies are infinitely divisible. Therefore, the analysis of any truth that depends on material facts will require an analysis of an infinity of parts. Third, some truths depend on the fact that God created this particular world, and that decision required comparing an infinity of possible worlds.

These considerations are present when Leibniz analyzes the contingent proposition that the Sun is shining.

²⁰⁶ Velasco 2013 offers a number of criticisms of Leibniz's infinite analysis view, including that even if we update Leibniz's notion of proof to include certain converging series, it renders certain mathematical truths contingent. While I think that criticizing Leibniz's account of a proof is a definitive blow to Leibniz's account, if we can offer a metaphysical feature to ground the infinite proofs, then even if the notion of proof fails to yield the right distinction between necessary and contingent proofs, the hope is that the metaphysical feature can never the less do the work. My suggestion is that having an infinite number of reasons is the metaphysical feature that grounds infinite analyses. Moreover, it is a feature that holds true for both God and humans; there are an infinity of reasons for a contingent truth from God's perspective too, but he need not engage in an infinite analysis to prove them.

[a.] For even if I say that the Sun is shining at this hour in our hemisphere because its previous motion was such that, granted its continuation, this event would certainly follow, yet (to say nothing of the fact that its obligation to continue is not necessary) the fact that its motion was previously such is similarly a contingent truth, for which again a reason must be sought. And this cannot be given in full except as a result of a perfect knowledge of all the parts of the universe---a task which surpasses all created powers.

[b.] For there is no portion of matter which is not actually subdivided into others; so the parts of any body are actually infinite, and so neither the Sun nor any other body can be known perfectly by a creature. Much less can we arrive at the end of our analysis if we seek the mover of each body which is moved, and again the mover of this; for we shall always arrive at smaller bodies without end.

[c.] God perceives the truth of all its accidents from its very notion, without calling in anything extrinsic; for each one in its way involves all others, and the whole universe.²⁰⁷

This passage highlights three ways in which Leibniz thinks that infinity creeps into our analyses of contingent truths. In all cases Leibniz's analysis traces the chain of reasons connecting the predicate to the subject, or in this particular case, connecting shining to the sun. The first suggestion (a) is that if we treat the Sun's shining as a function of the sun's position and previous movements, tracing the series of causes will involve an infinite regress that involves all of the parts of the universe. This is in part due to the fact that the movements of the sun alone are not sufficient to predict or necessitate its current states. Leibniz thus thinks that analyzing this truth requires examining the previous states of the sun to see how they lead up to and caused its current state. What's not totally clear from this suggestion, however, is why the chain of causes must be infinite. Leibniz is not committed to the eternality of the world, and allows it has a starting point temporally, so it's not clear why the chain of causes leading back to the start of the chain will require examining and infinity of causes.

²⁰⁷ "Necessary and Contingent Truths," PW 98.

Leibniz's next point (b) offers a further suggestion: the analysis has an infinite number of steps because the steps involve resolving bodies into their component parts. A full analysis of the whole involves a specification of all of the parts. Because matter is infinitely divisible, that specification will continue on indefinitely. Thus “because the parts of the body are actually infinite, so neither the sun nor any other body can be known perfectly by a creature.” But again, it's not clear why we must analyze all of the parts of the Sun in order to be able to grasp the reasons why it is in the position it is. If I can think about the sun as an approximation of an infinite number of parts and look for a finite number of causes to explain its current position, then it seems I could offer a demonstration of the truth that the Sun is shining. Moreover, this consideration renders contingency dependent on materiality, leaving it undetermined why the analysis of an immaterial subject leads to an infinite analysis (unless every contingent truth involves a body or corporeal facts). This tethers Leibniz's account of infinite analysis to the materiality of the world (one way or another) being involved in all contingent propositions.

Leibniz's commitment to corporeal substance during this period is controversial, so it's worthwhile to explore renderings of infinite analysis that do not require a commitment to corporeal substances.²⁰⁸ Leibniz does offer the follow example of analyzing the proposition ‘Peter denies’:

All existential propositions, though true, are not necessary, for they cannot be proved unless an infinity of propositions are used, i.e., unless an analysis is carried to infinity. That is, they can be proved only from the complete concept of an individual which involves infinite existents. Thus if I say, ‘Peter denies’, understanding this of a certain

²⁰⁸ Unfortunately, establishing that an *a priori* proof in fact requires the analysis of the physical parts of a body, for example, is problematic. For a further discussion see Carriero 1995, and Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne 1999, 207.

time, then there is presupposed also the nature of that time, which also involves all that exists during that time.²⁰⁹

If we treat ‘Peter denies’ as a covertly indexed to a time, Leibniz thinks that the nature of time will render the analysis infinite. Here Leibniz could mean that time is composed of an infinity of moments, each of which must be analyzed step by step in a proof and these moments are internal to the nature of Peter. Or, Leibniz could be thinking of moments or times as corresponding amongst substances in the same world. In this way the proposition ‘Peter denies’ is not, strictly speaking, about the substance Peter, but about the representation of Peter in all substances—notice that Leibniz says existential propositions involve an “infinity of propositions” perhaps one for each substance. So an analysis of the truth of this claim involves an infinity of substances via an infinity of propositions. However, Leibniz thinks that even if ‘Peter denies’ is not a temporal claim, the analysis of ‘Peter denies’ will be unending:

If I say ‘Peter denies’ indefinitely, abstracting from time, then for this to be true—whether he has denied, or is about to deny—it must nevertheless be proved from the concept of Peter. But the concept of Peter is complete, and so involves infinite things; so one can never arrive at a perfect proof, but one always approaches it more and more, so that the different is less than any given difference.²¹⁰

Again, it’s not clear why Peter’s concept involves infinite things. Perhaps because it represents a world that is infinitely complex, or maybe because even if we can trace the causal chains in a finite number of steps to understand the world, in order to explain why this world exists we will have to appeal to an infinity of substances, and compare this world to other worlds to demonstrate that it is the best. Whatever the

²⁰⁹ P 66.

²¹⁰ P 66.

source of infinity, because we cannot comprehend the laws that structure substances, and coordinate substances into worlds, seeking the reasons for contingent truths involves us in an infinite analysis. This is because worlds are made up of an infinity of substances, and which world exists depends upon a comparison of the qualities of an infinite number of worlds.

A second problem arises when we understand infinite analysis as a necessary and sufficient condition for contingent truth. For, we have some positive reasons to think that in some cases the proof of a contingent truth is finite. This problem has come to be known as the problem of the lucky proof.²¹¹ As Adams points out, in our analysis of a complete concept of Peter, for example, we might happen upon the predicate “denies” in a finite number of steps as we unpack Peter’s concept:

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 Christ 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.²¹²

We might thus luck into a proof of a truth about Peter’s action, rendering Peter’s action necessary. In fact, Rodriguez-Pereyra & Lodge 2011 argue that there is a related problem, what they call the problem of the *guaranteed proof*.²¹³ For if an analysis proceeds step-by-step, at each step further sub-components of the subject or predicate concepts are revealed. Even though a full analysis of a proposition will require an infinite number of steps

²¹¹ See Adams 1994, 34; Cover and O’Leary Hawthorne 2000; Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lodge 2011; Maher 1980.

²¹² Adams 1994, 34.

²¹³ This problem is raised (although not termed ‘the problem of the guaranteed proof’) in Maher 1980.

to try to reach the primary unanalyzable notions of the infinitely complex notions, the containment of the predicate concept in the subject concept will be revealed in a finite (although possibly very large) number of steps:

[Although the full decomposition of the infinitely complex concept ‘Peter’ will not be completable in a finite number of steps, every concept composing ‘Peter’ can be found in ‘Peter’ after a finite number of steps.²¹⁴

Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lodge offer a solution to address both the problem of the *lucky proof*, and *guaranteed proof*. They claim that proofs of contingent truths require infinite analyses because analysis requires a consistency proof of the subject-concept. On this view, demonstrating that the predicate is contained in the subject is insufficient to demonstrate the truth of a proposition. Additionally, it must be shown that the subject-term is internally consistent. This solves the problem of the Lucky Proof and Guaranteed Proof because if we unpack the predicate from the concept of the subject in a finite number of steps, the analysis is yet incomplete because it has not been demonstrated that the subject-concept is inconsistency free.²¹⁵ This explanation of why contingent truths must generate infinite analyses is derived from Leibniz’s treatment of the ontological argument for the existence of God.²¹⁶ Leibniz explains that showing that God essentially exists is only part of a successful argument for God’s existence, and that the remaining part is a demonstration that the notion of God is consistent. Thus, according to Leibniz, the ontological argument for the existence of God not only shows that existence follows from the very nature of God, but that

²¹⁴ Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lodge 2011, 223.

²¹⁵ This text strongly suggests that the analysis has not ended until it has been shown that the analysans are consistent (“possible”), and therefore it suggests that Leibniz’s answer to the problems of the Lucky Proof and Guaranteed Proof would have been that there cannot be such things since, no matter at what point in the analysis the concept in question shows up, the consistency of the analysandum will not yet have been established” (Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lodge 2011, 277).

²¹⁶ See “General inquiries about the Analysis of Concepts and of Truths,” P 63.

further it requires an analysis of the very concept of God as the most perfect being to show that God is at least a possibly existing being. This yields the suggestion that because all proofs presuppose the consistency of their definitions, no proof is complete until it includes a completed analysis of the relevant subject-term.

Even though Leibniz does emphasize that the ontological argument for God's existence requires a consistency proof, I do not think this shows that the proofs relevant for modal considerations require consistency proofs too. For although such proofs might presuppose the consistency of their terms, Leibniz does not commit himself to the view that a proof is incomplete for the purpose of establishing the modal status of a truth if it does not include a consistency proof. In fact, there is reason for Leibniz to resist this suggestion, for it renders identity statements, such as Caesar = Caesar, contingent because the analysis of Caesar will require an infinite consistency proof. Because identities of the form Caesar = Caesar are paradigmatic necessary truths for Leibniz, I take this to be good evidence that whatever guarantees that the proof of a contingent truth is infinite, it is not that a consistency proof is a requisite of an *a priori* demonstration of a truth.

My suggestion is that the basis of the infinite analysis view is the existence of an infinite number of reasons helps address the problem of the Lucky Proof and Guaranteed Proof. This is because a proof will start with a proposition to be proved and proceed step by step until the total sufficient cause of that feature's being produced in connection to the subject is revealed. Each step offers another sufficient reason, and the proof is not completed until all of the sufficient reasons are enumerated. So we might reach a point where we see that denying is contained in Peter's concept because that's what appeared best to Peter, but the proof is not complete because we do not have a sufficient reason for why that appeared best to Peter, which will further appeal to Peter's constitution and his background experiences, which will themselves have sufficient reasons. So we approach but never reach identities because we enumerate more and more sufficient reasons,

but cannot traverse the totality of reasons. What's important about this view is that it's a mistake to treat any sufficient reason we've reached in a finite number of steps as *proved* in a finite number of steps, for we have not proved it until we have a complete set of sufficient reasons. Thus the best response to the problem of the Lucky Proof and Guaranteed Proof is that they hinge on a notion of analysis that we want to eschew. Discovering the containment of the predicate in the subject is not sufficient to demonstrate the truth of a proposition because it does not engage the full sufficient reason. This account also does not require that the concept subject-term of contingent propositions be infinitely complex, for example in the case of laws of nature. As long as a the full set of sufficient reasons for the truth of a proposition is infinitely complex, the proof itself will be too.²¹⁷

Edwin Curley offers a decisive objection against the infinite analysis view. Even if finite and infinite analysis divide necessary and contingent properties accurately, the infinite analysis view leaves a gap in offering a deeper explanation as to why, exactly, infinity is an essential feature of contingency. Curley emphasizes that infinite analysis seems beside the point when we consider contingency.²¹⁸

But just because the concept of any possible individual is a complete concept, its analysis involves infinites...That is one way in which infinite processes occur, and it seems to be completely irrelevant to the problem of contingency.²¹⁹

Imagine there were only a finite number of worlds in the mind of God, each of which is finitely complex. Additionally, suppose that God selects one of these

²¹⁷ Cover and O'Leary Hawthorne offer a similar solution, but focus specifically on the infinite complexity of the will, and the key role of the will in bringing about states of individual substances. There is some textual evidence in support of this view in Leibniz's later correspondence with Clarke, as well as in the "Monadology". However, as Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lodge point out, the evidence for this view in the middle period is scant (Rodriguez-Pereyra and Lodge 2011, 225-26).

²¹⁸ Curley 1972, 94.

²¹⁹ Curley 1972, 94.

worlds—the best one—to exist. What makes the existence of that world contingent and not necessary is that which of those possible worlds exists depends on God's goals for creation and that there is an array of worlds to select from (albeit a finite array). Notice, however, that on this scenario there could be a finite proof of which world exists, or is the best in accordance with God's nature. Dependence on God's choice and nature seems to be at the heart of Leibniz's account of quasi-contingency, and the connection between this notion and an infinity of reasons does not capture that aspect of quasi-contingency. It seems only accidentally true that those things that are contingent require infinite analyses.

In response, Leibniz can insist that it is necessary that there is an infinity of worlds, that is, that what depends on God's good will and what has an infinite of reasons are necessarily co-extensive. So generating an infinite analysis is necessary and sufficient for depending on God's good will:

It must be understood, then, that all created beings have a certain mark of the divine infinite impressed upon them and that this is the source of many wonderful matters which astound the human mind. For example, there is no portion of matter, however tiny, in which there is not a world of creatures, infinite in number. And there is not created substance, however imperfect, which does not act upon all the others and suffer action from all the others, and whose complex concept as this exists in the divine mind does not contain the whole universe, with all that ever is, has been, and will be. And there is not truth of fact or of individual things which does not depend upon an infinite series of reasons, though God alone can see everything in that series. This is the cause, too, why only God knows the contingent truths *a priori* and sees their infallibility otherwise than by experience.²²⁰

However, what Curley's point emphasizes is that the connection between infinity and contingency is not illuminating, even if it is guaranteed. Even if infinite analysis cleaves so-called necessary and contingent propositions in the right way, it is

²²⁰ "On Freedom," L 264.

surprising to learn that what we meant by contingency is infinite analysis. Leibniz could draw on his necessitarianism here to point out that because God's understanding of possible worlds could not be otherwise, it is necessary that so-called contingent truths depend on an infinity of reasons. But what that gets us is the guaranteed co-occurrence of two notions, without further insight as to their relation. Despite the drawbacks of the infinite analysis view in illuminating the nature of quasi-contingent properties, it does nevertheless offer a good epistemological procedure by which we can identify some contingent truths.²²¹

6.2 Possible Free Decrees

In his Correspondence with Arnauld, "Discourse on Metaphysics" and "On Necessary and Contingent Truths," Leibniz comments that contingent truths are dependent on the possible free decrees God issues when he creates a world. Leibniz explains:

[J]ust as necessary truths involve only the divine intellect, so contingent truths involve the decrees of the will.²²²

For the possibilities of individuals or of contingent truths contain in their concept the possibility of their causes, that is, of the free decrees of God in which they differ from the possibilities of species or eternal truths.²²³

I conceive that there was an infinite number of possible ways of creating the world according to the different plans that God could form, and that each possible world depends upon certain of God's principal plans or ends, which are peculiar to him, that is to say upon certain primary free decrees or laws of general order.²²⁴

²²¹ I will emphasize this aspect in connection with human freedom in the next chapter.

²²² PW 104. See also LA 43.

²²³ LA 51.

²²⁴ LA 51.

Although possible worlds are represented in the mind of God before creation, they include various laws, and Leibniz thinks of those laws as the *possible divine decrees of God*, were God to actualize that world. Leibniz distinguishes contingent *de re* features as those that depend on God's free decrees from necessary *de re* truths, which do not depend on possible free decrees. Recall from the "Discourse on Metaphysics" Leibniz treats substances and worlds as structured according to laws that dictate how properties of substances follow from one another. He notes that these laws mediate the connections between substances and their properties. This emphasizes a different strand of Leibniz's thought regarding definition, where a definition need not only include information about the essence of the *definiendum*, but also about the generation or production of the *definiendum*.

But the concept of a circle put forward by Euclid---namely, that it is the figure described by the motion of a straight line in a plane about one fixed end---does afford a real definition, for it is clear that such a figure is possible. It is useful, therefore, to have definitions which involve the generation of a thing, or failing that, at least its constitution, i.e. a way in which it appears to be either producible or at least possible.²²⁵

The states of substances are produced in accord with the development law that constitutes very nature of individual substances. The law of a substance is thus part of what constitutes them as a unique individual, because it helps generate the states that ultimately distinguish that substance not only from other actual substances but other possible substances as well.

Understanding how laws play a role in worlds is complicated because Leibniz distinguishes different relevant laws.²²⁶ First, each substance has a law of

²²⁵ P 13.

²²⁶ "On Necessary and Contingent Truths," PW 99-102.

development that includes every state and change it will undergo, from its own perspective. This law is unique to each substance. Dependence on this law is not sufficient to render a property contingent, because this law constitutes the essence of the substance as an individual and does not distinguish necessary from contingent properties relative to the substance. Moreover, each world has a general law of the series, which characterizes the events and changes that are common to all substances (including miracles). This law of the series is included in the concepts of all substances that are part of that world:

[The] laws of the general order of that possible universe...[is that] whose concept they determine, as well as the concepts of all the individual substances which must enter into this same universe: since everything, even miracles, belongs to order, although miracles are contrary to some subordinate maxims or laws of nature.²²⁷

There are also subordinate laws that govern physical and mental phenomena (and the correspondence between the two), and these govern the changes in a substance's phenomena (for example when two billiard balls collide and change direction and velocity,²²⁸ when the apparent good of an outcome moves me to act,²²⁹ or when injury to my hand causes me to feel pain²³⁰). Some truths about substances are conditioned by these subordinate laws, while other truths follow directly from the essence of species-concepts and laws of logic (all features ultimately follow from the developmental law). The concept of a world includes a general law, as well as specifies all of the individuals that exist at that world. A truth is contingent if it follows from the general law of the series, or one of the subordinate laws of nature.

²²⁷ LA 57.

²²⁸ Governed by the physical laws of nature.

²²⁹ Governed by maxims of the will and action.

²³⁰ According to laws of mind-body interaction.

What makes these laws not only possible but also contingent is that they hold at some possible worlds, but not all possible worlds. So contingent features of substances are those that follow from laws that vary between worlds. This contrasts with essential features, whose natures do not vary world to world. On this view, if the property of a substance depends upon or is conditioned by a law that does not hold at all worlds, then it is contingent. However, truths that do not depend on such laws are truths that are necessary. We can understand possible worlds as possible plans for world creation, each with different laws that structure the states of substances.

[A]s the idea of a building results from the aims or plans of the man who takes it in hand, and the idea or concept of this world is a result of those plans of God considered as possibilities. For everything must be explained by its cause, and the cause of the universe is God's aims. Now each individual substance in my opinion is an expression of the whole universe in accordance with a certain viewpoint, and consequently it is also an expression of the miracles mentioned above.²³¹

Laws, as possible decrees of God, vary world to world,

For instance, if this world were only possible, the individual concept of a body in this world, containing certain movements as possibilities, would also contain our laws of motion (which are free decrees of God) but also as mere possibilities. For as there exists an infinite number of possible worlds, there exists also an infinite number of laws, some peculiar to one world, some to another, and each possible individual of any one world contains in the concept of him the laws of his world.²³²

Although the possible worlds are represented in full detail in God's understanding before he creates, these world-plans include what he would will were he to create that world. Because each of the plans of the worlds differ, we can treat the contingency of the laws in terms of the fact that they condition some but not all

²³¹ LA 44.

²³² LA 43.

worlds. Contingent *de re* modal claims pick out the features of a substance conditioned by the laws. Even though there is no world where Caesar exists and fails to cross the Rubicon, it is contingent that Caesar crosses the Rubicon because it is dependent on which laws God enacts, and those will vary depending on the world. The upshot of this view is that it gets the *de re* distinction right, i.e., Caesar's crossing the Rubicon depends on the laws of the world, but Caesar being identical to Caesar or Caesar's being rational is not dependent on the laws. Moreover, it points to a relevant difference in the connection between subject and predicate, where contingent properties are connected to subjects via laws, or possible free decrees of God, that could be otherwise in the sense that a different set of laws would hold if a different world exists. Thus Leibniz can affirm that everything that ever happens to a substance is essential to or intrinsic to that substance's nature, but the nature of a substance, even considered as a mere possibility in the mind of God, is structured according to laws that may or may not hold, depending on God's plans for creation.

Robert Sleigh, in his detailed study of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence expresses reservations about the viability of the possible free decrees view. Sleigh argues that the possible free decree view needs a further account of what makes God's decrees contingent.

I am not suggesting that the doctrine of infinite analysis replaced the free decree defense in the sense that Leibniz affirmed the former and rejected the latter. I believe that Leibniz saw the doctrine of infinite analysis as putting the free decree defense on firm, noncircular footing.²³³

Sleigh worries that grounding the contingency of *de re* features in God's possible free decrees pushes back the question of contingency one step further, to God's decrees,

²³³ Sleigh 1990, 67.

without explaining what makes those decrees contingent. If we appeal to the contingency of the features of the concepts we have a circular explanation, where contingency of free actions, for example, stems from God's free decrees, which are free because they decree about things that are contingent. Sleight appeals to the infinite analysis view to explain why God's decrees are contingent: they are contingent because it would take an infinite proof to demonstrate their truth.

However, I do not think Leibniz needs to appeal to the infinite analysis view to secure the contingency of God's decrees. What Leibniz needs is a viable distinction between the ways in which concepts of "contingent" and "necessary" features of substances are included in the concepts of those substances. The infinite analysis view is not well-suited to offering a sound metaphysical basis for this view because it leaves unexplained the unintuitive connection between that which is "contingent" and that which has an infinity of reasons. My suggestion is that array of worlds that are possible are those with coherent concepts, excluding considerations of God's good will. Accordingly there are an infinity of different ways of structing worlds, each with its own value. These worlds differ according to the general laws that hold at each, and the substances that are part of them. We can explain why free decrees are possible without appealing circularly to the contingency of the features of substances. There is an infinity of internally coherent possible worlds and which one exists depends upon the character of God's will. The "contingency" of the laws comes part-in-parcel with the fact that they vary world-to-world amongst the array of options, that are options insofar as one is selected to exist according to the moral character of God's will.

Sleight denies that Leibniz employs possible worlds to account for *de re* modality:

[W]hat matters for us...is Leibniz's treatment of *de re* modalities, where the issue is the modality of the connection between a substance and one of its properties. In our time period, Leibniz did not use the structure of possible worlds to account for *de re* modalities. He used it primarily as a vehicle to discuss creation and attendant theological matters, which explains why, on Leibniz's scheme God is not in any possible world. So it would be a mistake to look for an explanation of Leibniz's metaphysical commitments in his *de re* modal semantics.²³⁴

But the reason Sleigh denies that Leibniz employs possible worlds in his account of *de re* modality is because Sleigh is thinking of a solution that employs incomplete concepts as counterparts for substances, and offers a counterpart theory of modality. I agree with Sleigh that Leibniz does not offer a counterpart theory to account for *de re* modality. This was evidenced in Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld when Leibniz insists that incomplete concepts do not get to the heart of the matter when considering the modal properties of substances, which have complete concepts. However, my reading of Leibniz's possible free decrees account of *de re* modality employs Leibniz's notion of possible worlds without offering a counterpart theory of substances. We can distinguish types of connections internal to a substance by considering whether the connection is mediated by general or subordinate laws of nature. The suggestion of employing possible free decrees account of *de re* contingency appeals to possible worlds, and the variation in laws between those worlds, but without offering a counterpart theory of modality.

The possible free decrees view, as I have presented it, hinges on there being an array of worlds, one of which God selects to actualize while the rest remain non-actual. This is consistent with Leibniz's emphasis on the importance of an array of possible worlds for God's choice to create one,

²³⁴ Sleigh 1990, 52.

And if one wanted totally to reject purely possible things, one would be destroying contingency and liberty; for if nothing were possible except what God in fact creates, what God creates would be necessary, and God wanting to create something, could create nothing but that, without having freedom of choice.²³⁵

Of course, on my necessitarian all things considered reading, the existence of the actual world is necessary all things considered. But this is consistent with Leibniz's views as long as we understand possible worlds as those coherent options that God applies his will to, and that Leibniz sketches a notion of "contingency" out of this array.

However, there is a worry that Leibniz's notion of substance undermines the array of possible worlds even for God's choice. The worry is that if all substances are *compossible*, then there is a possible world that includes all substances. In fact, if worlds are individuated by which substances they include, and all substances are compossible, then if the array of worlds God chooses from are completely full of substances then there is only one world. A key feature of the possible free decrees view is that there are non-actual possibles for God's rational choice so I will turn to this issue, and the questions about the nature of compossibility now.

Hacking 1982 emphasizes a comment that Leibniz makes regarding minds to argue that all substances are compossible:

The immortality of the mind must be taken to be proved at once by my method, because it is possible within itself and compossible with all other things, that is to say it does not impede the course of things. For minds have no volume.²³⁶

If "immortal mind" here is read not just as cognitive faculties but as a substance, then Leibniz seems to be suggesting that all substances are compossible. Hacking

²³⁵ LA 56.

²³⁶ L 169.

does not think that compossibility is a matter of logical inconsistency, because if it were the incompatibility would have to be built into the very concepts of substances. But Hacking reads the above passage as Leibniz claiming there is nothing built into substances that could logically preclude the existence of other substances. If we take worlds to be maximal sets of compossible substances, and all substances are compossible, then there is only one world and it contains all substances. This is clearly not Leibniz's view, for Leibniz affirms in many places that not only are there non-actual substances but non-actual worlds, and he ascribes this in part to the fact that substances are impossible with one another.

It is clear that Leibniz is committed to the impossibility of substances in his early work in the 1670s. Leibniz explains "It is not useless to discuss the vacuum of forms, in order to show that not all possibles *per se* can exist along with others; otherwise many absurdities would follow."²³⁷ And also, "[my] principle, namely, is that whatever can exist and is compatible with other things does exist, because the reason for existing in preference to other possibles cannot be limited by any other consideration than that not all things are compatible."²³⁸ The constitution of possible worlds is shaped by patterns of compossibility. In fact, which world exists according to God's choice also seems to be an instance of compossibility, for alternative worlds that are not the best are impossible with an all-powerful, all-good, and all-knowing God.²³⁹ Leibniz is assured that patterns of impossibility shape the structure and order of worlds, but he also confesses at different moments that he is

²³⁷ L 168.

²³⁸ L 169.

²³⁹ There is at least one passage where Leibniz explicitly affirms that this sort of incompatibility (the incompatibility of impossibility) amounts to logical inconsistency: "Compossible is what, when taken with another does not imply a contradiction" (Grua 325).

not sure of the origin of compossibility. It is in part the result of the nature or essences of things which dictate which properties can be instantiated together. But when considering the nature of God, and that all of God's perfections are compossible, and necessarily so, he remarks:

It is yet unknown to me what is the reason of the impossibility of things, or how it is that different essences can be opposed to each other, seeing that all purely positive terms seem to be compatible.²⁴⁰

This passage is from Leibniz's early work, and the introduction of causally isolated substances only exacerbates the question of the origin of compossibility relations, because if substances are not causally related to one another, how does the existence of one exclude or conflict with the existence of another? However, it is clear that Leibniz, particularly in his late work, continued to embrace a notion of impossibility that fundamentally shapes the range of possible worlds:

I do not agree that "in order to know of the romance if 'Astrea' is possible, it is necessary to know its connections with the rest of the universe". It would indeed be necessary to know this if it is to be compossible with the universe, and as a consequence to know if this romance has taken place, is taking place, or will take place in some corner of the world, for surely there would be not place for it without such connections. And it is very true that what is not, never has been, and never will be is not possible, if we take possible in the sense of compossible, as I have just said.²⁴¹

Thus even in his later work Leibniz claims that there are non-actualized possibles because they are not compossible with what God created. This is Leibniz's explanation, on my view, for how some feature of the world are "contingent."

If one considers the universe as a collection, one cannot say that there could be many worlds in it. This would be true if the universe were a collection of all possibles, but it

²⁴⁰ G VII 194.

²⁴¹ L 661.

is not, since all possible are not compossible. Thus the universe is a collection of a certain order of compossibles only, and the actual universe is a collection of all the possibles which exist, that is to say, which form the richest composite. And since there are different combinations of possibilities, some of them better than others, there are many possible universes, each collection of compossible making up one of them.²⁴²

Leibniz clearly maintains that certain substances and aggregates of substances are impossible with one another, even after his introduction of the *world apart* view in the 1680s. Recall that the world apart view says that a substance would have all of its properties, and could even exist, without the existence of any other substances except for God. What we will explore now is what the best explanation for the origin of compossibility relations between substances is, given the causal isolation of substances in Leibniz's 1686 work. So the question is how do we account for the fact that, on the one hand, substances can exist without any other created substances, but on the other hand the existence of substances precludes the existence of other substances. Hacking's own solution is that compossibility is something imposed by God on substances through laws.²⁴³ On this view impossibility is not about the co-existence of substances being contradictory, but instead the co-existence of substances is incompatible with the laws God sets out. Because I am arguing that Leibniz is a necessitarian, where necessity is what would imply a contradiction if it were otherwise, it is important for my view that impossibility relations can be understood as logical incompatibility. Accordingly, the question is what is it about substances that make them logically incompatible to exist together?

²⁴² L 662.

²⁴³ Hacking 1982, 192-94.

Mates and Rescher each offer an account of compossibility as logical consistency between complete concepts of substances that are worldmates.²⁴⁴ They build in compossibility relations directly into the substances by including information about which substances are worldmates. In this case, a non-existent but possible substance is impossible with existing substances because it is part of its very nature that it only exists in conjunction with other substances. It is thus part of Caesar's nature that Caesar belong to a world with Cleopatra because it is included in Caesar's complete concept that he inhabit a world with Cleopatra.

This approach to compossibility does explain the origin of compossibility relations, but it is not consistent with what Leibniz says about the independence of substances, or the *world apart* view. First, if it is part of the complete concept of Caesar that if Caesar exists so does Cleopatra, then Caesar and Cleopatra seem dependent on one another for existence. This is particularly clear in the case of the passages where Leibniz explains the independence of substances in terms of the fact that God could create those substances in the absence of all other substances:

[E]ach substance is like a world apart, independent of all other things, except for God; thus all our phenomena, that is, all the things that can ever happen to us, are only consequences of our being.²⁴⁵

Leibniz explains that the states of a substance will unfold in accordance with their complete concept regardless of what other substances exist: "this would never fail, and it would happen to me regardless, even if everything outside of me were

²⁴⁴ Mates 1982, and Rescher 1979, 16-17.

²⁴⁵ "Discourse on Metaphysics" §14, AG 47.

destroyed, provided there remained only God and me.”²⁴⁶ Rescher and Mates’s view offers an account of compossibility relations and how substances enter into them, but their explanation does so at the interpretive cost of rejecting Leibniz’s claims that my substance would have all of the same features, even if no other created substances exist. If Cleopatra’s existence is part of Caesar’s concept, then God cannot destroy all other substances except for Caesar without rendering one of the features contained in Caesar’s concept false.

Appealing to features of a substance, included in its complete concept, that render its existence logically inconsistent with other substances seems like the best strategy for capturing compossibility on Leibniz’s view.²⁴⁷ But encoding that information as information specifically about what other substances exist violates the independence of substances. I suspect that Leibniz had not fully decided which key features of substances ground compossibility in the 1680s. In 1697 he offers the following analogy:

²⁴⁶ “Discourse on Metaphysics” §14, AG 47. Similarly, in his correspondence with Des Bosses in 1715 Des Bosses suggests that if God creates one of the substances that exists, then God must have created all the rest that constitute the same world. In reply Leibniz says “He can do it absolutely; he cannot do it hypothetically, because he has decreed that all things should function most wisely and harmoniously. There would be no deception of rational creatures, however, even if everything outside of them did not correspond exactly to their experiences, or indeed if nothing did, just as if there were only one mind; because everything would happen just as if all other things existed, and this mind, in acting with reason, would not charge itself with any fault.” (To Des Bosses, L 610).

²⁴⁷ Partially because of Leibniz’s comment about compossibility in terms of contradiction. Messina and Rutherford comment that this one passage seems like scant evidence to base the logical interpretation on (Messina and Rutherford 964-5). However, there is some further evidence from our discussion of Leibniz’s modal notions. Leibniz claims that some things are impossible in virtue of being incompatible with God. In light of the fact that impossibility is understood as implying a contradiction, this is suggestive that this incompatibility is logical.

It is obvious that of the infinite combinations of possibilities and possible series, that one that exists is the one through which the most essence or possibility is brought into existence...the situation is like that in certain games, in which all places on the board are supposed to be filled in accordance with certain rules, where at the end, blocked by certain spaces, you will be forced to leave more places empty than you could have or wanted to, unless you used some trick...it follows that there would be as much as the possible can be, given the capacity of time and space (that is, the capacity of the order of possible existence; in a word, it is just like tiles laid down so as to contain as many as possible in a given area.²⁴⁸

If we think of substances being combined into worlds as tiles being combined in a game, the question is what is analogous to the shape of the tiles and spaces such that one substance could “block by certain spaces” another substance.²⁴⁹

As emphasized in my above discussion of possible free decrees, I think that Leibniz emphasizes the role of laws in regulating the states of substances when he introduces his complete concept notion.²⁵⁰ Instead of building information about what other substances exist into the very concept of a substance, information of the laws that hold are built into the substance, such that two substances are impossible if they do not share certain laws. Now what I think Leibniz is unclear about, perhaps because he is uncertain, is precisely which laws substances must share in order to be compossible, or possible world-mates. One good candidate is the subordinate set of laws regulating the physical and moral realms. Two substances, for example, are impossible if one includes the law of conservation of momentum while the other includes a different law about momentum. The suggestion is that the laws are encoded into the very being of substances, and those laws exclude co-instantiation with substances with other laws. On this view the law

²⁴⁸ “On the Ultimate Origination of Things,” AG 150.

²⁴⁹ See McDonough’s 2010 detailed discussion both of this passage and of the Mates and Rescher approach to compossibility.

²⁵⁰ Russell 1937, 66-67, and Wilson 1993 both argue for similar accounts of compossibility, where it is a matter of logical incompatibility of laws.

of conservation of momentum cannot both hold and not hold in the same way, in two different substances. The benefit of treating laws as the features that logically exclude the existence of particular other substances is that they do not violate the independence of substances. Laws exclude the possibility of certain co-instantiations, but they do not require that particular other substances exist in order for any other substance to exist. So Caesar can exist without Cleopatra because subtracting Cleopatra from a world does not introduce an impossibility. Substances are impossible in virtue of the laws built into their complete concepts. These laws do not require that certain substances exist together (unlike the Mates/Rescher view), but they guarantee that certain substances cannot exist together. By analogy, we can think of compossible substances as akin to waltz partners. Each of the partners could complete the motions of the dance without the other, so one partner dancing does not guarantee the presence of the other partner. But what it does exclude is an alternative dance, for example with one partner waltzing and the other doing the cha cha.²⁵¹

Worlds, or series of things, are thus individuated not only by the laws that all their substances share, and the series of events that occur in the world, but which substances exist at that world. Because there are laws distinctive to each world, the impossibility of worlds is (at least partially) explained by the incompatibility of laws.²⁵² By offering an account of compossibility, we can see how Leibniz can

²⁵¹ I take this to be an extension of Margaret Wilson's suggestion. Messina and Rutherford 2009 criticize Wilson's view insofar as it suffers from similar problems as the Mates/Rescher view. But the main problems Messina and Rutherford highlight are world apart problems, and Wilson's view is not susceptible to those criticisms.

²⁵² I say only 'partially' explained because even worlds that share laws are incompatible in virtue of not containing the same set of substances.

maintain that the substances and their combinations form alternative worlds in God's understanding before he selects one to exist.²⁵³

6 Necessitarianism

The evidence in Leibniz's middle period for his commitment to necessitarianism all things considered is more scant than in his early texts, but there is at least one passage I take to be definitive and important. In his Correspondence with Arnauld, he and Arnauld discuss the modal status of the claim that Leibniz goes on a journey, given that going on that journey is contained in Leibniz's concept.²⁵⁴ Leibniz explains:

Since it is certain that I shall take [the journey], there must indeed be some connexion between me, who am the subject, and the accomplishment of the journey, which is the predicate, for in a true proposition the concept of the predicate is always present in the subject. *A falsity would therefore exist, if I did not take it, which would destroy the individual or complete concept of me*, or what God conceived or conceived of me even before deciding to create me...²⁵⁵

Although the possible free decrees view offers a way to distinguish how taking the journey is connected to Leibniz's concept from necessary connections according to eternal truths, it does not offer an account of genuine contingency that explains how Leibniz's features could be otherwise. In fact, Leibniz notes that not taking the

²⁵³ McDonough 2010 further examines the question of whether a world that includes all compatible substances entails that God does not have a set of worlds to choose from. He convincingly argues that even if there is one such world, there are alternative worlds that do not include all substances. On this view, God has a choice about which world to create, either the one with all of the substances, or a world that is merely a subset of them. So even if Leibniz is committed to the view that there is a worlds with all possible substances, there are still non-actual worlds because God could have instantiated fewer substances.

²⁵⁴ LA 52.

²⁵⁵ LA 52; emphasis added.

journey, if contained in his concept, would destroy it and create a falsity. We can see why Leibniz would be committed to this, given that God's knowledge of possibilities is contained in the realm of eternal truths, and those cannot be otherwise. What's more, it confirms that the infinite analysis view is epistemological in the sense that when Leibniz says that denying a contingent truth does not entail a contradiction, he must mean one that we cannot arrive at via analysis. He is not denying that the denial of a contingent truth contradicts the concept of a substance, for he conceded above that it does. This is not quite necessity all things considered, because it is necessity all features of a complete concept considered. But it does show a continued amenability to the idea that propositions he claims are "contingent" are necessarily false all things considered.

One other important observation to make, before moving to the later texts, is that I have emphasized the superiority of the possible free decrees view over the infinite analysis view, but it is less clear whether this was Leibniz's own preferred view. For even if it offers an account of the *de re* truths about substances, there is an important passage where Leibniz defuses the necessitarian argument using infinite analysis. Here he examines a necessitarian argument of the same form as the necessitarian argument from God's perfection that we examined in Chapter 1. He considers whether the necessity of *If p has greater reason for being true*²⁵⁶, *then p is true*, entails the necessity of *p*.²⁵⁷ He responds,

[I]f by definition a necessary proposition is one whose truth can be demonstrated with geometrical rigor, then indeed it could be the case that this proposition is

²⁵⁶ Here having a greater reason for being true is that it is better or part of the best world that God chooses.

²⁵⁷ "On Contingency," AG 30.

demonstrable... “God always acts with the highest wisdom.” But from this one cannot demonstrate the proposition “contingent proposition A has greater reason [for being true]” or “contingent proposition A is in conformity with divine wisdom.” And therefore it does not follow that contingent proposition A is necessary. 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.²⁵⁸

What Leibniz is denying here is that necessity, understood as demonstrable in a finite number of steps, is closed under entailment. Even if we can demonstrate in a finite number of steps that God chooses the best, and God choosing the best entails the some proposition p is true, it does not follow that p is necessarily true, because p might have an infinite analysis. Thus “although one can concede that it is necessary for God to choose the best...it does not follow that what is chosen is necessary [e.g. the existence of this world], since there is no demonstration that it is the best.” This certainly is suggestive that Leibniz’s preferred quasi-modal account in the middle period is infinite analysis. Perhaps part of the issue is that possible free decrees offers an account of *de re* quasi-modality for substances, but because possible free decrees do not condition God’s essence they cannot be employed to consider whether it is necessary that God choose the best. Here we will need a broader notion of quasi-modality, that can be used to understand the “contingency” involved in God’s free choice. We will see that in the *Theodicy* in the next Chapter Leibniz does just this. Moreover, the “bestness” of the world is a function of a balance between “simplicity of the ways” events change in the world with a “balance with the richness of effects.”²⁵⁹ Although it is not totally clear what Leibniz has in mind here, he thinks that free decrees influence the “simplicity of the ways” in which the world

²⁵⁸ “On Contingency,” AG 30.

²⁵⁹ “Discourse on Metaphysics” §5, AG 38.

comes about. Thus the bestness of the world is in some sense a function of the laws of the world. So bestness, as a *de re* property of a world, is contingent on the possible free decrees account as well. Even if the possible free decrees view is not Leibniz's preferred account, it does seem superior given Leibniz's own goals to articulate an account of "contingent" properties that is in some way related to what he thinks is intuitive about the notion of contingency, its connection to what God does freely.

7 Conclusion

In *Ways a World Might Be*, Robert Stalnaker describes Leibniz's *de re* modal account:

According to [Leibniz], every property of every individual is constitutive of its essence, and hence only existence is contingent. A modern descendant of this kind of anti-essentialism is David Lewis's counterpart theory. According to Lewis's theory, individuals have counterparts--things that resemble them more than anything else—in other possible worlds, but each individual itself exists in only on possible world. Hence no individual can have accidental properties in the sense defined above: properties that it lacks in some other possible world.²⁶⁰

The preceding discussion shows us that this picture is almost accurate: Leibniz does not think that a substance could exist at another possible world and lack any property specified by its complete concept. And, while David Lewis's counterpart theory bears resemblance to Leibniz's account of incomplete concepts, Leibniz does not offer a counterpart theory in service of *de re* terminology. Lastly, Leibniz's complete concept account of substances renders every property of every individual constitutive of its essence or identity. However, it does not follow that only existence

²⁶⁰ Stalnaker 2003, 72. Essentialism is the view that there is a distinction between the accidental and essential properties of objects.

is contingent. In one sense, even existence is necessary, since Leibniz is a necessitarian. On the other hand, if we are considering the surrogate account of contingency with respect to *de re* modality, then many other properties beyond existence are “contingent”, including the laws of nature and free actions of substances. Leibniz adheres to the claim that there is a meaningful way to distinguish necessary from contingent properties even for an individual substance with a complete concept. The distinction between “contingent” and “necessary” properties is the dependency on the possible free decrees of God. The infinite analysis account of contingency can be understood as an epistemic thesis about how to explain the relationship between things that depend on God's will, and truths that do not admit of a finite *a priori* demonstration. But dependency on God's possible free decrees is Leibniz's best explanation of what deeper metaphysical feature internal to individual substances we are tracking when we make *de re* modal distinctions.

Chapter 3: Necessitarianism & Modality 1700-1716

Absolute Necessity, Moral Necessity, and Freedom

1 Introduction

This chapter is a study of the modal notions of *Theodicy* along with a defense of my reading Leibniz as a necessitarian_{ATC} (all things considered). This is a challenging text for reading Leibniz as a necessitarian because it includes a number of passages and arguments that seem distinctly anti-necessitarian. For one thing, Leibniz develops a notion of freedom that includes contingency as a requisite condition, emphasizing “freedom is exempt not only from constraint but also from real necessity.”²⁶¹ He affirms that both human agents and God are in fact free; thus, he seems committed to the view that some propositions (about free actions) are contingently true. Secondly, Leibniz explicitly distances himself from Abelard, Wycliffe, Hobbes, and Spinoza who are all recognized (and publicly criticized) for endorsing necessitarian claims, including the claim that the actual world is the only possible world, and that all non-actual worlds are impossible.²⁶² Third, Leibniz shifts his language from “sufficient” reasons to “determinate” reasons,²⁶³ emphasizing that

²⁶¹ Preface, H 61.

²⁶² H §85, 122; §170, 232; §171, 233; §173-74, 235; §234-35, 272-73; §345, 332; §351, 336; §414, 371-76.

²⁶³ H §44, 147; §360, 341.

“reasons incline without necessitating.”²⁶⁴ If the reasons involved in choice are not necessitating, then perhaps Leibniz comes to understand free choice as a source of contingency.²⁶⁵ Fourth, Leibniz explains that contingent truths are only hypothetically and morally necessary. Leibniz notes that moral necessity “has the name by analogy only: it becomes effective...through the will of God.”²⁶⁶ Moreover, he describes the contingency involved in freedom as “non-necessity.”²⁶⁷ So at the very least it is not clear from Leibniz’s choice in terminology that he endorses a variant of necessitarianism.

To build a case for reading Leibniz as a necessitarian_{ATC}, I will first offer sophisticated versions of the necessitarian argument we first encountered in the “Confession”—one based on God’s omniscience and one on God’s perfection. Although Leibniz does not consider this argument directly in the *Theodicy*, I will show how each of the premises is supported by claims in the text. Moreover, I will argue that hypothetical and moral necessity are contrasted with absolute necessity, all of which can be understood by employing notions of quasi-contingency developed from the possible free decrees and infinite analysis accounts considered in Chapter 2. Although, Leibniz identifies “real necessity” with absolute necessity,²⁶⁸ I will argue that hypothetical necessity and moral necessity do not conflict with necessity all things considered. The distinction between absolute necessity and moral necessity is not a distinction between genuine metaphysical contingency and necessity all things considered. Further, I will argue that the contingency involved in freedom is

²⁶⁴ H §14, 419; § 45, 148; §48, 150.

²⁶⁵ See Poma 1995, 119, for a defense of this view.

²⁶⁶ H 387.

²⁶⁷ H 302, 310.

²⁶⁸ H 61.

explicated using notions of quasi-contingency. On this view, possible free decrees play a distinctive role in God's freedom, while both infinite analysis and possible free decrees are involved in creaturely freedom. These discussions of freedom offer the opportunity to understand how reasons can "incline without necessitating" even in a necessitarian framework. Lastly, I will review Leibniz's discussion of Hobbes, Wycliffe, Spinoza, and Abelard to show that the ways Leibniz distances himself from these thinkers does not require the rejection of necessitarianism_{ATC}. With respect to Hobbes, Wycliffe, and Abelard, Leibniz emphasizes that his dispute with them is terminological, and that they have the resources to accept the view that God's choice to create the actual world does not render non-actual worlds impossible. Leibniz does reject Spinoza's "blind necessitarianism," according to which God's creation is not a deliberative choice. However, Leibniz's dispute with Spinoza concerns not the claim *that* God necessitates the existence of the actual world, but *how* God necessitates the existence of the actual world.²⁶⁹

Bertrand Russell criticized Leibniz's views in the *Theodicy*, describing them as both illogical and unrepresentative of Leibniz's genuine philosophical system.²⁷⁰ This view is encouraged by the observation that Leibnizian doctrines, such as the

²⁶⁹ H 67.

²⁷⁰ "What [Leibniz] published was designed to win the approbation of princes and princesses. The consequence is that there are two systems of philosophy which may be regarded as representing Leibniz: one, which he proclaimed, was optimistic, orthodox, fantastic, and shallow; the other, which has been slowly unearthed from his manuscripts by fairly recent editors, was profound, coherent, largely Spinozistic, and amazingly logical. It was the popular Leibniz who invented the doctrine that this is the best of all possible worlds (to which F.H. Bradley added the sardonic comment "and everything in it is a necessary evil"); it was this Leibniz whom Voltaire caricatured as Doctor Pangloss. It would be unhistorical to ignore this Leibniz, but the other is of far greater philosophical importance" (Russell 1946, 581).

complete concept theory of substance, receive no mention in the *Theodicy*. Thus before I turn to the sophisticated necessitarian argument, I will justify the treatment of the *Theodicy* as a representative text of Leibniz's modal theorizing, and clarify the relevant modal terminology central to the *Theodicy*: absolute, moral, and hypothetical necessity.

2 Background: The *Theodicy* and Being a Cautious Metaphysician

Leibniz's work from 1700-1716 includes many of his most influential texts, including the "New Essays on Human Understanding," *Theodicy*, "*Monadology*," and Correspondence with Clarke. The *Theodicy*, the only of these texts published antemortem, is the main focus of this Chapter. The focus on the *Theodicy* mandates comment because this is a period with so many seminal works. First, I have selected this text because Leibniz identifies it as a statement of his metaphysical views. In a 1710 letter to Burnett, Leibniz describes the *Theodicy* as addressing "many issues of general philosophy and natural theology, where I claim that everything can be determined demonstratively and provide the means of doing so."²⁷¹ Also, the *Theodicy* is a natural culmination of Leibniz's life work, returning to many of the issues we witnessed in his discussion of the "Confession". Leibniz understands God's creation of the world to be a free action, and there is a resulting tension between God's goodness and choice to create *this* world, and the existence of evil in this world. The *Theodicy* thus includes themes Leibniz returned to throughout his life,

²⁷¹ Letter to Burnett, G III 321.

including the origin of sin, the compatibility of God's goodness with evil, and divine and human freedom.

In the *Theodicy*, Leibniz acknowledges the connection between addressing the problem of evil, and ensuring that freedom is not threatened by necessitarian commitments:

There are two famous labyrinths where our reason very often goes astray: one concerns the great question of the Free and the Necessary, above all in the production and the origin of Evil; the other consists in the discussion of continuity and of the indivisibles which appear to be the elements thereof, and where the consideration of the infinite must enter in. The first perplexes almost all the human race, the other exercises philosophers only.²⁷²

As we saw in the "Confession" the production of evil, in the context of the production of the world, raises questions about how God's necessary existence could fail to render the world, and all truths, necessary as well. Leibniz takes this issue to not just be relevant for philosophers, but "almost all the human race."

The *Theodicy* emerged through Leibniz's discussion of Pierre Bayle's *Dictionary* with Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia. Bayle's *Dictionary* is a relentless commentary and philosophical critique, engaging contemporary and historical intellectual figures and debates. Bayle's emphasis throughout is on the fact that there is no rational solution to the problem of evil.²⁷³ Leibniz aims to refute Bayle's position by offering a rational solution.²⁷⁴ The *Theodicy* is a unique opportunity to understand Leibniz's own views in relation to his contemporaries and important

²⁷² H 53.

²⁷³ For a discussion of Bayle's treatment of this issue, see Hickson 2013.

²⁷⁴ See H 63.

intellectual traditions.²⁷⁵ And yet, at the key moments where Leibniz offers his own views, his distinctive doctrines are absent. For example, his theory of substances as monads with complete concepts receives scant direct attention. Instead of metaphysical doctrines that explicitly appear in other later texts, including “Monadology,” Leibniz offers metaphors and analogies for the reader to unpack.²⁷⁶

The elusiveness of Leibnizian central doctrines in the *Theodicy* is what Bertrand Russell interprets as disingenuousness in Leibniz’s public presentations of his philosophy. In his Preface to the second edition of *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, Russell laments Leibniz’s “general duality,” according to which “he had a good philosophy which (after Arnauld’s criticism) he kept to himself, and a bad philosophy which he published with a view of fame and money” (vi). This duality is increasingly entrenched, according to Russell, as we arrive at Leibniz’s later texts: “...as he grew older he forgot the good philosophy which he had kept to himself, and remembered the vulgarized version by which he won the admiration of Princes and (even more) of Princesses” (vi). On Russell’s view, when we examine Leibniz’s unpublished manuscripts we can see that he “fell into Spinozism whenever he allowed himself to be logical; in his published works, accordingly, he took care to be illogical” (vii). Leibniz’s *Theodicy* is arguably one of the pieces Russell had in mind when thinking about Leibniz’s public, disingenuous, pandering texts (particularly because

²⁷⁵ Leibniz describes the development of the *Theodicy* as the result of correspondence with Sophie Charlotte Queen of Prussia and reaction to Bayle’s *Dictionary* in the preface to the *Theodicy*.

²⁷⁶ See, for example, the laden boat analogy for God’s concurrence with creatures H §30, 141, the prince who rules over his citizens as God rules over humans H §125, 199, and drawing a straight line and God decreeing the best world exist see H §196, 249.

of its origin in correspondence Princess Sophie Charlotte.)²⁷⁷ The absence of Leibniz's particular doctrines might bolster Russell's views about Leibniz's duality, encouraging a reading of Leibniz as reverting to more traditional terminology and less controversial approaches in published works. Antognazza, for example, notes that Leibniz's treatment of modal notions in terms of absolute and hypothetical necessity in the *Theodicy* evidences Leibniz's desire to "play down any talk which could ring suspiciously of necessitarianism."²⁷⁸ Antognazza is not endorsing Russell's view, but points to Leibniz's desire to hide some of the more controversial aspects of his views for the purpose of first introducing readers to his system.²⁷⁹ In a 1710 letter, Leibniz notes that in the *Theodicy* "some of my views cannot be presented in a straightforward manner, since people are liable to misunderstand them, not in relation to religion (which is strongly supported) but in relation to the senses."²⁸⁰ Leibniz is worried about counterintuitive aspects of his views that might prevent audiences from engaging his work and considering it seriously. His concern is not with respect to the theological implications of his views, but their coherence with how we perceive the world. As we saw in Leibniz's middle texts, his account of

²⁷⁷ Antognazza 2009, 480.

²⁷⁸ Antognazza 2009, 483.

²⁷⁹ Whipple 2013 argues that we should distinguish esoteric and exoteric presentations of Leibniz's philosophy. Esoteric presentations make definitions explicit, are fully rigorous, and presented in a more geometric-style. Exoteric presentations target terminology, and less rigorous presentations to adapt to targeted audiences. Whipple identifies different ways Leibniz adapts his language and approach exoterically, in some cases to conform to Cartesian intellectual scholarship and at other times to offer popularized versions of his work. Given the *Theodicy's* development as a reaction to Bayle's *Dictionary*, I suspect Leibniz was hoping to reach a broader audience than philosophers and theologians, and is exoteric in employing traditional terminology like 'moral necessity' and 'hypothetical necessity'.

²⁸⁰ G III 680, as translated in Antognazza 2009, 482.

substances as causally isolated, and apparent instances of causation as mere correlation, might strike people as counterintuitive (as evidenced by Arnauld's reaction to Leibniz's account of substance in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*). Accordingly, Leibniz might have deemphasized his theory of substances so as to avoid various initial resistance to counterintuitive aspects of his view. I am sympathetic to Antognazza's suggestion that Leibniz wanted to present intuitive aspects of his system first, before presenting otherwise counterintuitive metaphysical views. He was, contra Russell, trying to help people understand his view and agree with him, not placate the opinions of royalty.

Leibniz, like many intellectuals dependent on the patronage and good favor of the powerful and wealthy, is certainly concerned about the reception of his views. But the result is not a public incoherent philosophy and a private systematic view (as Russell suggests). Leibniz worries about the best way to present his views to his audience, but in doing so I do not think that he presents an incoherent view in the *Theodicy*. In fact, the *Theodicy* includes many of Leibniz's views that lead to necessitarianism, and by examining the *Theodicy* with these features in mind, we will see how we can make sense of the *Theodicy* in light of Leibniz's necessitarianism and his notions of quasi-modalities.

That said, I *do* think necessitarianism is one of the views that Leibniz thought was too controversial to present up front. In the 1670s Leibniz expressed reservations about presenting fully formed and controversial metaphysical views:

Metaphysics should be written with accurate definitions and demonstrations, but nothing should be demonstrated in it that conflicts too much with received opinions. For thus this metaphysics will be able to be received. If it is once approved, then

afterwards if any examine it more profoundly, they will draw the necessary consequences themselves.”²⁸¹

We should interpret Leibniz as a *cautious* metaphysician who encourages the reader to draw out the consequences of his view for themselves. Consider an astronomer who endorses the heliocentric understanding of the cosmos. It is wise, and cautious, to avoid presenting their view as “the view that denies the sun rises everyday,” for this is seemingly in direct conflict with our experience. But a heliocentric view does not deny the phenomena of the sun apparently traversing the sky. Instead, it indicates that this apparent movement of the sun is the result of the movement of the earth. Such a view can describe the sun as “rising” if we understand this event in terms of the rotation of the earth. Similarly, Leibniz does not present his account of modality as the view that everything is necessary. Instead, he aims to present his system in its most initially plausible light, so that even if it seems to diverge from our experiences of the world, we can be receptive to Leibniz’s explanation of our experiences. Even if all propositions are necessary in some sense, he wants to make sense of our notions of “contingency”.

Leibniz wants to present his system in the most plausible way so that his audience can come to appreciate why accepting something like necessitarianism all things considered is plausible.²⁸² Further, in endorsing necessitarianism, Leibniz is not falling into Spinozism, for he devotes significant effort to successfully distinguishing Spinoza’s views from his own. Accordingly I will work to interpret and connect Leibniz’s treatment of metaphysical and moral necessity in terms of the

²⁸¹ A VI.iii 573.

²⁸² Furthermore, the emphasis on traditional terminology might also be an effort to articulate how his views compare and contrast to those of his contemporaries.

quasi-modal notions we encounter in Leibniz’s earlier work, and emphasize the sense in which Leibniz rejects necessitarianism and the sense in which he does not.

3 Varieties of Necessity: Absolute, Hypothetical, and Moral

Leibniz distinguishes absolute necessity (which he also identifies as “logical” “metaphysical,” or “geometrical”) from moral necessity and hypothetical necessity. Leibniz contrasts absolute necessity and moral necessity with respect to the types of causes involved: “[there is] an *absolute necessity*, metaphysical or geometrical, which may be called blind, and which does not depend upon any but efficient causes; in the second place, a moral necessity, which comes from the free choice of wisdom in relation to final causes.”²⁸³ Absolutely necessary truths are those that do not depend, in any way, on the will of a human or divine agent. A truth is morally necessary when one of its reasons is that the will is inclined to the best (in the case of God) or apparent best (in the case of creatures). Leibniz thinks of the inclination of the will as a matter of doing something for the sake of the best, so that free action involves final causation.

A truth is hypothetically necessary when it follows from the truth of another proposition.²⁸⁴ So if B is hypothetically necessary given A, A’s being true is sufficient for B’s being true. Leibniz identifies this type of necessity as necessity of the consequence: if the antecedent of the conditional is true it is impossible for the

²⁸³H §349, 334.

²⁸⁴H §37, 144. Leibniz explains that hypothetical necessity is the necessity of the consequence given a particular supposition (in H §37, 144, he applies this specifically to God’s foreknowledge). Also, see the Appendix to the *Theodicy*, H 381.

consequent to be false.²⁸⁵ Moral necessity is a type of hypothetical necessity that results from conditional statements whose antecedent make a statement about choice or will.

[I]t must be admitted that God...is prompted to the best by a *moral* necessity. It must be admitted also that one is necessitated to the choice by a hypothetical necessity, when one actually makes the choice...These hypothetical necessities do no harm [to God's freedom]. I have spoken sufficiently on this point already.²⁸⁶

Thus examples of statements of moral necessity include;

Given the hypothesis that the divine will chooses the best...only that which as in fact been produced could have been produced.²⁸⁷

For example: it was necessary for Judas to sin...supposing that Judas believed that it would be best.²⁸⁸

It can be said that things have some sort of necessity, which is hypothetical, ...i.e., the necessity of things arises from the will of God, not from their essence: for, God's decrees once posited, everything is necessary²⁸⁹

Leibniz's notion of hypothetical necessity also allows Leibniz to articulate a notion of hypothetical (and moral) *impossibility*;

Certainly this series can be understood or conceived, but its actual existence is impossible by a hypothetical impossibility, not because it implies a contradiction in terms but because it is incompatible with the presupposed existence of God, whose perfection (from which his justice follows) cannot allow such a thing.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ AG 139; H 396. On this view necessity applies to the conditional, so B is hypothetically necessary given A can be summarized as necessarily (if A, then B).

²⁸⁶ H §132, 203.

²⁸⁷ "Comments on Spinoza," G II 20.

²⁸⁸ CP 119.

²⁸⁹ Grua 300.

²⁹⁰ CP 119.

A proposition is hypothetically impossible if its falsity is guaranteed by the truth of another proposition. For example, the existence of non-actual worlds is hypothetically (and morally) impossible given God's good will. Moreover, as the above passage suggests, when Leibniz contrasts absolute necessity and hypothetical necessity, he sometimes emphasizes that absolutely necessary truths are those whose denial entails a contradiction.²⁹¹ Absolute necessity is a complex notion in the *Theodicy* because what is central to the notion is that absolutely necessary truths do not depend on the truth of other propositions, and instead are true in virtue of the conceptual relations internal to the proposition.²⁹² This is why Leibniz includes truths of mathematics as examples of absolutely necessary truths and emphasizes that the denial of an absolutely necessary implies a contradiction.²⁹³ It is not just that the denial of absolutely necessary propositions implies a contradiction, but does so *in a finite number of steps*:

Nevertheless, when in making the analysis of the truth submitted one sees it depending upon truths whose contrary implies contradiction, one may say that it is absolutely necessary. But when, while pressing the analysis to the furthest extent, one can never attain to such elements of the given truth, one must say that it is

²⁹¹ H §2, 74, H §20 87, H §37 144, H §§173-74 275, H §224 267. I will argue that absolute necessity is not equivalent to necessity_{ATC} because necessity_{ATC} includes considerations of the will and moral goodness. If something is absolutely necessary, then it is necessary_{ATC}. However being necessary_{ATC} does not guarantee that something is absolutely necessary. More needs to be said here to distinguish these two notions, both of whose denial entails a contradiction. For now I want to broadly introduce absolute, moral, and hypothetical necessity.

²⁹² Spelling out what it is for a proposition to be true in itself as opposed to what is true in virtue of other propositions will be taken up shortly.

²⁹³ H 395. Truths of mathematics do not rely on efficient causes, which is why absolute necessity cannot just be a matter of efficient causation. What is central here is that whatever the reasons for the truth of an absolutely necessary truth, those reasons are not dependent on the truths of other propositions, including ones about choices.

contingent, and that it originates from a prevailing reason which inclines without necessitating.²⁹⁴

I read this as a signal that Leibniz is employing his infinite analysis view of contingency in offering the distinction between absolute necessity, on the one hand, and hypothetical and moral necessity on the other. Reading finite analysis as part of Leibniz's notion of absolute necessity makes sense of many of his claims about which denials entail contradictions:

It is true that there would have been no contradiction in the supposition that Spinoza died in [Leiden] and not at The Hague; there would have been nothing so possible...²⁹⁵

But as we saw in Chapter 2, Spinoza's complete concept contains the concept of dying at The Hague (because it is true Spinoza died at The Hague), and we cannot include dying in Leiden in Spinoza's complete concept without "destroying the concept" of Spinoza.²⁹⁶ There, we remarked that Spinoza dying in Leyden contradicts his complete concept, but it is a contradiction that cannot be arrived at in a finite number of steps. That Leibniz is assuming the infinite analysis view in the *Theodicy* explains why he claims that it is possible Spinoza died in Leyden without retracting the view of substance he develops in the middle period.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ H §14, 419. This text "Concerning the Origin of Evil" one of three appendices Leibniz prepared to accompany the *Theodicy*. It is a commentary on "De Origine Mali," (1702) written by William King. Therein King defends the view that freedom involves indifference, a view that Leibniz does not accept without great qualification.

²⁹⁵ H §174, 235.

²⁹⁶ LA 53, 41.

²⁹⁷ Why not think Leibniz changes his view? In other texts from the same period as the *Theodicy* we find Leibniz affirming that all features of a substance arise from its own nature, see "Monadology," §60.

Thus Leibniz's notion of "absolutely necessary" comes to include those truths whose sufficient reasons *exclude* considerations of the will and final causes and whose denial entails a contradiction via a finite analysis. This contrasts with (merely) hypothetically necessary truths, whose full sufficient reasons include some reasons beyond the concepts contained in the consequent.²⁹⁸

Hypothetical necessity is not restricted to moral necessity. Leibniz also considers the hypothetical necessity that follows from God's knowledge:

[I]t was necessary that Judas would sin, on the supposition that God had foreseen it.²⁹⁹

Hypothetical necessity is when a thing can be understood to be otherwise in itself, but, *per accidens*, because of other things already presupposed outside itself it is necessarily such and such. For example: it was necessary for Judas to sin, supposing that God foresaw it...³⁰⁰

These passages are from Leibniz's early work, where "Judas sins" is *per se* contingent because Judas's essence as a human, included in his specific concept, does not include sinning, and does not include not sinning. However, if God knows that Judas sins, then it is true that Judas sins. Because God is infallible and knows all truths, God's knowing a truth entails that truth, so all truths are hypothetically necessary relative to God's knowledge.³⁰¹ In the *Theodicy* Leibniz is particularly focused on two types of hypothetically necessary claims, those that follow on the

²⁹⁸ I added the 'merely' here because absolute truths can be hypothetically necessary too, for example $2 + 3 = 5$ is absolutely necessary, and is hypothetically on the assumption that $2 + 3 = 5$. Being the consequent of a hypothetically necessary truth does not automatically make something hypothetically necessary in the way relevant for the sorts of modal considerations Leibniz is interested in above.

²⁹⁹ "Conversation with Steno on Freedom," CP 123.

³⁰⁰ CP 119.

³⁰¹ The developments of complete concepts in the middle period adds further necessitarian considerations, which we will consider shortly.

supposition of God's good will (these are morally necessary), and those that follow on the supposition of God's knowledge (these are a type of hypothetical necessity). The consequences of God's knowledge and good will are contrasted with those truths that are absolutely necessary.

Leibniz identifies absolute necessity as the problematic notion of necessity insofar as this sort of necessity must be banished from our notion of freedom. Absolute necessity, or real necessity,

would destroy the freedom of the will, so essential to the morality of action: for justice and injustice, praise and blame, punishment and reward cannot attach to necessary action, and nobody will be under obligation to do the impossible or to abstain from doing what is absolutely necessary.³⁰²

With respect to God, if his actions are absolutely necessary, it "would open the door to impiety, whether through the impunity one could thence infer or the hopelessness of any attempt to resist a torrent that sweeps everything along with it."³⁰³ If action were constrained by absolute necessity, there would be no justification for praise and blame, and we would not have moral duties to act in certain ways. Moreover, God's action, insofar as he created the world, would not be praiseworthy, for it would not be a function of his good will, but instead some unreflective process. Leibniz continues "it is important to note the different degrees of necessity, and to show that there are some which cannot do harm, as there are others which cannot be admitted without giving rise to evil consequences."³⁰⁴ The degrees of necessity, according to Leibniz, that can do no harm are moral and hypothetical necessity.

³⁰² H 57.

³⁰³ H 57.

³⁰⁴ H 57.

But is Leibniz right about that? Leibniz is right that moral and hypothetical necessity do not prevent humans and God from being free, but, or so I will argue these notions of necessity are part of his commitment to necessitarianism all things considered. To start to piece this together, it's important to see how hypothetical necessity is related to necessity_{ATC}. Necessity of the consequence guarantees that if the antecedent is true, then the consequent is true too. But it does more than this: it transfers the modal quality of the antecedent to the consequent.³⁰⁵ Thus if B is hypothetically necessary relative to A, and A couldn't fail to be true, then B couldn't fail to be true. Put another way, if we accept: necessary (if A, then B) and necessary (A), then we are committed to necessary (B).³⁰⁶ Championing hypothetical and moral necessity as ways of resisting necessitarianism is only effective if the antecedents of those conditionals are *not* themselves necessary, or if they are necessary it is not through a necessity that is transferred via necessity of the consequence. One of the upshots of absolute necessity is that it is not transferred via necessity of the consequence. For example, according to Leibniz it is necessary that if God is perfect, then the (the actual) world exists. God's perfection is absolutely necessary (it can be demonstrated in a finite number of steps as part of the very definition of God), but it does not follow that the existence of the world

³⁰⁵ Or so it does in the case of necessitarianism_{ATC}. As Leibniz emphasized in the "Confession of a Philosopher," *per se* necessity is not transferred via necessity of the consequence. Leibniz makes similar comments with respect to infinite analysis and demonstration in "On Contingency," AG 30.

³⁰⁶ This is a version of the necessitarian argument offered in the "Confession," but instead of the truths at issue being those that follow from God's existence, the worry is specifically the status of truths that follow from God's good will, God's knowledge, and the human will.

can be demonstrated in a finite number of steps.³⁰⁷ Thus the key question, for Leibniz, is the modal status of the antecedents of hypothetical involving human and divine goodness, and whether that kind of modality is transferred from antecedent to consequent.

I will argue that all things considered, the antecedents of these hypotheticals are necessary, so that all things considered so are their consequents. Leibniz employs infinite analysis and possible free decrees to block the necessity of the consequent, but these are quasi-modal notions that do not undermine the basic fundamental claim that things could not be otherwise.

The two types of hypothetically necessary statements Leibniz's considers in the *Theodicy* are those based on God's will and those based on his knowledge. Each generate necessitarian arguments, first the argument from God's omniscience and the second the argument from God's goodness. I am going to argue for two claims specifically: first, that when Leibniz resists the arguments of (fellow) necessitarians, he is resisting the claim that all truths are necessary absolutely, or necessary_{ABS}. Secondly, he resists the claim that the hypothetical necessity of truths given God's omniscience commits us to necessitarianism_{ABS} and this argument offers the possibility of a line of resistance to necessitarianism_{ATC}. Resisting necessitarianism_{ATC} from the argument from God's Omniscience hangs on the argument for necessitarianism_{ATC} from God's goodness or perfection. I will argue that Leibniz does not have the resources to resist this second argument, and thus is committed to

³⁰⁷ Here it is important that analysis does not employ conditionals, or else the finite analysis of the antecedent plus the conditional would give us a proof in a finite number of steps. Leibniz employs this reasoning in "On Contingency," AG 30.

necessitarianism_{ATC}. First, I will examine each of these arguments, and then I will turn to Leibniz’s criticisms of his contemporary necessitarians.

4 The Necessitarian Argument from Omniscience.

Leibniz denies that the hypothetical necessity of truths given God’s knowledge of them is sufficient for the necessity of those truths. Consider, for example, that Judas sinning is hypothetically necessary given that God knows Judas sins. First, this is insufficient to conclude the necessity_{ABS} of Judas’s sinning, for its denial does not entail a contradiction in a finite number of steps. But a worry remains. For since God is infallible and unchanging, it seems that if God knows that Judas sins, “Judas sins” couldn’t fail to be true.³⁰⁸

Leibniz considers this worry;

It is agreed that foreknowledge in itself does not make truth more determinate; truth is foreseen because it is determinate, because it is true; but it is not true because it is foreseen: and therein the knowledge of the future has nothing that is not also in the knowledge of the past or of the present. But here is what an opponent will be able to say: I grant you that foreknowledge in itself does not make truth more determinate, but it is the cause of the foreknowledge that makes it so. For it needs must be that the foreknowledge of God *have its foundation in the nature of things*, and this foundation, making the truth *predeterminate*, will prevent it from being contingent and free.³⁰⁹

Leibniz’s point here is that although God’s knowledge of p entails the truth of p , God’s knowledge is itself dependent on the reasons that render that proposition true; thus he “grant[s] that foreknowledge in itself does not make truth more

³⁰⁸ Recall that Leibniz raises similar worries in the “Omniscience and Omnipotence of God and Human Freedom,” and the “Confession of a Philosopher,” CP 9-17, 27, 125, 131-33.

³⁰⁹ H §38, 144; emphasis added.

determinate, but it is the cause of the foreknowledge that makes it so.” What foreknowledge is grounded in, according to the above passage, is the nature of things. The modal status of God’s knowledge is thus dependent on the modal status of the nature of the objects of God’s knowledge. If the natures of things are not necessary_{ATC} then Leibniz is not committed to necessitarianism_{ATC} via the argument from omniscience.

Here is a summary of the argument from omniscience:

1. It is necessary_{ATC} that if God knows p , then p is true.
2. It is necessary_{ATC} that God knows p .
3. Therefore, p is necessary_{ATC}.

However, Leibniz can resist premise 2 by arguing that although God couldn’t fail to be omniscient, the nature of the object known could, in fact, be otherwise. The necessity of God’s knowledge is dependent both on the features of God, and the modal features of the natures of things. If the natures of things are not necessary_{ATC}, then God’s knowledge of them is not necessary all things considered. This is particularly important in cases where God’s knowledge is of the free actions of humans. Whether God’s knowledge of Judas’s sin is necessary thus depends upon whether it is necessary that Judas sins.

I have argued in the first and second Chapters that according to both the *per se* view and necessity_{ATC} it is necessary that Judas sins. But my point here is that someone resisting this view can highlight that for all Leibniz has said in the *Theodicy*, the modal status of the natures of creatures, all things considered, is unclear. But I think that Leibniz continues to be committed to the view that all things considered the natures of those creatures, and all truths about them, are necessary. Moreover, I think the passages in which Leibniz describes the natures of

things as contingent, he is appealing to accounts of quasi-modal notions. We have already seen the role of the infinite analysis view in his account of absolute necessity. In response to the above question, what is the basis for God's knowledge of p Leibniz offers the following answer:

For this result [an answer to this question] 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...Thus we have a principle for the certain knowledge of contingent futurities, whether they happen actually or must happen in a certain case...God would see them as they are in the region of the possibles, before he decrees to admit them into existence.³¹⁰

So the basis for God's knowledge of true propositions is his understanding of different ways essences, substances, and worlds can come about. He goes on to emphasize:

But if the foreknowledge of God has nothing to do with the dependence or independence of our free actions, it is not so with the foreordination of God, his decrees, and the sequence of causes which, as I believe, always contribute to the determination of the will.³¹¹

Here Leibniz is affirming the importance of God's possible free decrees as structuring possible worlds in his understanding. But what's more is that the possible free decrees account, which I still take to be more fundamental than the infinite analysis view, is important for spelling out how creatures and God have 'contingent' features and are free. Leibniz's answer about the nature of things, that determines the modal status of the content of God's knowledge, depends upon the modal status of God's free decrees. In Chapter 2 we examined the possible free decrees view specifically as a theory of *de re* claims about substances. We need to

³¹⁰ H §42, 146-47.

³¹¹ H §43, 147.

examine Leibniz's account why God's possible free decrees are contingent. First, I look at a few passages that evidence that Leibniz continued to affirm this view in the *Theodicy*. This will confirm that the modal status of the content of God's knowledge is "contingent" according to the possible free decrees view. Whether those decrees themselves are contingent will depend on the contingency of God's will. This, in turn, depends on the success of the second necessitarian argument from God's perfection or goodness.

5 Possible Free Decrees in the *Theodicy*

Early in the *Theodicy* Leibniz distinguishes mathematical truths from truths about laws of nature:

[T]he one kind is of those called the 'Eternal Verities'..., which are altogether necessary, so that the opposite implies a contradiction. Such are the truths whose necessity is logical, metaphysical or geometrical, which one cannot deny without being led into absurdities. There are...laws which it has pleased God to give Nature, or because they depend upon those. We learn them either by experience, that is, *a posteriori*, or by reason and *a priori*, that is, by considerations of the fitness of things which have caused their choice.³¹²

God's possible free decrees constitute and condition those features of the world that are not absolutely necessary:

This fitness of things has also its rules and reasons, but it is the free choice of God, and not a geometrical necessity, which causes preference for what is fitting and brings it into existence. Thus one may say that physical necessity is founded on moral

³¹² Even though we can glean some of the laws *a priori* we cannot understand their reasons via analysis, so I take this view to be consistent with Leibniz's view in the middle period that we cannot offer an *a priori* proof of the possible free decrees. What's interesting here is that Leibniz thinks that we can *a priori* reason to the truth of some laws based on God's perfection. A further examination of the nature of this sort of *a priori* reasoning would take us too far afield of this discussion.

necessity, that is, on the wise one's choice which is worthy of his wisdom; and that both of these ought to be distinguished from geometrical necessity.³¹³

Leibniz is connecting the array of options for different worlds and laws to God's will and his selection of one based on his good will and the bestness (or fittingness) of the world. Because which laws hold vary world to world, and which world God makes actual depends on his good will, the results of the actual free decrees, and the actual decrees themselves, are morally necessary. The possibility of free decrees helps to explain what Leibniz means when he claims that moral necessity creates no contradiction in the objects of what God wills:

Nevertheless, although his will is always indefectible and always tends towards the best, the evil or the lesser good which he rejects will still be *possible in itself*. Otherwise the necessity of good would be geometrical (so to speak) or metaphysical, and altogether absolute; the contingency of things would be destroyed, and there would be no choice.³¹⁴

The notion of possibility in itself is key for Leibniz's account of contingency in terms of possible free decrees. The idea is that something is possible in itself if it has a coherent nature or concept, but what makes a proposition *contingent* is that its truth results not just from reasons internal to the concept of its subject but reasons external to it that selected it as one of many coherent options. Here, there being an array of coherent differing options, one of which is selected by a criteria not dictated by their own natures, is what renders God's free decrees possible. So the reality of God's choice (having an array of options where one of which is selected accord to the nature of the will) is preserved. The variations among the options, via the laws, are

³¹³ H §2, 74.

³¹⁴ H 387. This passage is from one of the three Appendices of the *Theodicy*, specifically "Summary of the Controversy Reduced to Formal Arguments," in which Leibniz formulates objections (as syllogisms) and responds to each of them.

contingent features of the worlds. This is how the possible free decrees account offers an account not only of contingent propositions about, for example, Caesar, but also about worlds, including which is best (which results from a comparison of worlds) and which exists (which results from the selection of one of those worlds).

The possible in itself view, treating possibles as coherent objects in an array of options, helps to explain Leibniz's notion of moral necessity. For Leibniz says that a key feature of moral necessity is that "[n]ecessity of this kind [moral necessity], which does not destroy the possibility of the contrary, has the name by analogy only: it becomes effective not through the mere essence of things, but through that which is outside them and above them, that is, through the will of God."³¹⁵ The reason why moral necessity "does not destroy the possibility of the contrary" is that non-selected options continue to be options, excluding information about which option is selected. One option becomes actual, not because some feature of that option alone is sufficient to guarantee it is actual, but because something external to the options eliminates all but one. This process of elimination does not change the status of the options as options, but it renders one selected, and the rest rejected. What is important for defending my necessitarian view of Leibniz in the *Theodicy* is that the contingency of God's possible free decrees stems from variations in possible worlds, and not from the fact that God's will, which selects one of those worlds, is not necessitated all things considered.

I have been pushing for the view that God's free decrees are contingent because of features of the object of God's choice, but someone might try to argue that Leibniz thinks that God's will itself is not necessitated, and this is the origin of the

³¹⁵ H 387.

contingency of the decrees. The key question is whether Leibniz has identified the will of God as a source of genuine contingency that could be otherwise. If this is what Leibniz has in mind, then he has, in fact, rejected necessitarianism_{ATC}. In the next section, I will make the case that Leibniz is not rejecting necessitarianism_{ATC} by starting with an argument from God’s perfection and goodness to the conclusion that all truths are necessary_{ATC}.

6 The Necessitarian Argument from God’s Perfection

The necessitarian argument from God’s perfection is a reconstruction of Leibniz’s commitments in the *Theodicy*. It shares structural features with the necessitarian argument from the “Confession of a Philosopher,” although it is more complex. Moreover, Leibniz does not engage this argument explicitly, but his discussion in the *Theodicy* evidences endorsement of the premises and the conclusion. I’ll call the argument in the *Theodicy* the *argument from God’s perfection*.³¹⁶

1. It is necessary_{ATC} that God exists.³¹⁷
2. It is necessary_{ATC} that if God exists, God wills what is best.³¹⁸
3. This world is necessarily_{ATC} the best.³¹⁹

³¹⁶ This version of Leibniz’s argument is adapted from Blumenfeld 1982. Blumenfeld does not use the all things considered terminology. Although perfection does not play an obvious role in the premises as summarized here, God’s perfection is central to Leibniz’s commitment to the premises of the argument.

³¹⁷ God’s perfect essence guarantees this via the ontological argument for God’s existence.

³¹⁸ Demonstrated by the discussion below of God not failing to will what is best. Because God is essentially good God wills according the principle of the best, such that if God wills, God wills what’s best. Leibniz also assumes that God cannot fail to create, for it is essential to God’s goodness that he express that goodness through creation.

4. It is necessary_{ATC} that if God exists, God actualizes this world.³²⁰
5. It is necessary_{ATC} that this world exists.³²¹
6. Thus everything that occurs, occurs necessarily_{ATC}.

Thus all truths are necessarily_{ATC} true.

Premises 2 and 3 are the most controversial, particularly because Leibniz denies them by applying quasi-notions to the necessity operators. However, or so I argue, Leibniz is committed to premises 2 and 3 with respect to all things considered necessity.

6.1 Premise 3: This World is Necessarily_{ATC} the Best.

The necessity of the bestness of the actual world brings us back to the key question in the argument from God's omniscience in relation to the necessitarian argument from God's perfection. What is the modal status of the features of worlds and natures of substances? The worlds are sets of compossible substances, where each substance has its nature or essence fully specified by its complete concept in God's mind. As we saw in the Correspondence with Arnauld, those concepts could not be different without destroying the nature of the creature. Similarly, each world

³¹⁹ This follows from the fact that worlds are aggregates of substances that couldn't be otherwise. Substances cannot be otherwise because their natures are a function of essences and laws, and although those laws do not hold at all worlds, they could not be otherwise given that substance and world. Put another way, Leibniz acknowledges that possible worlds, in all their details, exist in God's understanding and could not be otherwise. A world cannot have properties other than it has, so its good-making qualities are necessary relative to that world. Further, the array of possible worlds could not be otherwise, so which world is the best cannot be otherwise.

³²⁰ From premises 2 & 3.

³²¹ From premises 3 & 4.

is a unique set of compossible substance(s), where if one thing were different it would no longer be that world.

We saw from our earlier discussion that it is necessary that if God creates, God creates the best. Leibniz goes on to explain that the essences of creatures are not dependent on God's will:

God was able to create matter, a man, a circle, or leave them in nothingness, but he was not able to produce them without giving them their essential properties. He had of necessity to make a man a rational animal and to give the round shape to a circle, since, according to his eternal ideas, independent of the free decrees of his will, the essence of man lay in the properties of being animal and rational, and since the essence of the circle lay in having a circumference equally distant from the center as to all its parts.³²²

The essences couldn't be otherwise, which is not to say that in themselves they guarantee that they exist, but that it is impossible for there to be a circle whose radius varies. Leibniz affirms that

These essences and these truths emanate from the same necessity of nature as the knowledge of God. Since therefore it is by the nature of things³²³ that God exists, that he is all-powerful, and that he has perfect knowledge of all things, it is also by the nature of things that matter, the triangle, man and certain actions of man, etc., have such and such properties essentially. God saw from all eternity and in all necessity the essential relations of numbers and the identity of the subject in the propositions that contain the essence of each thing.³²⁴

The *same* necessity that render's God's existence and nature necessary is the very same necessity involved in the essences of creatures.³²⁵ If God understands all

³²² H §183, 242.

³²³ Here I take Leibniz to mean in virtue of essences, specifically God's essence.

³²⁴ H §183, 242.

³²⁵ Leibniz goes on to explain that this includes the essence of goodness itself; see H §183, 242-43. Leibniz discusses the immutable nature of goodness earlier too: "But that is exactly what is meant by being essential to good music: for those rules belong already in the ideal state, even when none yet things of singing, since it is known that they must of

possibilities before creation, and those possibilities are represented in his understanding as possible worlds, then those structures, those possibilities, are necessarily possible.³²⁶ Leibniz affirms this view earlier in the *Theodicy*: “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.”³²⁷ They are necessarily possible in that they have coherent essences and couldn’t be otherwise. Because the nature of goodness couldn’t be otherwise, the structures of worlds couldn’t be otherwise, and which one is best couldn’t be otherwise, it is necessary that this world is the best all things considered.

Worlds are structured according to possible free decrees and those decrees influence the bestness of the world, which is a function of the simplicity of the laws and fecundity of the phenomena, but they are also internal to the nature of the world. My suggestion from Chapter 2 is that to understand contingency in the worlds as a function of those subordinate laws that vary world to world, those laws

necessity belong to it as soon as one shall sing. In the same way virtues belong to the ideal state of the rational creature before God decrees to create it; and it is for that very reason we maintain that virtues are good by their nature” (H §181, 240).

³²⁶ Even though Leibniz does not mention individual substances directly in these passages, early in the *Theodicy* he notes “and each thing as an idea has contributed, before its existence to the resolution that has been made upon the existence of all things; so that nothing can be changed in the universe (any more than in a number) save its essence or, if you will, save its numerical individuality. Thus if the smallest evil that comes to pass in the world were missing in it, it would no longer be this world...” (H §9, 129). Worlds are aggregates of substances, but like substances they are individuated by all of their features, were one thing changed we would have an alternative world.

³²⁷ H §52, 151. I read “accidents” as features of a substance that derive from laws of nature (either exclusively, or in addition to truths about essences). Thus I read accidents as properties that result from God’s possible free decrees.

are possible because they vary both world to world. Those laws are not contingent relative to a world-concept, they are contingent once we appreciate that they vary in a set of options from which God chooses. Because laws are intrinsic to the nature of the world, and those laws determine the bestness of the world in comparison to other worlds, the bestness of the world couldn't be otherwise. Put another way, the world couldn't have different features, and the range of options couldn't be different. So the natures of worlds or substances can be understood as 'contingent' via the possible free decrees account, since possible free decrees 'contingency' is only quasi-modal, it does not conflict with necessity_{ATC}.³²⁸ So the answer to the argument from God's omniscience is that Leibniz can reject the necessity of the nature of things known by God via the quasi-modality and laws, but this does not yield contingency all things considered.

6.2 *God Necessarily Chooses the Best World*

The point of the above discussion is to show that even though possible free decrees condition what is "contingently" true of the world, those decrees are intrinsic to the nature of the world. A defender of the view that Leibniz admits genuine contingency into his system in the *Theodicy* might argue that even if the possible free decrees of God are essential to the world, or a particular plan of action, which world God wills is nevertheless not necessary. However, I think that Leibniz endorses the view that all things considered God necessarily chooses the best world.

³²⁸ Similarly, the infinite analysis account can be deployed as a quasi-modal account to explain the contingency of the bestness of this world, but the infinite analysis does not yield the conclusion that the bestness of the world is contingent all things considered.

The *Theodicy* emphasizes an aspect of Leibniz's philosophy that is closely related to his commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason and necessitarianism_{ATC}. In Leibniz's texts he emphasizes that God cannot act arbitrarily.³²⁹ The centrality of the Principle of Sufficient Reason ensures that there is always a reason for God's actions, and thus that divine action is never arbitrary. The principle

of the sufficient reason, which states that there is no true enunciation whose reason could not be seen by one possessing all the knowledge necessary for its complete understanding. [This principle] must hold not only in necessary but also in contingent truths; and it is even necessary that that which has no sufficient reason should not exist. For one may say in a sense [this] principle [is] contained in the definition of the true and the false.³³⁰

In the case of God's actions, Leibniz emphasizes the link between perfection and acting for reasons, so that God's perfection guarantees both that *there is a reason* for why he does just what he does, and that his goodness, or that the reason why he does just is the *best* one. The reconciliation of God's good reason for the creation of the world and the existence of evil is a core component of the *Theodicy* and an excellent context in which to frame the importance of Leibniz's modal notions.

The connection between non-arbitrariness and God's perfection and its relation to necessitarianism is clearest in an Appendix to the *Theodicy*, where Leibniz considers objections to his views in the form of syllogisms:

³²⁹ For example, this appears in Leibniz's early work "If God wills something without reason, it follows that he acts and wills imperfectly because every intelligent substance, insofar as it does not act from intelligence, acts imperfectly" (CP 129). In the "Discourse on Metaphysics" Leibniz explains "to act with less perfection than one is capable is to act imperfectly" (§3, AG 37).

³³⁰ H §14, 419.

Objection VIII³³¹

1. Whoever cannot fail to choose the best is not free.
2. God cannot fail to choose the best.
3. Therefore God is not free.

Because asserting that creation is a free act of God is a central claim of Leibniz's natural theology, he cannot accept the conclusion of this argument. Leibniz's response here is important for two reasons: he rejects premise 1, and he accepts premise 2.³³² He accepts that God cannot fail to choose the best, but thinks that this does not undermine God's freedom (and thus rejects premise 1).

Leibniz offers an insightful argument as to why God cannot fail to choose the best, which ultimately shows that it is necessary that God choose the best.³³³ First, because God is essentially good and perfect, God's will is guided by the principle of the best. The principle of the best dictates that the best of all options be selected, because actions are undertaken for the sake of what is best. Leibniz explains that "if the will of God had not as its rule the principle of the best, it would tend towards evil, which would be worst of all; or else it would be indifferent somehow to good and evil, and guided by chance."³³⁴ If the principle of the best does not guide God's

³³¹ H 386.

³³² "I deny the major of this argument" (H 386).

³³³ This is particularly important because it helps establish that for Leibniz it is necessary all things considered that God will the best. This is a controversial point in the literature. Robert Adams notes that the *Theodicy* offers evidence of the contrary, "If the *Theodicy* were the only source for Leibniz's opinions, I think we would find nothing incompatible with the impression that Leibniz thinks it contingent, *de dicto*, that God chooses what is best" (Adams 1994, 37).

³³⁴ H 387.

will, then either some other (worse) principle guides God's will (e.g., the principle of the second best), or there is no principle that guides God's will (and the Principle of Sufficient Reason is violated). In the first case, God's creative activity would be "malicious," and in the second case, where there is no principle, God's creative activity would be "absurd."³³⁵ But neither of these is possible for an essentially perfect God, because acting without a reason would render God "no less imperfect than the object of his choice."³³⁶ This would undermine our reasons for loving and worshiping God: "then he would not deserve absolute trust; he would act without reason in such a case, and the government of the universe would be like certain games equally divided between reasons and luck."³³⁷

Elsewhere in the *Theodicy*, Leibniz also defends the claim that God cannot fail to choose the best. Thus he endorses the claim that it is necessary that God create the best of all worlds, because God's failing to create the best of all worlds entails a contradiction. Leibniz explains that a being that creates something other than the best "deprive[s] God of the designation *good*"³³⁸

The true God is always the same: natural religion itself demands that he be essentially as good and wise as he is powerful. It is scarcely more contrary to reason and piety to say that God acts without cognition, than to maintain that he has cognition which does not find the eternal rules of goodness and justice among its objects, or again to say that he has a will such as heeds not these rules.³³⁹

³³⁵ H 387.

³³⁶ H 388. Leibniz also notes that "indifference with regard to good and evil would indicate a lack of goodness or of wisdom" (H §174, 236).

³³⁷ H 388.

³³⁸ H §176, 236.

³³⁹ H §177, 238.

This passage confirms that God is essentially good, and God's goodness cannot be otherwise because then it would be contrary to reason.³⁴⁰ For the same reason, Leibniz condemns the suggestion that the nature of goodness itself is contingent or could be otherwise.

[W]hen we reduce goodness to the most general abstraction, we find therein the will to do good. Divide and subdivide into as many kinds as you shall please this general goodness, into infinite goodness, finite goodness, kingly goodness, goodness of another, goodness of a husband, goodness of a master, you will find in each, an inseparable attribute, the will to do good."³⁴¹

Being good is essential to God's nature, and essential to goodness is the will to do good. This grounds the principle of perfection that guides God's will in his essential nature. So God's will could not be otherwise, it could not fail to be guided by the principle of the best and thus God cannot fail to create the best.

This is a particularly important point against the view that Leibniz has stipulated a genuine sort of contingency that issues from God's will. On this view, when Leibniz says God cannot fail to do what is best, Leibniz is saying that God will not fail to do what is best, but it is not necessary that God does what is best. However, I think that all Leibniz needs for the freedom of God's choice is the internal consistency of the objects of God's choice, one of which is selected as a function of God's moral character. To go further and say that God has the ability to select what is other than the best would erode God's perfection, which is not

³⁴⁰ Further, Leibniz connects these notions to necessity when discussing Bayle's view: "[God can will nothing that is opposed to the necessary love which he has for his wisdom] is self-evident, for one can do nothing whereof the opposite is necessary" (H §236, 273).

³⁴¹ H §179, 238-39.

possible. God cannot be otherwise in the strongest modal sense, all things considered.

Before moving on, there are a few passages that may seem to cut against my suggestion that God wills the best all things considered. These passages are particularly important because Leibniz is considering Bayle's argument that God's nature necessitates God's choice:

The love that God bears to himself is essential to him, but the love for his glory, or the will to acquire his glory, is not so by any means: the love he has for himself did not impel him by necessity to actions without; they were free; and since there were possible plans whereby the first parents should not sin, their sin was therefore not necessary.³⁴²

Leibniz seems to be rejecting Bayle's reasoning, which accordingly means that Leibniz seems to be rejecting the reasoning I just committed him to. However, I think that he is not rejecting the claims that God will the best necessarily all things considered. Instead I read Leibniz as saying that it is not from the love of himself *alone* that he creates but the love for himself and the love for what he creates. He is claiming that God does not will a particular world or create any world just based on considerations of his own essence, so I read the above passage as follows:

the love that God bear to himself is essential *to him* but the love for his glory [what he creates in specific], or the will to acquire his glory [i.e. to create at all], is not so [not essential to God] by any means: the love he has for himself did not impel him by necessity [because it was not the sole cause] to his actions without [because they also depend on his love of his creation].

The mistake Bayle is making, on my reading of Leibniz, is to think that the total sufficient cause of the creation of a particular world is necessitated by the essence of God. Leibniz is saying that it is a combination of the essence of God and the

³⁴² H §233, 271.

essential nature of the possible worlds available. This maintains necessity_{ATC} because *all* (God's essences and the natures of worlds) things considered God creates the best of all worlds. So Leibniz is not denying the *de dicto* claim that God must create the best, he is denying the *de re* claim of the actual world that God must create it, just based on the perfection of God. Notice too how the above passage ends: "and since there were possible plans whereby the first parents should not sin, their sin was therefore not necessary." Leibniz is not appealing to God's freedom to account for this necessity, he is appealing to variations amongst worlds. However, Leibniz continues in response to Bayle:

God chose between different courses all possible: thus, metaphysically speaking he could have chosen or done what was not best; but he could not morally speaking have done so.³⁴³

Again, when Leibniz says that "metaphysically speaking" God could have chosen or done what is not the best, he is not denying the necessity_{ATC} of God choosing what is best. First, recall that metaphysical necessity is identified with absolute necessity in the *Theodicy*. Leibniz might very well be repeating the claim that one cannot demonstrate that God selects this world amongst the infinite options in a finite number of steps. Notice, moreover, that Leibniz affirms that morally speaking God could not have done what is not best. That is, relative to the principle of the best God could not have done differently. Here I read Leibniz as explaining that the array of possible worlds from which God chooses includes worlds that are not the best, and that *per impossible*, God would choose one of them if God did not act according

³⁴³ H §234, 272.

to the principle of the best. Lastly, Leibniz closes out this section with the following comment:

It implies no contradiction that God should will—directly and permissively—a thing not implying a contradiction, and in this sense it is permitted to say that God can will it.³⁴⁴

If non-actual worlds do not imply a contradiction, then this above passage appears to confirm that God can will them, it is not contradictory for God to will them. This goes against my suggestion that it is necessary that God wills the best. However, I do not think this passage should be read this way. This passage is a bit more complicated because a proper reading of it involves Leibniz's theory of antecedent versus consequent will. Early in the *Theodicy* Leibniz explains;

But in relation to God nothing is open to question, nothing can be opposed to *the rule of the best*, which suffers neither exception nor dispensation. It is in this sense that God permits sin: for he would fail in what he owes to himself, in what he owes to his wisdom, his goodness, his perfection, if he followed not the grand result of all his tendencies to good, and if he chose not that which is absolutely the best, notwithstanding the evil of guilt, which is involved therein by the supreme necessity of the eternal verities. Hence the conclusion that God wills all good *in himself antecedently*, that he wills the best *consequently* as an *end*, that he wills what is indifferent, and physical evil, sometimes as a *means*, but that he will only permit moral evil as the *sine quo non* or as a hypothetical necessity which connects it with the best. Therefore the *consequent will* of God, which has sin for its object, is only *permissive*.³⁴⁵

Leibniz thinks of God's will as inclined towards all things with good qualities, that is, God is antecedently inclined to will all worlds insofar as each is good, but his inclination is in proportion to their goodness, and he ultimately wills the one that is the best, or the one toward which he is most inclined. Denying of the consequent

³⁴⁴ H §234, 272.

³⁴⁵ H §25, 138.

will of God that God wills the best is contradictory. Put another way, in the original passage Leibniz is trying to make sense of what we mean when we say God *can* will something. If it has a coherent concept, Leibniz thinks God can will it, but as we include more and more considerations we limit more and more what God can will, until we reach what God can will all things considered, and that is the best. We can say God can will that the second-best of all worlds exist, either in the sense that it was among the options before he chose according to the best, or it would take an infinite demonstration to show that world is second best. So it is in a qualified sense that thinking of God as failing to do what is best does not imply a contradiction.

The strategy with respect to all of these passages is to show that when Leibniz claims it is possible that God fails to will what is best, he has restricted the range of sufficient reasons we are considering in one way or another, either by just considering God's essence, or the world's essence, or the range of worlds, but not all things considered.

That God cannot fail to choose the best is not the only important claim gleaned from Leibniz's response Objection VIII. Recall the objection reads:³⁴⁶

1. Whoever cannot fail to choose the best is not free.
2. God cannot fail to choose the best.
3. Therefore God is not free.

So far I have focused on Leibniz's acceptance of 2, but Leibniz's rejection of 1 is of utmost importance for this views in the *Theodicy*, for I take most of his apparent

³⁴⁶ H 386.

rejections of necessitarianism as rejections of views that undermine our freedom. Necessity all things considered does not undermine our freedom, and in what follows I will examine Leibniz's notion of freedom so that we can see how the notions of contingency involved are notions of quasi-contingency.

7 Freedom: Spontaneous, Intelligent, and Contingent Action

In the "Confession" Leibniz offers an account of freedom that requires both spontaneity and deliberation, such that free action originates from the agent via the will guided by understanding.³⁴⁷ Leibniz returns to this account in the *Theodicy*:

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 judgment in him who acts there is no freedom. And if we had judgment not accompanied by any inclination to act, our soul would be an understanding without will.³⁴⁸

However, Leibniz adds *contingency* as a third requirement of free action:

Up to this point I have expounded the two conditions of freedom mentioned by Aristotle, that 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'; for I have already said here that freedom must exclude an absolute and metaphysical or logical necessity.³⁴⁹

I will argue that Leibniz's further analysis of contingency does not make room for events to happen otherwise (it is not a rejection of necessity all things considered),

³⁴⁷ CP 69 and 123.

³⁴⁸ H §34, 93.

³⁴⁹ H §302, 310.

but instead employs notions of quasi-modality—*possible free decrees* and infinite analysis. Leibniz’s inclusion of contingency as a requisite for freedom is thus not the rejection of necessitarianism_{ATC}.

7.1 *Divine Freedom*

Leibniz argues that even though God cannot fail to do what is best, God is nevertheless free. To do so, he calls upon his notion of the possibility of God’s free decrees. He notes that because God chooses amongst things that are possible in themselves, or internally consistent worlds represented his mind, the fact that he could not choose otherwise does not undermine his freedom:

[I]n willing [God] always follows the tendency of his own nature, and all other things always follow his will...Nevertheless, although his will is always indefectible and always tends towards the best, the evil or the lesser good which he rejects will still be possible in itself. Otherwise the necessity of good would be geometrical (so to speak) or metaphysical, and altogether absolute; the contingency of things would be destroyed, and there would be no choice.³⁵⁰

Part of the reason why God’s free actions are not absolutely necessary is that they come about according to final causes, where God acts for the sake of what is best. Leibniz’s notion of freedom is that of deliberative choice. The fact that God must act for the sake of what is best does not undermine God’s freedom.

There is nothing less servile and more befitting the highest degree of freedom than to be always led towards the good, and always by one’s own inclination, without any constraint and without any displeasure...when [God] had set before him an end, that of exercising his goodness, his wisdom determined him to choose the means most appropriate for obtaining this end.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ H 387.

³⁵¹ H 386.

Here contingency, as a necessary condition for God's freedom, is best understood as there being an array of internally consistent worlds God considers to actualize. What does, in fact, actualize one of those worlds is God's will, determined by what is best. That is, God's creation of the actual world is free because God is the cause of the action, through a reflective and deliberative process whereby he considers the infinite ways worlds that can be (each possible in themselves) and then selects the best to create. It is contingent that this world is actual because its own nature is not sufficient to bring it into existence and how it does come to be is a matter of being chosen among many. God's action is free because it is a choice that is neither guaranteed by God's nature alone, nor by the nature of the object of choice alone.

Possible worlds are important for God's free choice for two reasons. First, the array of genuinely possible sets of circumstances, all of which God could create but only one of which he will create, evidences God's power. Which outcomes are available for contemplation when choosing are a function of what we are capable of doing (excluding considerations of which world is best). An array of possible worlds is important for characterizing the options that God could at least in principle exercise his power over. Omnipotence is the power to bring about any logically possible states of affairs. Thus God's power, considered independent of his willing the best, is in part understood in terms of the options available to him amongst which to choose.

Power and will are different faculties, whose objects are also different; it is confusing them to say that God can do only that which he wills. On the contrary, among various possible, he wills only that which he finds the best. For all possibles are regarded as

objects of power, but actual an existing things are regarded as objects decretory will.³⁵²

The sort of threat of necessity Leibniz is concerned with is one that deems non-actual worlds impossible or contradictory. If these worlds are contradictory, then God cannot exercise power over them. The threat of necessity is a threat to God's power when choosing, and is a threat to freedom in that respect. Possible worlds are the objects of God's choice, and limiting the array of those objects limits God's power.

Second, the existence of possible worlds in God's understanding is important to ensure that God's productive activity is intentional, aiming at creating the world that brings about the most amount of goodness. In order to understand one's choice, one must understand the objects of choice, and God's understanding of ways the world could be, constitute is understanding of the objects of his choice. Possible worlds are the objects of God's understanding, and God's willing that something be the case does not render his objects of knowledge contradictory. I take Leibniz's main point to be that the objects of God's power and understanding are internally consistent worlds and God's willing one of these to exist cannot render the natures of those worlds internally contradictory. The claim that Leibniz is really aiming to exclude is that possible but non-actual worlds are impossible, where impossible means entailing a contradiction internal to the world;

...but it does not compel him, for his choice creates no impossibility in that which is distinct from the best; it causes no implication of contradiction in that which God

³⁵² H §171, 233.

refrains from doing. There is therefore in God a freedom that is exempt not only from constraint but also from necessity.³⁵³

This decree does not change the nature of the objects: it does not render necessary that which was contingent in itself, or impossible that which as possible.³⁵⁴

Worlds are possible existents, before their relative goodness and the character of God's will determines which one exists. The contingency involved in God's free choice is that God's will does not render a possible world necessary in itself or impossible in itself.

For God chooses among the possible, and *for that very reason* he chooses freely, and is not compelled; there would neither be choice nor freedom if there were but one course possible.³⁵⁵

The thing indeed would imply no contradiction *in itself* if the effect did not follow; and therein lies contingency.³⁵⁶

God fails not to choose the best, but he is not constrained so to do: nay, more, there is no necessity *in the object of God's choice*, for another sequence of things is equally possible. For that very reason the choice is free and independent of necessity, because it is made between several possibles, and the will is determined only by the preponderating goodness of the object.³⁵⁷

The contingency condition in divine free will is met by acknowledging that the sufficient reasons that necessitate the existence of this world are neither exclusive to God's nature nor to the nature of what is chosen. The extent to which each world is good is essential to each world, but which one is best is a function of a comparison of all the worlds, and even then that does not guarantee existence for God must create according to the principle of what is best. The objects of God's choice are

³⁵³ H §230, 270.

³⁵⁴ H §231, 270.

³⁵⁵ H §235, 272-73; emphasis added.

³⁵⁶ H §44, 147.

³⁵⁷ H §45, 148.

distinct from God's nature, and as long as he is presented with an array of options in willing one to exist, the act of creation is free. The possible-in-itself view explains why the existence of the world is not necessitated by the nature of the world alone. This is not to say, however, that God's free choice is not necessary all things considered, for considering all things, God's nature, the nature of worlds, and comparative goodness, a contradiction would arise if a different, non-best, world exists.³⁵⁸

7.2 *Human Freedom*

Leibniz offers the same general account of freedom for creatures as divine agents, that is, free action is spontaneous, intelligent, and contingent. However, one important lesson from our examination of *per se* modality in Leibniz's middle period is that *per se* modality does not distinguish contingent from necessary properties in substances or worlds. Thus instead of analyzing contingency in terms of *per se* modality for non-divine creatures, I think Leibniz employed the infinite analysis and possible free decrees accounts of quasi-contingency to spell out his notion of human freedom.³⁵⁹ Though Leibniz does not explicitly discuss the infinite analysis account in the *Theodicy*, he is committed to the view that contingent truths are not demonstrable:

³⁵⁸ The infinite analysis view could also be used to show that which world exists is contingent. But God's free choice depending on an infinity of reasons, that God himself does not require in order to cognize worlds seems less on point in the context of these passages.

³⁵⁹ Although Caesar's free action is contingent in both the possible free decrees sense and the infinite analysis account, the infinite analysis ensures an important epistemic feature of free actions.

Nevertheless, when in making the analysis of the truth submitted one sees it depending upon truths whose contrary implies contradiction, one may say that it is absolutely necessary. But when, while pressing the analysis to the furthest extent, one can never attain to such elements of the given truth, one must say that it is contingent...³⁶⁰

Consider Caesar's crossing the Rubicon. In order for this to count as a free action, for Leibniz, Caesar must deliberate and act in accordance with his will. Human actions differ from divine actions in that God's will is not influenced by passions in addition to means-ends reasoning.

...we do not always follow the latest judgment of practical understanding when we resolve to will; but we always follow, in our willing, the result of all the inclinations that come from the direction both of reasons and passions, and this often happens without an express judgment of the understanding.³⁶¹

Thus our will, even in free actions, is not merely subject to deliberative reasons.³⁶²

What exactly does contingency add to his account of human freedom? Leibniz accounts for the contingency of the truth Caesar crossed the Rubicon by appealing to the contingent connection between crossing the Rubicon and Caesar, which, as we saw last chapter, is both a function of God's possible free decrees, or laws that vary world to world, and the fact that such decrees require an infinite analysis to demonstrate. That is, an *a priori* demonstration that Caesar crossed the Rubicon would involve a nonterminating process, or an infinite number of reasons or causes. We can never determine, in a finite number of steps, that crossing the Rubicon is contained in Caesar's concept, just as we cannot show that supposing that Caesar did not cross the Rubicon entails a contradiction.

³⁶⁰ Appendix to the *Theodicy*, Concerning "The Origin of Evil," H §14, 419.

³⁶¹ H §151, 51.

³⁶² I'm setting aside issues of just how much influence the passions can have before an action is no longer free and voluntary.

Importantly, this is true for Caesar too. In order for Caesar to act for the sake of what appears best, he must apply his will. But if we can cognize from our own natures what action we will take, instead of taking that action because it is the apparent best, our freedom will be undermined. Acting voluntarily is a matter of having a set of options within one's power,³⁶³ and willing one of those options by deciding which is best. I think Leibniz thinks that we can act voluntarily even though we do not have the power to do otherwise, as long as our reason for acting, and what influences the will, is our reasoning about what is best, and not what we foresee our inclinations will lead us to. The infinite analysis view ensures that there is no way to *a priori* predict how I will behave and what I will will. Making deliberation about which action within my means will bring, the best outcome relevant.

Leibniz wants to account for the sense it which it feels like we could have done otherwise when we act.

When we present a choice to ourselves, for example, whether to leave or not to leave, given all the internal or external circumstances, motives, perceptions, dispositions, impressions, passions, inclinations taken together, there is a question as to whether I am still in a state of contingency, or whether I make the choice to leave, for example, by necessity—that is, whether in fact this true and determined proposition, that in all these circumstances taken together I will choose to leave, is contingent or necessary. I reply that it is contingent, because neither I nor any other more enlightened mind could demonstrate that the opposite of this truth implies a contradiction. And assuming that by freedom of indifference we understand a freedom as opposed to necessity (as I have just explained), I agree about this freedom.³⁶⁴

The proposition “in all these circumstances taken together I will choose to leave” is contingent. A complete analysis of all of the determining factors that render my

³⁶³ Or at least, of it not being demonstratively false that we have a set of options.

³⁶⁴ “Letter to Coste on Human Freedom,” AG 194; emphasis added.

choice cannot be completed in a finite number of steps, so my choice is contingent. The upside of this sort of contingency is that it explains how there is a sort of indifference in free actions, without rejecting the Principle of Sufficient Reason. So Leibniz thinks his analysis of freedom is complete because it captures the sense in which our actions are determined but not necessary, for even if we assume all of the events leading up to our action, we cannot derive a contradiction through analysis. There is a contingent connection between all events leading up to Caesar's decision and his action.

But the freedom of the mind which is contrasted with necessity pertains to the bare will, in so far as this is distinguished from the understanding. It is what is known as 'free will' [*le franc arbitre*]: it consists in the view that the strongest reasons or impressions which the understanding presents to the will do not prevent the act of the will from being contingent, and do not confer upon it an absolute or (so to speak) metaphysical necessity.³⁶⁵

My will is genuinely efficacious in bringing about future states, but would not be if I could just cognize what my future states will be like and how my willing follows from those inclinations. The infinite analysis aspect of modality thus ensures that it's in principle impossible for an agent to act on *a priori* reasons and circumvent the will.

Thus freedom is a matter of considering a set of options, appreciating which is best, and then willing accordingly. A free choice is a matter of considering an array of options, one of which is selected according to the nature of the will. In the case of God, the array of options are internally consistent worlds, one of which is the best, which God subsequently wills to exist. God cannot fail to create the best of these worlds, or fail to properly understand which is the best, or fail to will what is

³⁶⁵ NE II.xxi.8, 175.

best. What renders his creation of the world contingent is that the determining factor in which world exists is his good will. So what is key to God's free choice to create the world is an array of possible worlds.

However, human beings are not presented with a genuine array of options, because which option we choose is already contained in our very concept and nature. There is a sense in which the objects of our choice are internal to our being. However, because of our epistemic limitations we do not know what the outcome of our choice will be, we cannot *a priori* know what we will choose. Because of our epistemic limitations, we are presented with an array of 'possible' actions or outcomes, each of which is genuine in that we cannot demonstrate it will not be chosen. Because we do not have this epistemic access into what we are determined by our constitution to choose, we can engage in the process of considering which outcome is best, or appears best, and will accordingly. The contingency in God's freedom is guaranteed by the separate objects of his choice, but and the contingency of human freedom is supported by the indemonstrability of what we are determined to choose.

8 Inclining 'without Necessitating'

After Leibniz outlines his compatibilist view of free will, he explains that reconciling determinism with free will does not answer all of the threats to freedom:

Yet one must confess that the cylinder of Chrysippus does not answer the objection of necessity. He ought to have added, in the first place, that it is by the free choice of God that some of the possibles exist; secondly, that rational creatures act freely also, in accordance with their original nature, which existed already in the eternal ideas;

and lastly, that the motive power of good inclines the will without compelling [or necessitating] it.³⁶⁶

The cylinder of Chrysippus is a metaphor for the human will. Leibniz notes that just as the rolling motion of a cylinder is in part caused by whatever pushes the cylinder it but is also a function of the shape of the cylinder's surface, the action of free agents is the result of determining factors external to the agent (including God's creative activity) but also factors internal to the agent (for example their character). The cylinder of Chrysippus is meant to render Leibniz's compatibilist view more plausible. What is important about this example is that even if he employs the cylinder of Chrysippus analogy to explicate his compatibilist view of the will, he thinks that he has not addressed "the objection of necessity". According to Leibniz, in order to answer this objection one must spell out the free choice of God to create, and how rational creatures freely act. The last component, that reasons incline without necessitating, is that final component to explain.

Leibniz claims the reasons incline without necessitating both for God and humans.³⁶⁷ The role of reasons is important for moral necessity, because reasons must be of such a nature that they leave room for our will to bring things about as a function of our character, or what appears best. Leibniz often claims that reasons incline without necessitating, which is certainly suggestive of an anti-necessitarian sentiment. For if reasons can incline without necessitating, then there can be sufficient reasons that do not necessitate, even if those reasons are themselves necessary. In his review of Michael Griffin's necessitarian reading of Leibniz,

³⁶⁶ H §336, 327.

³⁶⁷ AG 28; H §43, 147; §45, 148; §132, 203; §367, 345; NE II.xxi.8, 175.

Michael Futch emphasizes that inclination without necessitation offers a compelling reason against reading Leibniz as a necessitarian:

...Leibniz also writes often of “reasons that incline without necessitating,” another part of his theories of contingency enlisted to establish that there is no metaphysical necessity in God creating this world: “I say that motives incline without necessitating and there is...not an absolute necessity in contingent things” (Leibniz’s fifth letter to Clarke, section 9). Again, some have found in this, especially when integrated into Leibniz theory of infinite analysis, an attempt to show that the world’s existence is not metaphysically necessary, even if by that we mean extrinsically necessary. Griffin critically addresses neither Leibniz’s writing on this score nor the available scholarly literature.³⁶⁸

Making sense of “inclination without necessitation” within a necessitarian framework is an important part of defending a necessitarian reading of Leibniz. Possibility in itself, and the array of options involved in choice are two key notions for spelling out inclining without necessitating in a necessitarian framework. What someone ultimately wills is the result of a weighing of different reasons in favor of different possible outcomes. As we saw above, however, in the case of humans these reasons often include the influence of passions (and perhaps also our indistinct perceptions of the world). When Leibniz says that reasons incline without necessitating, he is saying that no one reason, considered in itself, is sufficient to guarantee an action. There are no necessary connections between having a certain reason and acting a certain way. When we consider any one reason we are only considering a partial cause of our action, or a portion of the reasons sufficient to cause action. For example, being as thirsty as one could possibly be does not necessitate drinking a glass of water, whether we will to drink with depend on whether we have stronger

³⁶⁸ Futch 2013.

countervailing reasons not to drink, like we think the water is poison. I think this is what Leibniz has in mind when he notes:

So the predetermination of events by their causes is precisely what contributes to morality instead of destroying it, and the causes incline the will without necessitating it. For this reason the determination we are concerned with is not a necessitation. It is certain (to him who knows all) that the effect will follow this inclination; but this effect does not follow thence by a consequence, which is necessary, that is, whose contrary implies contradiction; and it is also by such an inward inclination that the will is determined, without the presence of necessity. Suppose that one has the greatest possible passion (for example, a great thirst), you will admit that the soul can find some reason for resisting it, even if it were only that of displaying its power. Thus though one may never have complete indifference of equipoise, and there is always a predominance of inclination for the course adopted, that predominance does not render absolutely necessary the resolution taken.³⁶⁹

I take Leibniz's point to be that there is not an immediate contradiction that follows from an agent having reason to drink, and yet not drinking. However, this need not entail rejecting the claim that all things considered (including the prevailing reasons) a particular action is necessary. The "predominance does not render absolutely necessary the resolution taken" because those reasons, considered by themselves and not in comparison to other reasons, do not necessitate that course of action. Similarly with respect to God's choice to create the world, the goodness of each world inclines God will towards creating it, but the features of no one world, considered by itself, is sufficient to necessitate God's will, because it is not just goodness that inclines God's will, but bestness (or being the most good). Leibniz further emphasizes that the fact that the will resolves itself to do that which it is strongest inclined towards is a law that is imposed externally to the will.

[A]s for the connexion between causes and effects, it only inclined, without necessitating, the free agency, as I have just explained; thus it does not produce even a

³⁶⁹ H 382.

hypothetical necessity, save in conjunction with something from outside, to wit, this very maxim, that the prevailing inclination always triumphs.³⁷⁰

So that having the strongest reason to will something only necessitates it with the additional requirement that the will resolves to do what it has strongest reason to do. Again, this is consistent with all things considered necessitarianism if we read Leibniz as making these claims under a restricted conception of reasons. If we restrict ourselves just to the reasons, those reasons in themselves are not sufficient to guarantee the resolution of the will. Thus they do not necessitate the will. But the outcome is guaranteed, nevertheless, all things considered.

So Leibniz's account of freedom, his claims about the power of reasons to incline without necessitating, and his emphasis on moral necessity can all be understood consistently in an all things considered necessitarian framework. What evidences that Leibniz was aware of this commitment, and is not merely inconsistent in his modal theorizing, is that when he discusses other necessitarian views, he does not distance himself as much as it might first appear. He notes that many of his disputes with necessitarians are terminological, and in light of the necessitarian argument from God's perfection, I think we have good reason to think that Leibniz was knowingly committed to necessitarianism all things considered.

9 Leibniz's discussion of other Necessitarians

Both Abelard and Wycliffe's works were censured for versions of necessitarianism.³⁷¹ Leibniz acknowledges that both Abelard and Wycliffe's views are problematic, but what Leibniz identifies as problematic is not the endorsing of

³⁷⁰ H §53, 152.

³⁷¹ Pierre Abelard was censured at the Council of Sens and Wycliffe at the Council of Constance.

necessitarianism_{ATC}. Instead, Leibniz finds their terminology, or lack thereof to capture claims about contingency, problematic. Abelard’s problematic claim is that God can only do that which God in fact does.³⁷² Leibniz explains that “it appears that this author was a little too much inclined to speak and think differently from others: for in reality this was only a dispute about words: he was changing the use of terms.”³⁷³ Leibniz does not reject Abelard’s view, but claims that Abelard uses terms differently than Leibniz does. When discussing what God *can* do, we might be discussing the range of options within his power (possible worlds) or what God does, in fact, do given God’s essential and perfectly good will. “Power and will are different faculties, whose objects are also different; it is confusing them to say that God can do only that which he wills...For all possibles are regarded as objects of power, but actual existing things are regarded as the objects of his decretory will.”³⁷⁴ Leibniz identifies, and endorses, Abelard’s view, which very closely resembles Leibniz’s own modal variantism: “It may indeed be said that this man can be saved in respect of the possibility of human nature, which is capable of salvation: but it may not be said that God can save him *in respect of God himself, because it is impossible that God should do that which he must not do.*”³⁷⁵

Leibniz offers a similar diagnosis of Wycliffe’s position, noting that “men of talent do wrong to truth and to themselves when, without reason, they bring into use new and displeasing expressions.”³⁷⁶ Leibniz, as a cautious metaphysician, aims to present his views with pleasing expressions. According to Wycliffe’s problematic

³⁷² H §171, 233.

³⁷³ H §171, 233.

³⁷⁴ H §171 233.

³⁷⁵ H §171, 234; emphasis added.

³⁷⁶ H §172, 234.

phrasing, which Hobbes also fell prey to according to Leibniz, non-actual worlds are *impossible*. Here Leibniz notes that some things remain possible, even though their requisites (or reasons) never come about.³⁷⁷ Leibniz does not reject the views of Abelard and Wycliffe, but notes that some of their claims are misleading. Non-actual worlds are impossible and God can only do what he does relative to God's perfectly good will. If we restrict the considerations of sufficient reasons to exclude God's good will, we can offer accounts of quasi-contingency and affirm that there are non-actual possible worlds. Leibniz's amendments to their views are thus not tantamount to rejection necessitarianism_{ATC}.

Leibniz then turns his attention to Spinoza. Unlike his treatment of Abelard, Wycliffe, and Hobbes, Leibniz outright rejects a tenet of Spinoza's view. Leibniz explains that he rejects *Blind Necessitarianism*. According to blind necessitarianism all truths are necessitated by God's nature, but not by choice: "Spinoza went further: he appears to have explicitly taught a blind necessity...he acknowledges no goodness in God, properly speaking, and he teaches that all things exist through the necessity of the divine nature, without any act of choice by God."³⁷⁸ Leibniz explains that he rejects this view because he believes that there are "possible...things that imply no contradiction."³⁷⁹ I read these passages by interpreting "implies a contradiction" as limiting itself to more or less restricted subsets of reasons all things considered.

³⁷⁷ Leibniz's discussion here is a bit misleading, for he says that we can say that "their requisite conditions can exist although they do not exist". Here he must mean the essential features of the world, or world concept is coherent, for he cannot mean that God could fail to be good (and thus bring a world into existence that is less than the best).

³⁷⁸ H §173, 234.

³⁷⁹ H §173, 234. Here I read 'implies no contradiction' as implies no internal contradiction, but would if we were to consider all things.

Leibniz's rejection of Blind Necessitarianism ensures that God is supplied with a will and understanding such that God's creative activity can be an intentional outcome of choice and willing according to what is best. Leibniz thus criticizes the absence of final causes in Spinoza's explanation of God's creation of the world.

The rejection of Blind Necessitarianism does not require the rejection of necessitarianism_{ATC} because Leibniz's account of worlds as possible in themselves is sufficient to represent God's choice in creating the world. Leibniz does not object to the view that all things considered the world necessarily exists, but instead objects to the idea that it is not necessitated by God's goodness in combination with the natures of created substance.

10 Conclusion

At the opening of this Chapter I introduced four aspects in which Leibniz's views in the *Theodicy* seem anti-necessitarian: his view that reasons incline but do not necessitate, the inclusion of contingency as a requisite for freedom, the emphasis on contingency in terms of moral necessity and God's freedom, and Leibniz's criticisms of the necessitarian views of Hobbes, Wycliffe, Spinoza and Abelard. I argued that each of these features are consistent with Leibniz being a necessitarian all things considered, because the relevant notions of contingency can be spelled out in terms of quasi-modality extended from the views in Chapter 2. All absolutely necessary truths are necessary_{ATC} but not all truths necessary_{ATC} are absolutely necessary. Moreover, although all truths are necessary_{ATC} so that all morally necessary truths are necessary_{ATC}, this further fact holds in virtue of Leibniz's views about God's will and the nature of substances. Emphasizing the importance of God's choice is not a way of injecting contingency into his system, but instead a way

of showing that despite being necessitated by one's nature, freedom is possible. Leibniz is thus trying to show that freedom is compatible with necessitarianism all things considered.

Conclusion

I have argued that we should not interpret Leibniz's suggestions about contingency as reductive analyses that uniformly apply to all contingent propositions. When Leibniz presents his *per se*, infinite analysis, and possible free decrees accounts, he is not offering a general theory of contingency. Because Leibniz is committed to necessitarianism all things considered, no truths are contingently true at a deep level. This gives way to the suggestion that Leibniz offers so many modal theories because he is trying to account for the meaning of "contingency" in different contexts within a necessitarian framework. In his early work, the relevant modal issue is whether God's creation of the world is an act of will guided by choice, which requires an array of possible worlds or outcomes one of which is actualized by God's will. Leibniz also highlights the importance of analyzing the meaning of our modal terms, which vary according to how we conceive of the terms in our propositions. In cases in which we speak of contingency, Leibniz emphasizes the distinction between essential and accidental properties. Although all truths are necessary all things considered, not all propositions are true in virtue of the essentiality of properties, allowing us to distinguish a type of quasi-contingency.

However, between 1676-1686 Leibniz fundamentally revises his notion of individual substance. His complete concept theory of substance renders all features of a substance essential, so that whatever distinction we want to make between necessary and contingent properties, it cannot be explained in terms of essential

features or features the substance has *per se*. This change in his notion of substance also raises questions about the composition of worlds, and how, exactly, the compatibility of substances shapes the landscape of possibility and possible worlds. In treating compossibility and *de re* modality, I have emphasized the importance of laws of nature and their role in constituting the nature of a substance. These laws, understood as God's possible free decrees, form the foundation for what I think is Leibniz's most successful account of *de re* modality, as well as explain how substances are mutually impossible.

The accounts of quasi-contingency that Leibniz develops in his middle period become central to vindicating divine and human freedom in his later work. Central to the notion of "contingency", is the presence of a range of options that are all possible in that they are internally consistent, one of which is selected according to the goals or values of an agent. This account of freedom, developed in conjunction with Leibniz's notion of moral necessity, is perfectly consistent with Leibniz's necessitarianism all things considered. We can arrive at this conclusion by considering Leibniz's account of substances and God in the *Theodicy*. Because the nature of goodness couldn't be otherwise, the structures of worlds couldn't be otherwise, which world is best couldn't be otherwise, and God's good nature couldn't be otherwise, all things considered no truths could be otherwise.

Appendix: List of Key Works

The following is a list, ordered alphabetically, of Leibniz's main works and their estimated dates of authorship. Those texts with disputed or questionable authorship dates are marked "?".

"Comments on Spinoza"	1677
"The Confession of a Philosopher"	1672-73
"Conversation with Steno Concerning Freedom"	1677
"Correspondence with Arnauld"	1686-87
"Correspondence with Clarke"	1715-16
"De Conditionibus"	1665
"Dialogue on Human Freedom and the Origin of Evil"	1695
"Discourse on Metaphysics"	1686
"An Example of Demonstrations About the Nature of Corporeal Things, Drawn from Phenomena"	1671
"General Inquiries about the Analysis of Concepts and Truths"	1686
"Le Cause de Dieu"	1716
"Letter to Burnett"	1710
"Letter to Coste On Human Freedom"	1707
"Letter to Magnus Wedderkopf"	1671
"Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas"	1684
"Metaphysical Definitions and Reflections"	1680
"Middle Knowledge"	1677
"The Monadology"	1714
"Necessary and Contingent Truths"	1686
"New Essays on Human Understanding"	1704
"Notes on Metaphysics"	1676
"On Body, Space, and the Continuum"	1676
"On Contingency"	1686?
"On the Demonstration of Primary Propositions"	1671-2

“On Freedom”	1689?
“On Freedom and Possibility”	1680-82?
“On the Infinite”	1676?
“On Mind, the Universe and God”	1675
“On the Omnipotence of Omniscience of God and Human Freedom”	1670-71
“On Spinoza’s Ethics”	1676?
“On Truths, the Mind, God, and the Universe”	1676
“On What Is Independent of Sense and Matter” (Letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia)	1702
“Primary Truths”	1686?
“The Radical Origination of Things”	1712
“The Source of Contingent Truths”	1685-89
“Specimen Juris”	1669
<i>Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom on Man and the Origin of Evil</i>	1710
“Whatever Can Exist Exists”	1676

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