Moral Necessity

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Leibniz frequently describes free decisions as "morally necessary" but not "metaphysically necessary." This way of speaking is characteristic of Leibniz's *Theodicy*; more generally, it is especially frequent in writings from the last ten years of his life. That is particularly true of the historically pivotal application of the concept to God. Gaston Grua, who knew the texts as well as anyone in the twentieth century has known them, said that to his knowledge, it was only in 1707 that Leibniz began to speak of actions of God as "morally necessary" (Grua 1953: 234–235). In those last years, however, God's choices join those of the virtuous sage as paradigms of the morally necessary for Leibniz; "it must be said that God, that the sage, is carried to the best by a moral necessity" (T 132). But such claims do not stop there; strange as it may seem, the category of moral necessity is extended in some passages to all voluntary choices, even sinful ones.[1]

Leibniz's Jesuit friend Des Bosses got him to agree in correspondence in 1711, the year after the *Theodicy* was published, that he should not say "that there was a moral necessity of sinning in Adam or in anyone else," and that "it is better never to acknowledge a moral necessity except to [do] good."[2] This private concession has limited credibility, however; Leibniz linked it with the comment that he would prefer his words in general to be interpreted in such a way "that nothing bad sounding follows" (G 2:420). And in the last months of his life we find Leibniz speaking to Clarke of "a necessity which is moral, whereby [not only] a wise being chooses the best, [but] every mind follows the strongest inclination" (LC 5.4).

What *metaphysical necessity* is for Leibniz we know pretty well. It is the type of necessity on which most ink has been spilled by his interpreters—an absolute necessity whose mark, for Leibniz, is that the negation of what is metaphysically necessary implies a contradiction. It is harder to say what he means by *moral necessity*, and that is the main subject of this essay. It is one that seems to me to have some intrinsic philosophical interest, whether or not the idea of moral necessity will go as far as we might like it to as interpretation of Leibniz.

Leibniz found the expression 'moral necessity' used extensively in the jurisprudence of his time (as documented in Grua 1953: 222–226). In jurisprudence the expression typically meant *obligation*; it expressed the strongest modality in deontic logic. In previous writing on this subject I have interpreted 'moral necessity' as having that meaning in Leibniz. That was also Samuel Clarke's interpretation; he took a moral necessity of doing good to mean no more than "that a *good* Being, continuing to be *Good*, cannot do *Evil*," and complained, with some plausibility, that a necessity of that sort was not relevant to a dispute about freedom and determinism (G 7:423). Leibniz gives definitions that leave no doubt that he sometimes uses 'moral necessity' in this deontic, jurisprudential sense (A 6.1:465; Grua 608). Michael Murray (1996: 47–48) has argued, however, that Leibniz also uses the expression in another, metaphysically richer way, and in particular that he does so in the *Theodicy*; and I am persuaded that Murray is right about that. In this richer sense, to say that a decision is morally necessary is not merely to say that it *ought* to be made; it is to say something by way of explaining how and why it *is* made.

Murray points out that the terminology of moral necessity had been used in such an explanatory sense by several Catholic theologians, mostly Spanish Jesuits, in the seventeenth century, beginning with Diego Ruiz de Montoya (1562–1632) and Diego Granado (1571–1632), and that Leibniz acknowledged acquaintance with the work of some of them.[3] Ruiz and Granado developed a theory according to which a free choice—for instance, a choice of a perceived good—is neither metaphysically nor physically necessary, but is morally necessary, in view of the agent's inclinations and perceptions of value. That this is an important part of the background to Leibniz's thought about free will is highly plausible. Murray, and Sven Knebel (1991a, 1992), have been bringing to light a current of seventeenth-century, mainly Jesuit, philosophical theology that is very interesting and deserves to be better known than it has been. It was certainly known to Leibniz, and provided precedents for some aspects of his thought, including his "optimism."

Nonetheless, I think we cannot rely very heavily on the Jesuits for the content of our interpretation of Leibniz's views on freedom, for several reasons. (1) My most general reason for this caution is that Leibniz seems to me a remarkably learned writer, but not a very scholarly one. He is generally eager to present himself as agreeing with other writers, but seems to care much less whether he agrees with them in precisely the sense intended by them. (2) He often cites by memory, and his appreciative mention of these Jesuit authors tends to be accompanied by disclaimers of current or extensive knowledge of their writings (G 2:362, 366, 436, 450). (3) There are possible disagreements to be considered between Leibniz and his Jesuit precursors. In particular, we may wonder whether Leibniz agrees with Ruiz and Granado in opposing moral necessity to physical necessity, or only to metaphysical necessity—a point discussed by Murray to which I shall soon return. (4) There are also significant differences in the development of the idea of moral necessity by different seventeenth-century theologians, as Knebel and Murray make clear, so that even if we suppose Leibniz to be agreeing with views of theirs, there will remain a question as to which version of the views he has adopted. For these reasons, and because I think I see how to do it in a way that may be interesting,

I will try simply to fit to the texts of Leibniz some speculations about moral necessity.

Moral and Physical Necessity

It is certainly not only to metaphysical necessity that moral necessity is opposed in Leibniz's thought. The competition here is among answers to questions of the form "Why is it certain, or determined, that p?" The "machinery," so to speak, of determination and explanation invoked by the competing conceptions is quite different: formal or logical implication and contradiction in the case of metaphysical necessity; "final causes," as Leibniz calls them, in the case of moral necessity. But these are not the only relevant alternatives; moral necessity is opposed to any value-free mechanism determining choice.

One passage in which Leibniz appears to oppose moral necessity to physical necessity, or at any rate to physical causation, is particularly illuminating. Arguing against Thomas Hobbes, Leibniz writes:

> M. Hobbes is no more willing to admit talk of a moral necessity, because in effect everything happens by physical causes. But there is reason, nonetheless, to make a big distinction between the necessity that obliges the wise to do good, which is called moral, and which has a place even in relation to God, and that blind necessity by which Epicurus, Strato, Spinoza, and perhaps M. Hobbes have believed that things exist without intelligence and without choice, and consequently without God, who in effect would not be needed according to them, since according to that necessity everything would exist by its own essence, as necessarily as two plus three must make five. And that necessity is absolute, because everything it carries with it must happen, whatever one does; whereas what happens by a hypothetical necessity happens in consequence of the supposition that this or that has been foreseen or resolved, or done in advance; and moral necessity carries an obligation of reason, which always has its effect in the wise. This species of necessity is happy and desirable, when one is carried by good reasons to act as one does; but necessity blind and absolute would overturn piety and morality. (T h3)

Moral necessity is opposed in this passage both to "physical causes" and to an "absolute necessity" of which mathematical necessity is an example, though Leibniz is not at pains here to distinguish these alternatives to moral necessity. What is most important to Leibniz, I believe, about the types of necessity opposed here is that they are all *blind* necessity, necessity that operates "without intelligence and without choice." Moral necessity is not blind; in its operation "one is carried by good reasons to act as one does."

Another important mention of "blind necessity" in the *Theodicy* comes in a discussion of Spinoza, who, according to Leibniz, "appears to have explicitly taught a blind necessity, having denied to the author of things understanding and will, and imagining that good and perfection relate only to us and not to him" (T 173). Particularly significant in this comment is the clear indication that "good and perfection" will play an essential part in any pattern of determination and explanation that avoids blind necessity. Value has explanatory force in the Leibnizian

scheme of things. The best of all possible worlds is chosen and actualized because it is the best, and Leibniz even implies that God exists because God is the most perfect possible being (see Adams 1994: 164–76).

This is connected, I believe, with the idea of final causes, whose soundness and importance Leibniz fervently and persistently advocated. In final causation, as conceived by Leibniz, something is done, or occurs, because of the value, or apparent value, of an end that is an object of choice or appetition.[4] Final causes are presented by Leibniz, in a central metaphysical context, as opposed to causes that we might call physical. It will be important to remember that our sense of 'physical' is narrower than its usual sense in Leibniz's lifetime. Our sense may be close to what Leibniz meant in speaking about "physical causes" in the passage about Hobbes that I quoted; but he usually speaks of "bodies" where we might speak of the "physical," and it is efficient causes and the realm of bodies that are opposed to final causes in a particularly interesting section of his final letter to Clarke:

> All the natural forces of bodies are subject to mechanical laws, and all the natural forces of minds are subject to moral laws. The former follow the order of efficient causes, and the latter follow the order of final causes. The former operate without liberty, like a watch; the latter are exercised with liberty. . . . (LC 5.124)[5]

Though moral necessity is not mentioned in this section, this is the same letter in which Leibniz says it is by moral necessity that "every mind follows the strongest inclination" (LC 5.4). We may surely infer that "moral laws" and "the order of final causes" are the way in which Leibniz thinks moral necessity works.

The contrast between efficient and final causes is one of Leibniz's ways of characterizing one of the most fundamental distinctions in his system, that between monads and bodies. In section 79 of the *Monadology* he says:

> Souls act according to the laws of final causes by appetitions, ends, and means. Bodies act according to the laws of efficient causes or of motions. And the two realms, that of efficient causes and that of final causes, are harmonious with each other.

In this text "the laws of efficient causes or of motions" are surely the laws of Leibniz's mechanistic physics. And while only "souls" are mentioned here on the other side, Leibniz's system of preestablished harmony surely requires that all monads or simple substances be included in the "realm of final causes"—the more so inasmuch as the internal causal structure of all monads is supposed to work by "appetitions," which we must certainly understand teleologically. I do not know of a text in which Leibniz explicitly applies the concept of moral necessity or moral laws to the actions of subrational monads; perhaps he would not and should not. But the difference between moral necessity and whatever necessity determines the operations of humbler monads can hardly be one of the most fundamental differences in his system; for the appetitions of the humblest monads are conceived by analogy with conscious human purposiveness, and even in our own case "an infinity" of factors of which we are not conscious is apt to be involved in the final cause of our actions (Mon 36).

The idea on which I think it may be most interesting to focus in trying to understand what Leibniz says about moral necessity and final causation is this: that

the value or apparent value of an end, or some analogue of apparent value, is sufficient of itself to determine the action of a substance. God chooses the best just because it is the best, other minds choose the apparent best just because it is the apparent best, and even the humblest monad does something analogous. In relation to minds, it would be claimed that the "moral laws" are strong enough to determine choice infallibly in advance. Sure as the moral laws are to be followed, however, there would be no logical incoherence in a mind's failing to follow them; the choice is in that sense not metaphysically necessary. And there is no value-free mechanism that makes the mind obey the moral laws; the choice is in that sense not physically necessary. The boldest form of this thesis would be one in which it is denied that facts of value can be reduced to anything metaphysically more fundamental, but I will not venture here into the complex topic of Leibniz's views about the metaphysical structure of facts of value.

An account in which the value or apparent value of an end is "sufficient of itself" to determine the action of a substance is one in which there is no further mechanism to explain how final causation works.[6] In any system or pattern of explanation it seems there will be a bottom layer, at which, at least in practice, explanation comes to an end. In typically modern patterns of efficient causal explanation, the most general laws of nature are allowed to be part of such a bottom layer. I take Leibniz to have supposed that 'because it seemed to *s* to be the best thing to do' can function in that way as part of a bottom layer of explanation and causation—a rock bottom "mechanism" of final causation, so to speak. I don't think he thought there must be a further *how* here, a *how* simple substances choose what seems to them best.[7]

It will hardly escape notice that the interpretation I have just sketched would make Leibniz in one way a precursor of Kant's theory of freedom. On Kant's view, freedom is a sort of causality, and as such requires a law. Its law is the moral law. To be free is to able to do something just because the moral law requires it. Kant's view is less deterministic than Leibniz's, however: Kant does not think the moral law determines choice infallibly; we can and do violate it. Kant may seem less optimistic than Leibniz at this point, and in some sense he is certainly a less optimistic philosopher; but we must bear in mind that the "moral laws" we all follow infallibly according to Leibniz are much less ideal than the Kantian moral law, as they are tailored to our very imperfect apprehension of the good.

It is time to focus on the deterministic aspect of Leibniz's thought. In denying that free actions are necessitated, he generally goes out of his way to say that it does not follow that they are not determined. Indeed, as I have indicated, I think the concept of moral necessity is supposed to play a part in explaining how free actions are determined. I have suggested that they are supposed to be determined by the value or apparent value, or something analogous to the apparent value, of an end; and presumably the real value of an end plays at least a part in determining its apparent value. But values can hardly work alone in determining an action. If values can determine the action of a substance, that is because the substance is sensitive to value, has the capacity to perceive and appreciate value to some degree, and the capacity to pursue an end because of its perceived value, or an analogue thereof—the capacity for value-oriented appetition.[8] These capacities will be part

of the nature of the substance. Thus it seems that the action of the substance—even the free action of a mind—will be determined jointly by its nature and the values of the ends for which it could have appetition.

At this point in the argument we have returned to the relation between moral and physical necessity. Only here it seems not to be a relation of opposition. Rather, moral necessity seems likely to be subsumed under physical necessity. To see why that is so, we must remember that in Leibniz's time, 'physical' does not just mean 'corporeal.' 'Physical' comes from the Greek *φύσις* which means *nature*, and physical necessity is generally necessity flowing from the natures of things.[9] But then, if it is determined by the natures of minds, even without metaphysical necessity, that they always choose the apparent best, is that not physically necessary, in a broad sense?

That the actions of substances are predetermined by their natures—that is, by their primitive forces—is unquestionably a thesis of Leibniz's philosophy; the preestablished harmony depends on it. There is still the question whether that predetermination allows of an interesting opposition between moral necessity and other sorts of necessity. We have already seen how moral necessity is supposed to be opposed to "blind" necessity, and that seems to me relatively unproblematic. The opposition between moral and metaphysical necessity seems to require Leibniz to deny that free actions follow logically, by the principle of noncontradiction, from the natures of substances. That may be more problematic for him; I'll come back to that in the third section herein. The question before us at the moment is whether there is yet another sort of necessity, to be called "physical" necessity, by which free actions do not follow from the natures of substances.

Michael Murray suggests that "Leibniz did not think physical or causal necessity compatible with freedom."[10] I am uneasy about the use of the term 'causal necessity' here. I have not noticed Leibniz using it (though I could of course have overlooked it), and it is not obvious with what we should identify causal necessity in a Leibnizian context. More than one candidate is available. Leibniz's explanation of morally necessary free actions is explicitly in terms of causes—final causes. That explanation is opposed to an explanation in terms of "efficient causes"; but what is meant by the latter seems to be quite specifically and narrowly a mechanical explanation. Leibniz certainly does not mean to deny, but rather to affirm, that free actions are caused—or at any rate, done—by agents, substances. And he holds that they are predetermined by prior states of those substances, as required by the preestablished harmony. It is not surprising, then, that in an earlier essay Leibniz spoke of efficient causes in a broader sense, contending that "even final causes can be referred to efficient causes, that is, when the agent is intelligent, for then it is moved by thought" (Grua 28).

Even in his fifth letter to Clarke, Leibniz describes the operation of moral necessity in terms that I think most of us would call strongly causal:

> It is true that Reasons in the mind of a Wise being, and Motives in any mind whatsoever, do that which answers to the effect produced by weights in a balance. The author [Clarke] objects that this notion leads to necessity and fatality. (LC 5.3)

It is in the course of distinguishing types of necessity in response to this objection that Leibniz makes the statement I have quoted already that by moral necessity "a wise being chooses the best, and every mind follows the strongest inclination" (LC 5.4). This is not an isolated instance; Leibniz liked mechanical analogies for the will (RB 193; T 22; G 7:304/L 488). Volition is like mechanical causation in that the effect is determined with certainty, and by prior facts; they are unlike, of course, in that volition does not have a value-free mechanism. They are unlike further, as Leibniz claims a bit later in the letter, in that the choosing mind is active in a way that a balance is not. "Properly speaking, motives do not act upon the mind, as weights do upon a balance; but 'tis rather the mind that acts by virtue of the motives, which are its[11] dispositions to act" (LC 5.15). But the fact that the action of the motives is the mind's own action does not show that the motives determine less surely than the weights in a balance; on the contrary, it shows that "if the mind should prefer a weak inclination to a strong one, it would act against itself, and otherwise than it is disposed to act" (LC 5.15).

If in one passage that we have seen Leibniz opposes "physical causes" to "moral necessity," elsewhere he brings them into positive connection, and even subsumes physical necessity under moral necessity. At the outset of the *Theodicy* he tells us that "physical necessity is founded on moral necessity, that is on the choice of the wise, worthy of his wisdom; and that the one as well as the other must be distinguished from geometrical necessity" (T pd2). The reason for this dependence is that the laws of nature, seen here as the source of physical necessity, depend on God's free choice,[12] which is produced by moral necessity but not by metaphysical necessity, which is here called "geometrical." And undoubtedly God's choice of the best is the single most important and most foundational case of final causation in the Leibnizian scheme of things.

Leibniz's system also offers us, however, another and less theological reason for thinking that final causation and moral necessity are fundamental to all natural causation. As I have noted earlier, the Leibnizian simple substances, the monads, act by appetition, by a sort of final causality, and by moral necessity or an analogue thereof. But it is the simple substances, and they alone, that are the ultimately real agents in the Leibnizian universe. The bodies, the "realm of efficient causes," are only "well-founded phenomena." Their motions, governed by mechanical laws of efficient causation, exist only as harmonious appearances to monads. The ultimately real events that "found" such reality as the motions possess are changes in monads and are governed by moral or quasi-moral laws of final causation. It is only the processes of final causation that are metaphysically fundamental and that determine what motions shall appear to occur in accordance with the laws of mechanical or efficient causation. That the processes of final causation dictate an appearance of motion in accordance with mechanical laws is due, I take it, to the great beauty and value of mechanical order.

From these considerations I believe we must conclude that the Leibnizian system does not include a metaphysically fundamental type of causal necessity that can be opposed to moral necessity. Still it is true that Leibnizian moral necessity operates in a very different way from what most philosophers today would think of

as causal necessity. It operates by final causes, and excludes determination by any value-free mechanism.

Other questions can be raised about the relation of moral necessity to laws of nature. I believe the Leibnizian system will allow us to ascribe to free decisions at least the following independence from laws of nature: no free action can be predicted, precisely and with certainty, from law-like generalizations and other facts, by any calculation that can be performed by finite minds (see DM 7 and 17; C 21–22/MP 102). Of course, that same sort of independence can be ascribed to some motions of bodies. In particular, and most obviously on Leibnizian assumptions, it can be ascribed to those motions that are the corporeal, phenomenal counterpart of free decisions. These factors seem to me to distinguish Leibnizian moral necessity less fundamentally than the value-laden teleological character of its operation.

Moral and Metaphysical Necessity

I want now to take a closer look at the relation between moral necessity and metaphysical necessity. As we have seen, Leibniz says that free decisions are morally but not metaphysically necessary. I have argued (Adams 1994: chap. 1) that Leibniz has two main accounts of how any truths can be metaphysically contingent, given certain constraints operative in his system that might be thought to force him to regard all truths as necessary. I believe that Leibniz's conception of moral necessity presupposes both of these accounts, and thus is not an alternative to them, but at most a supplement to them—though we may consider interpreting it in a way that puts it in tension with some of his views about the basis of metaphysical necessity.

In one of Leibniz's theories of metaphysical contingency, facts are allowed to be contingent if they have alternatives that are possible in their own nature, completely free of internal contradiction or incoherence, whether or not a being possessing the perfect nature that God possesses could coherently choose to actualize them. It is this theory of contingency that appears to be invoked in Leibniz's explication of moral necessity in his fifth letter to Clarke, when he says that choice of the good is not absolutely necessary.

> For when God (for instance) chooses the best, what he does not choose, and is inferior in perfection, is nevertheless possible. . . . For God chooses among possibles, that is, among several alternatives, none of which implies a contradiction. (LC 5.8)

In this account of free choice, the centerpiece of the argument that "good, either true or apparent . . . inclines without necessitating" (LC 5.8) is an appeal to the internal coherence of alternatives for choice, rather than a claim about the nature of the chooser.

Here I shall set this line of argument aside, however, in order to focus on Leibniz's other main theory of contingency, the one that starts with his thesis that in every true affirmative proposition the concept of the predicate is contained in some way in that of the subject, and proceeds to distinguish necessary truths, as

those that can therefore be reduced to identities in a finite series of steps of analysis, from contingent truths, whose analysis will yield no such result though it be continued to infinity. We should not expect Leibniz to exempt facts of free choice from his conceptual containment thesis about truth, since he regularly says that it applies to contingent as well as necessary truths (see Adams 1994: 42–43). We should ask rather how predicates of free choice are included in the complete concepts of choosers, and whether there is a manner of such containment that is consonant with moral necessity.

It may be helpful in this inquiry to consider first the question how existence is contained in the concepts of those creatures that actually exist. The answers Leibniz proposes to this question[13] do not treat existence as a fundamental or primitive constituent of the definitive concepts of finite things. The only being that exists by its own nature alone is God. The existence of other things that actually exist does not follow from their own concepts alone but only in conjunction with considerations about God. The existence of an actually existing creature, we may say, is contained in its individual concept, not directly and immediately, even in an infinite analysis, but only in the sense that the concept contains reasons that are sufficient (together with facts about God) to determine and explain the existence of the creature. And the most significant fact about these reasons, from the point of view of a theory of moral necessity, is that Leibniz clearly assumes that the reasons for existence to be found in the concepts of creatures will turn on the value of the creatures or, more precisely, on the comparative values of the possible worlds of which they are parts. They are reasons for the existence of the creatures because they are reasons for God to choose those creatures. And God's choice is guided, with moral necessity, by the values of the alternative possible worlds; God chooses the best.

In this pivotal example we see a way in which the conceptual containment thesis and the concept of moral necessity seem to mesh very well. The conceptual containment thesis admits more than one pattern of determination and explanation of predicates by the concept of the subject. One such pattern, as we have just seen, involves the same sort of value-laden teleological structure that is involved in moral necessitation. If the existence of a finite substance can follow from its concept in this way, so, surely, can the choices a substance makes follow from a concept that has among its constituents, in the first instance, not the choices themselves, but value-laden reasons from which the choices follow by moral necessity.

And this necessity, we may add, will not be a metaphysical necessity because no finite analysis would suffice to derive the choices from the reasons that are primitive constituents of the concept. With this fusion of moral necessity and the infinite analysis conception of metaphysical contingency, a Leibnizian theory of moral necessity could reach its conclusion. And so perhaps it should; but I'd like to play a bit with the thought of another step in this direction, a further mitigation of Leibniz's determinism, though I doubt that it can work for him.

The further step would be a strengthening of the claim that when an agent chooses freely, there would be no formal or logical incoherence in the agent's choosing otherwise. If Leibniz relies only on the infinite analysis theory to shield free choice from metaphysical necessity, then the claim just mentioned means

only that there would be no finitely provable incoherence in the agent's doing otherwise. One might want more than that, for there may also be broadly formal incoherence that is not finitely provable.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Goldbach's conjecture is true but not provable. Every even number is the sum of two primes, but there is no proof of that mathematical fact. Then the hypothesis of a number that is even but not the sum of two primes is arithmetically incoherent in a way, though it is not provably incoherent. There are clearly points in Leibniz's philosophy at which he demands a broadly formal coherence that is more than freedom from provable incoherence. Possible worlds, for example, must have the more extensive, broadly formal, but not merely proof-theoretical coherence. If there is, for example, no possible world that is as good as the actual world without the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, that is surely not because there is a finitely provable dependence of great goods on those evils.

Let us ask, then, whether a free agent's choosing otherwise must be free, not only from finitely provable incoherence, but from any sort of broadly formal incoherence. It seems that an affirmative answer to this question would yield a less deterministic version of Leibniz's philosophy. For if the agent's choosing otherwise would be formally incoherent, though not provably so, that would seem intuitively to be a metaphysically strong sort of necessitation, even if Leibniz chooses not to classify it as "metaphysical necessity." But if choosing otherwise would be formally coherent in every way, then any "moral necessity" that lies behind the choice would seem to have much less metaphysical bite.

But in that case, how can the particular choice that is made be determined and perfectly certain in advance? Thoroughgoing indeterminists would be happy to say that it is not determined with certainty in advance, but Leibniz is certainly not indeterminist enough to accept that conclusion. Can he appeal at this point to the Principle of Sufficient Reason? It is determined and certain in advance that the agent will choose the apparent best, because the apparent bestness of the choice is a sufficient reason for it, and there is no sufficient reason for any alternative choice.

On this view the Principle of Sufficient Reason would indeed be "the principle of contingent truths." It would have to be strongly independent of the Principle of Noncontradiction; otherwise there would be at least a broadly formal incoherence, after all, in something happening without a sufficient reason. Indeed it seems that in order to play this role, the Principle of Sufficient Reason itself would have to be metaphysically contingent in the strong sense that its falsity would not involve even a broadly formal incoherence.

But then how could the Principle of Sufficient Reason be strong enough to ground the determination of our choices, with certainty, in advance? There is in some sense supposed to be no real chance in the Leibnizian universe that any rational agent will choose other than the apparent best. What could be the status of a principle that keeps that from being a real chance? It must be synthetic, on this hypothesis, in the sense that, as I have said, its falsity would not involve even a broadly formal incoherence. And of course, nothing that is not analytic—indeed, finitely analytic—will count as "metaphysically necessary" for Leibniz. Some philosophers, however, have thought there are synthetic necessary truths—necessary,

obviously, not in Leibniz's sense, but in some other way that seems metaphysical enough and is often called "metaphysical." Could the Principle of Sufficient Reason have for Leibniz something like the status that other philosophers have conceived as synthetic necessary truth? Leibniz will not call that status "metaphysical necessity," but is that more than a verbal point?

This suggestion faces objections on two fronts. On the one hand, we may doubt that it does much to mitigate Leibniz's determinism. If an agent's doing otherwise would violate a principle that is something like a synthetic necessary truth, a principle that God knows will never be violated, does that leave us able to say that the agent "could have done otherwise" in a sense much stronger than that in which we could say it if doing otherwise would violate a principle that is broadly analytic though not finitely provable? That is a difficult question.

The opposite objection regards only the interpretation of Leibniz. It is not easy to determine what Leibniz believed about the necessity or contingency of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, and its relation to the Principle of Noncontradiction.[14] It is clear, however, that in some of his logical writings he committed himself to the view that all truths are at least broadly analytic—that all facts are determined, at bottom, by purely formal considerations. This is, I think, an implausible view—so implausible that Leibniz, like virtually every other philosopher, says a number of things not easily reconcilable with it; and many of his ideas, fortunately, are detachable from it. Nonetheless, it appears to be a view that he held and thought important; it seems to be presupposed in his infinite analysis theory of contingency. And it obviously implies that the Principle of Sufficient Reason, and all facts about free choice, are broadly analytic, and their negations incoherent, even if not provably so.

Similar things can be said about the other line along which Leibniz might try to explain the infallible predetermination of free choices without appeal to even broadly analytic truth—namely, in terms of the nature of the choosing agent. In an early essay he wrote that "even moral causes are natural, for they are taken from the nature of the mind" (Grua 28).[15] Early and late he writes that "God wills the best by his own nature" and that "it follows from the nature of God that he prefers the most perfect."[16] And I have already argued that if values determine choices, in a Leibnizian context, the nature of the chooser must participate in the determination. Certainly Leibniz thought that particular free choices do not follow from a mind's nature by a finite formal demonstration, and are thus not metaphysically necessitated in his strict (and arguably artificial) sense. May he also have supposed that the connection between the mind's nature and its choices is not even broadly analytic?—that the hypothesis of a mind with the same nature choosing otherwise would not be attended with even the sort of incoherence that may be thought to attend a mathematical hypothesis that is false but not provably false? And may he at the same time have supposed that the connection between the mind's nature and its free choices is nonetheless strong enough for the nature to determine the choices with certainty in advance?

This thought faces a pair of objections similar to those that attended the alternative account in terms of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. On the one hand, if the nature of a mind infallibly determines its choices, that seems to imply a strong

determinism, hardly weaker than what is normally thought of as causal determinism or causal necessitation of the choices (though not, of course, determination by a value-free mechanism). We may wonder how much this mitigates Leibniz's determinism. It is not clear to me whether it would be more mitigating than determination by a Principle of Sufficient Reason that would have something like the status of a synthetic necessary truth.

The opposite objection attacks the claimed nonanalyticity of the connection between the mind and its choices. Even outside the Leibnizian context, when it is said that some fact follows from the nature of a thing, it is often assumed that the connection is at least broadly analytic—perhaps because of the relation between the concepts of nature and definition in the philosophical tradition. For Leibniz, of course, to the extent that he is committed to a theory that grounds all truth on formal syntactical relationships, the following of particular choices from the natures of the agents must be at least broadly analytic, as all truths must be. And his statement, which I have quoted, from his fifth letter to Clarke, that "if the mind should prefer a weak inclination to a strong one, it would act against itself, and otherwise than it is disposed to act" (LC 5.15), seems to suggest pretty specifically that there would be something incoherent in a mind's acting otherwise than according to its strongest preexisting inclination.

I conclude that while things Leibniz says about moral necessity fit into very interesting views about how free choices are determined and explained, they are unlikely to lead us to a much softer reading of his determinism.

Notes

This essay was presented to the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association in April 2000, and to the philosophy department of Purdue University in September 2000; I first developed some of the main ideas in a seminar on Leibniz at Yale University. I am indebted to many for helpful discussion—in particular to Jan Cover, Martin Curd, Patricia Curd, Sukjae Lee, and especially to Michael Murray, who presented extensive written comments on the paper at the APA.

1. Most explicitly in T a3; apparently also in T 282. Both passages are explicitly targets of Des Bosses's objection (G 2:421).

2. G 2:418–420; see also G 2:421–424. The concession is noted in Grua 1953: 237.

3. Murray 1995: 106–107; see Murray 1996: 37–43.

4. In Leibniz's conception of final causation, unlike Aristotle's, the valued end must be an object of perception and appetition to the subject or agent. Arguably, also, the good of the whole universe, as distinct from that of the agent, plays a larger role in Leibnizian than in Aristotelian final causation. I am indebted to discussion with Patricia Curd on these points.

5. See G 7:451/L 472, from 1696.

6. I am indebted to Jan Cover for pressing me on the issue addressed in this paragraph.

7. In Leibniz's system this may apply most cleanly to God's choosing; I am abstracting here from the role that God's "concurrence" may play in explaining the choices of finite substances.

8. Such capacities could of course figure in indeterministic as well as deterministic theories of final causation.

9. When Granado, for instance, says that when "God wills the best, even if it is not necessary physically, but rather absolutely free . . . still it is morally necessary" (quoted in Knebel 1991a: 5, n. 11), he is presumably not making the irrelevant (because platitudinous) exclusion of corporeal necessity from God, but rather allowing that God's choice of the best does not follow necessarily from the divine nature.

10. Murray 1995: 97; see Murray 1995: 95, and Murray 1996: 49.

11. Here I follow Clarke's translation, as reprinted by Alexander, and G 7:392, which reads *ses*, as the sense of the passage seems to demand. The critical edition, Robinet 1957, has *des*. The reading I have chosen implies nothing that is not clearly implied in the passage as a whole.

12. See RB 178–179.

13. See the texts cited in Adams 1994: 43 (including n. 65 on that page).

14. See Parkinson 1965: 62–69.

15. Dated 1683–86 by watermark, according to A.6.4:2323.

16. Grua 289 (probably from the early 1680s) and 393 (from 1698).