Leibniz on the 'Justification' for the Principle of Sufficient Reason (Mainly) in the Correspondence with Clarke.

The aim of this paper is to shed some light on a relatively neglected aspect of Leibniz's philosophy, namely the grounds for his commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR). I approach this by engaging in a close textual analysis of his correspondence with Samuel Clarke. It is well-known that in the correspondence Leibniz appeals to the PSR in connection with his arguments against the Newtonian conception of space and time. But, in addition, not only are there a number of places in which Leibniz discusses the basis for his commitment to the PSR, sections 18-20 and sections 125-20 (the last six sections) of Leibniz's final letter[1] contain an extended discussion of precisely this issue. We should approach with some caution the thought that we are here provided with Leibniz's definitive views on the status of the PSR. However, as we shall see, Leibniz offers a wide range of considerations in a philosophical swansong which was dispatched in August 18, 1716 only three months before Leibniz's death.

I will begin by clarifying how Leibniz characterizes the PSR in the Clarke correspondence. Then I will turn to the sections mentioned above and use them as the basis for organizing other pertinent remarks scattered among Leibniz's five letters into a surprisingly large number of different justifications for the principle, which I will present in turn along with critical commentary. I will finish the paper in a rather speculative way. At the very end of his final letter Leibniz alludes to a justification for the PSR which he tells Clarke is "too abstruse for the present dispute" (LC 5.130/Al 96) and which he does not provide. I will take the liberty of using this as an opportunity to introduce, among other things, a justification that we might take from a reading of one of Leibniz's more abstruse and lesser-known writings, which would help resolve some of the worries that arise in connection with those he does give.

1. Leibniz's characterization of the PSR

Leibniz introduces the Principle of Sufficient Reason to Clarke in the first section of the second of his letters as one of two principles, the other being the Principle of Contradiction (PC). He presents it as follows: "the principle of sufficient reason, viz. that nothing happens without a reason why it should be so, rather than otherwise" (LC 2.1/Al 16). The PSR is characterized again at the beginning of the final discussion in Letter 5, but here the characterization is slightly more complex, with Leibniz talking of "the principle of the want of a sufficient reason; in order to any things existing, in order to any events happening, in order to any truth's taking place" (LC 5.125/Al 95).

At first glance it might appear that we can take the first statement to be a truncated version of the second. However, there is a crucial element in Letter 2 that is missing in Letter 5, namely the explicit assertion that the sufficient reason should account for both the why and why not otherwise. In what follows I am going to take the PSR to be the most generation combination of the two, namely as:

> The principle of the want of a sufficient reason for a thing to exist rather than not exist, for an event to happen rather than not happen, for any truth's taking place rather than not taking place.

[1] In fact, the 'correspondence' comprises a set of extracts from and addenda to letters that were sent to Caroline, Princess of Wales. However, I shall refer to the texts as 'letters'.

Whilst not explicitly labelled the Principle of Sufficient Reason, this version of the PSR can be found in *Confessio Philosophi* which dates all the way back to 1672-73:

> [N]othing ever exists unless it is possible (at least for one who is omniscient) to assign a sufficient reason why it exists rather than not, and why it is thus and not otherwise. (A VI iii, 118/CP 33)

Furthermore, this characterization is endorsed by Clarke in his 3rd Letter, where he says "Undoubtedly nothing is, without a sufficient reason why it is thus, rather than not; and why it is thus rather than otherwise" (LC 3.2/Al 30). And it coincides closely with what we find in another of Leibniz's relatively late writings, the *Monadology*, in section 32 of which the PSR is said to be:

> [the principle] by virtue of which we consider that we can find no true or existent fact, no true assertion, without there being a sufficient reason why it is thus and not otherwise, although most of the time these reasons cannot be known to us. (GP VI, 612/AG 217)

One thing that is brought out by these characterizations is not always apparent when Leibniz's presents the PSR, namely the fact that it concerns reasons that are supposed to pertain to what is not as well as what is; there is a "rather than". For example, it does not occur in a passage from *Demonstrations of Primary Propositions* of 1671-72(?) (A VI.ii, 483), which has often been presented as crucial locus for our understanding of Leibniz's commitment to the PSR and to which we will return later.

An important feature of the way that the PSR is invoked in the Clarke correspondence is that there is only one occasion on which Leibniz offers an example of a sufficient reason, namely in Letter 5 section 9. Here he observes that "the principle of what is best", i.e., the proposition that God acts on the basis of his choice of the best is "the sufficient reason for the existence of things" (LC 5.9/Al 57). It is unclear just what to make of this, but it suggests that neither the efficient causes cited in any actual natural philosophical explanation nor the reasons that might be consciously considered during the deliberation of created rational beings could count as sufficient reasons for Leibniz. Furthermore, given Leibniz's commitment to the limited nature of the cognitive capacities of created beings and the actually infinite structure of created universe, it is hard to see how he could regard things as otherwise.[2] It also seems that Leibniz alludes to this with his parenthetical remark about omniscience in the passage from the *Confessio* above. Thus these very general considerations point to the thought that the PSR is grounded in the fact that the universe results from divine choice, and that it is ineliminably a principle of final causation, albeit one that governs the efficient cause of the universe as well.

Finally, it is worth noting that the passage from the *Monadology* reminds us that Leibniz sometimes wishes to extend the notion of a sufficient reason to include *all* truths, including those which are necessary and whose truth is governed explicitly by what he calls the *Principle of Contradiction* (PC). The relation between these two principles is a complex one, but I will bracket these considerations in the context of the current essay. For when Leibniz is concerned with the justification of the PSR in the correspondence with Clarke, it is solely in connection with

[2] At LC 5.66, Leibniz observes that unlike God, "Men, being such limited creatures, as they are, may act in this manner. They may resolve upon a thing and then find themselves perplexed about the means, ways, places, and circumstances," (Al 78). However, he stops short of saying that this will always be the case.

contingent truths concerning the created world and the divine activity by which their truth makers were produced.[3]

2. Leibniz's swansong

Whilst the PSR is invoked in all of Leibniz's letters to Clarke, the issue of Leibniz's grounds for invoking it does not arise until late in the correspondence. Clarke begins his 4th letter by criticizing Leibniz's insistence that the will of God must be determined by a reason. In addition to claiming that such a view would lead to necessitarianism, he questions Leibniz's grounds for rejecting the situation in which "there may be a very good reason to act, though two or more ways of acting may be absolutely indifferent" given that he [Leibniz] "supposes the contrary, as a principle; but gives no proof of it, either from the nature of things, or the perfection of God" (CL 4.1-2/Al 45). Leibniz takes this to be an explicit critique of the PSR, and in his response provides what appears to be a 'proof' of each kind, as well as offering a number of additional considerations which speak to the challenge. But he also observes "I shall speak more largely at the conclusion of this paper, concerning the solidity and importance of this great principle" (LC 5.20/Al 60). And, true to his word, he returns to the issue in sections 125-30, confident by the penultimate sentence of his last letter to Clarke, that he has "said what is sufficient to justify [the PSR]" (LC 5.130/Al 96).

I will draw on other parts of the correspondence as I proceed, but for the present I want to focus on what I am calling Leibniz's swansong, namely his comments on why one should adopt the PSR in the 5th letter. Since it will be important to attend to the flow and interconnections of the claims that Leibniz makes, I will begin by quoting the relevant passages in full, along with sections 18-20:

> 18. … ['T]is very strange to charge me with advancing my principle of the want of a sufficient reason, without any proof drawn from the nature of things, or from divine perfections. For the nature of things requires, that every event should have beforehand its conditions, requisites and dispositions, the existence whereof makes the sufficient reason of such an event.
>
> 19. And God's perfection requires, that all his actions should be agreeable to his wisdom; and that it may not be said of him, that he has acted without a reason; or that he preferred a weaker reason before a stronger.
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> 20. I shall speak more largely at the conclusion of this paper, concerning the solidity and importance of this great principle of the want of a sufficient reason in order to every event; the overthrowing of which principle would overthrow the best part of all philosophy. 'Tis therefore very strange that the author should say, I am herein guilty of a *petitio principii*; and it plainly appears he is desirous to maintain indefensible opinions, since he is reduced to deny that great principle which is one of the most essential principles of reasoning (LC 5.18-20/Al 60)
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> 125. I shall conclude with what the author objected against me at the beginning of his Fourth Reply: to which I have already given an answer above (Numb. 18, 19, 20. But I deferred speaking more fully upon that head, to the conclusion of this paper. He pretended that I have been guilty of a *petitio principii*. But, of what principle, I beseech

[3] For a helpful discussion the relationship between PSR and PC, and for Leibniz's views on the PSR in other writings, see Rodriguez-Pereyra (2013)

you? Would to God less clear principles had never been laid down. The principle in question, is the principle of the want of a sufficient reason; in any order to any thing's existing, in order to any events happening, in order to any truth's taking place. Is this a principle, that wants to be proved? The author granted it, or pretended to grant it, Numb. 2 of his Third Paper; possibly, because the denial of it would have appeared too unreasonable. But either he has done it only in words, or he contradicts himself, or retracts his concession.

126. I dare say that, without this great principle, one cannot prove the existence of God, nor account for many other important truths.

127. Has not everybody made use of this principle, upon a thousand occasions? 'Tis true, it has been neglected, out of carelessness on many occasions: but that neglect has been the true cause of chimeras; such as are (for instance,) an absolute real time or space, a vacuum, atoms, attraction in the scholastic sense, a physical influence of the soul over the body, and a thousand other fictions, either derived from erroneous opinions of the ancients, or lately invented by modern philosophers.

128. Was it not upon account of Epicurus's violating this great principle, that the ancients derided his groundless declination of atoms? And I dare say, the scholastic attraction, revived in our days and no less derided about thirty years ago, is not at all more reasonable.

129. I have often defied people to allege an instance against that great principle, to bring any one uncontested example wherein it fails. But they have never done it, nor ever will. 'Tis certain, there is an infinite number of instances, wherein it succeeds [or rather it succeeds][4] in all the known cases in which it has been made use of. From whence one may reasonably judge, that it will succeed also in unknown cases, or in such cases as can only by its means become known: according to the method of experimental philosophy which proceeds *a posteriori*, though the principle were not otherwise justified by bare reason, or *a priori*.

130. To deny this great principle, is likewise to do as Epicurus did; who was reduced to deny that other great principle, viz. the principle of contradiction, which is that every intelligible enunciation must either be either true, or false. Chrysippus undertook to prove that principle against Epicurus; but I think I need not imitate him.[5] I have already said what is sufficient to justify mine: and I might say something more upon it, but perhaps it would be too abstruse for this present dispute. And I believe, reasonable and impartial men will grant me, that having forced an adversary to deny that principle is reducing him *ad absurdum*. (LC 5.125-30/Al 96-97)

Whilst it is hard to pick apart all the strands in these passages, I want to suggest that we can usefully distinguish five distinct approaches which comprise responses to Clarke's demand for a proof of the PSR. They are all worthy of attention, though I will have more to say about Sections 18, 19 and 130 than the others.

[4] The square brackets indicate an interpolation that was added by Leibniz in his own copy subsequent to the dispatch to Caroline.
[5] As Alexander observes, this is reported in Cicero's *De Fato*, X (Al 96 note1).

Before moving on to the things that Leibniz says that look like justifications for the PSR, or at least claims that might the bases for such justifications, it is worth noting the way in which he approaches Clarke's demand in Section 125:

> Is this a principle that wants to be proved? The author granted it or pretended to grant it, Numb. 2 of his Third Paper; possibly, because the denial of it would have appeared too unreasonable. (LC 5.125/Al 96)

Albeit without further elaboration, Leibniz's initial move is to question whether there is really any need to prove the PSR. Elsewhere Leibniz refers to the PSR as an "axiom" (LC 3.7/Al 27). In light of this, one might be tempted to think Leibniz took the PSR to be in need of no support because it was a foundational claim, perhaps even that he regarded it as self-evident.

However, as Leibniz makes clear elsewhere, the status of axiom is not in itself sufficient to confer this kind of foundational status. Whilst Leibniz excludes the need to prove "primary axioms" (NE 75), these are propositions that fall into the class of "identities" (NE 406), i.e., those whose truth is self-evident in virtue of their form rather than their content, or to put it a little anachronistically, analytic truths whose analyticity has been seen explicitly. Leibniz also takes there to be "secondary axioms" and he insists on "the importance of demonstrating all secondary axioms by bringing them back to axioms which are primary" (ibid.). It is surely the case that the PSR falls into the second of these categories. Assuming this this is so, then Leibniz appears committed to the idea that the axiomatic status of the PSR could in some way be rendered perspicuous in terms of some "primary axiom", whose truth was analytic and self-evident as a matter of the form in which it was expressed. But, whether Leibniz conceived of things explicitly in these terms or not, there is nothing in the Clarke correspondence which looks like an attempt to articulate such a "bringing back" as justification.

3. A proof from the nature of things

As we have seen, Clarke's 4th letter includes the accusation that Leibniz has not proved the PSR "either from the nature of things, or the perfection of God" (CL 4.1-2/Al 45). Leibniz responds directly to the first of these in Section 18 of Letter 5.

> For the nature of things requires, that every event should have beforehand its conditions, requisites and dispositions, the existence whereof makes the sufficient reason of such an event. (LC 5.18/Al 60)

A number of commentators have suggested that we should regard this as a version of an argument that occurs much earlier in Leibniz's career, namely the one in the *Demonstrations of Primary Propositions* and the *Confessio Philosophi* mentioned above.[6] As presented in the *Demonstrations,* the argument runs as follows:

> Proposition:
> Nothing is without a reason,
> or whatever is has a sufficient reason.
>
> Definition 1. A sufficient reason is that which is such that if it is posited the thing is

[6] See Sleigh 1983, 203 and CP 151n.23; Adams 1994, 68; Look 2011, 205. Versions of the argument are also found in *On Existence* (AV VI iii, 587/DSR 113); *On Freedom* (Gr 326/AG 94).

Definition 2. A requirement is that which is such that if it is not posited the thing is not.

Demonstration:
Whatever is, has all [its] requirements.
For if one [of them] is not posited the thing is not by def. 2.
If all [its] requirements are posited, the thing is.
For if it is not, it will be kept from being by the lack of something, that is, a requirement.
Therefore all the requirements are a sufficient reason by def. 1.
Therefore whatever is has a sufficient reason.
Q.E.D. (A VI.ii, 483/Adams 1994, 68)

This argument has been roundly criticized on the grounds that it begs the question against those who would deny the PSR. Thus Adams observes: "anyone who denies the Principle of Sufficient Reason will suppose that when all the necessary conditions of a thing's existing are given, there might still be the possibility of its existing and a possibility of its not existing" (1994, 68).[7]

My main interest here, however, is not with the plausibility of the demonstration. Instead (though ultimately, this must surely be a related claim), I want to suggest that we should be wary of assuming that the demonstration of 1671-72(?) is really the same argument as that which Leibniz presents to Clarke in Letter 5. For one thing, as I noted above, the formulation of the PSR in this text differs from that in the Clarke correspondence, in that the PSR contains no reference to a "rather than". So, there is a sense in which a truncated repetition of this argument could not be fully adequate to the task set by Clarke. But other things are, at least *prima facie*, different.

For one thing, in the Clarke correspondence, rather than things 'having all their requirements', it is the "existence" of the "proper conditions, requisites, and dispositions" that are said to "make the sufficient reason" (LC 5.18/Al 60). But perhaps more importantly, embracing Clarke's language, Leibniz claims that "the nature of things requires" that which he equates with the PSR, rather than offering definitions of 'sufficient reason' and 'requirement' (a term which appears to be equivalent to 'requisite' in the correspondence) and concluding that it hold. Indeed, I think the differences become even clearer if we look at the context in which the comments of Section 18 occur.

If we focus on Section 18 alone, it may seem that Leibniz has nothing more in mind, since he prefaces the brief claim that he does make by observing "[ʻT]is very strange to charge me with advancing my principle of the want of a sufficient reason, without any proof drawn from the nature of things, or from divine perfections" (ibid.). However, Sections 14-18, which I shall consider further below, include an extended reiteration of Leibniz's view that rational

[7] However, it is worth noting that Adams seems to equate the term 'requisite' with 'necessary condition' (also see Look 2011, 204). This clearly tracks one common understanding of the term 'necessary', namely as equivalent 'could not have been otherwise'. But as Adams himself has argued, Leibniz's preferred conception of modality, at least by the time of the correspondence with Clarke, is grounded in the logic of discursive cognition, and it is ultimately the formal complexity of the content propositions and their being immune to analysis into identical propositions that comprises their contingency (Adams 1994, 25-34). Indeed, Leibniz is happy to tell Clarke that the series of contingent things is "hypothetically necessary" (LC 5.4/Al 56), and in his elaboration it is clear that this notion render them such that they follow ineluctably from the nature of God, which is itself determinate (LC 5.4-13/Al 56-8). Thus, whilst Leibniz's demonstration may be flawed, we need to recognize that an adequate criticism will need to do more than appeal to intuitive modal claims in order to adequately characterize the problem in ways that Leibniz would have accepted at this point in his life.

agency requires that the activity which emerges is fully determinate, and that this in turn entails that all that is required to bring about this determinate outcome is also in place, i.e., the conditions that serve as a sufficient reason. So, as Leibniz would have it, given, that both Clarke and he agree that the way that the universe is, or "the nature of things" is the result of divine rational agency, it follows that the nature of things has a sufficient reason.

This leaves many questions unanswered, and, as we shall see the answers themselves are certainly not ones that persuade Clarke. However, what appears to be the case is that rather than a reiteration of the argument that Leibniz provided earlier in his career, the "proof from the nature of things" depends upon the "proof from divine perfections". Indeed, they are probably best thought of as the same "proof" under different names. Hence, the discussion of the next section should perhaps be regarded as a continuation of section 3.

4. A proof from divine perfections

Leibniz's second response to Clarke's challenge is as follows:

> And God's perfection requires, that all his actions should be agreeable to his wisdom; and that it may not be said of him, that he has acted without a reason; or that he preferred a weaker reason before a stronger. (LC 5.19/Al 60)

Again, it is hard to see a proof here, with Leibniz doing little more than asserting the connection that Clarke has asked him to demonstrate, namely that the nature of God as a rational agent requires that what he produced be subject to the PSR. However, the response echoes a good deal that has been said in earlier letters and it is possible to gain a better sense of why it is that Leibniz thinks that divine perfection entails the PSR in light of these.

In his 2nd letter, Clarke claims to support Leibniz's endorsement of PSR, but only to add that this is "oft-times no other, than the mere will of God" (CL 2.1/Al 20), on the grounds that to deny that the divine will "could act without a predetermining cause … would tend to take away all the power of choosing and to introduce fatality" (CL 2.1/Al 21). Leibniz's initial response is two-fold: First, he attacks Clarke on the grounds that he is "falling back into the loose indifference" which he claims to have "confuted at large, and showed to be absolutely chimerical, even in creatures, and contrary to the wisdom of God" (LC 3.7/Al 27); and second, he defends his own conception of choice as determined by a sufficient reason as involving a benign kind of "fatality", which he equates with "the wisest order of providence" (LC 3.8/Al 28) as opposed to a "blind fatality or necessity, void of all wisdom and choice, which we ought to avoid" (ibid.).

Clarke's response to these claims is uncompromising and reveals more about his own understanding of the divine activity and the way in which he interprets Leibniz's alternative:

> Where there is any difference in the nature of things, there the consideration of that difference always determines an intelligent and perfectly wise agent. But when two ways of acting are equally and alike good (as in the instances before mentioned;) to affirm in such a case, that God cannot act at all, or that 'tis no perfection in him to be able to act, because he can have no external reason to move him to act one way or another seems to be a denying God to have in himself any original principle or power of beginning to act, but that he must needs (as it were mechanically) be always determined by things extrinsic (CL 3.7 and 8/Al 32-33)

Clarke agrees with Leibniz that where the objects of choice differ, God (*qua* perfectly intelligent wise agent) will be determined in his choice by his "consideration of that difference". But this still allows for cases in which consideration reveals equally good options, and hence no difference that could provide a basis for choice. And, to Clarke's mind, Leibniz's claim that God could not act in such a situation is: 1) to deny that God has an internal power to initiate change; and 2) to insist that God is always determined to act by extrinsic causes.

The significance of these claims was clearly not lost on Leibniz, given that his 4th letter begins with a somewhat terse response:

> 1 In things absolutely indifferent, there is no [foundation for][8] choice; and consequently no election, nor will; since choice must be founded on some reason, or principle.
>
> 2. A mere will without any motive is a fiction, not only contrary to God's perfection, but also chimerical and contradictory; inconsistent with the definition of the will (LC 4.2/Al 36)

And he returns to the issues in Section 18 of Letter 4, observing that "A will without reason would be the chance of the Epicureans. A God, who should act by such a will, would be a God only in name" (LC 4.18/Al 39), adding in Sections 19 and 20:

> 19. When two things which cannot both be together, are equally good; and neither in themselves, nor by their combination with other things, has one any advantage over the other; God will produce neither of them.
>
> 20. God is never determined by external things, but always by what is in himself; that is by his knowledge of things, before any thing exists without himself. (LC 4.19-20/Al 39)

We can see how radical the difference is between Leibniz's and Clarke's conceptions of divine activity are in these passages. But, nonetheless it is clear that both men believe that the activity of God as they conceive it, is wise and in accordance with the PSR.

One crucial difference that feeds into Clarke's 4th letter and Leibniz's 5th letter is Clarke's apparent willingness to embrace the idea that God's activity may in some situations be determined by things external to the divine nature – namely in those situations where alternative courses fail to be "equally and alike good" (CL 3.7 and 8/Al 32) and their natures, as conceived correctly by God, determine the way God acts. This is then contrasted with situations in which God's activity is not so determined, due to indiscernibility (such as deciding where to locate matter in infinite homogeneous space), and here Clarke insists that rational activity proceeds via spontaneous internal act of divine will.

Leibniz objects to this view for two reasons. One is the very familiar idea that God will refrain from acting where there is no better option; but the other is less prominent in his writings. For Leibniz finds himself needing to make the point that God is "never determined by external things" (LC 4.20/Al 39). In his 4th letter Clarke returns to the charge that Leibniz's conception of divine action "leads to a universal necessity and fate" (CL 4.1 and 2/Al 45), but he also draws on an analogy that Leibniz himself had introduced in the first section of his 2nd letter (LC 2.1/Al 16). Clarke suggests that Leibniz is assimilating the way in which motives are related

[8] The bracketed material was added by Clarke.

to the will to the way in which weights act on a balance, with the stronger motive determining the agent as a heavier weight would, and cases in which the motives are "equally alike and good" leaving the agent unmoved like a balance in equilibrium. Clarke insists that the analogy is inappropriate.

> A balance is no agent, but is merely passive and acted upon by the weights; so that when the weights are equal, there is nothing to move it. But intelligent beings are agents; not passive, in being moved by motives, as a balance is by weights; but they have active powers and do move themselves, sometimes upon the view of strong motives, sometimes upon weak ones, and sometimes where things are absolutely indifferent. In which latter case, there may be very good reason to act, though two or more ways of acting may be absolutely indifferent. (CL 4.1 and 2/Al 45)

Here Clarke attempts to articulate a view which allows both that intelligent beings act "upon the view of" of external conditions and yet "move themselves", as opposed to the "merely passive" changes that occur when weights are placed on a balance and the arms move (or not). Leibniz's response in Sections 14 and 15 of his 5th letter reveal the inadequacies that he sees in Clarke's sketch of the disanalogy.

In Section 14 Leibniz claims that it is incorrect to think that the patterns of motion when weights are placed on a balance sometimes involve activity and sometimes not. Both the balance and the weights are active whatever the scenario, with the pattern of motion due to the resolution of the activity. But, more importantly, in Section 15 Leibniz tells us how we should conceive of what is going on in agency "properly speaking" (LC 5.15/Al 59). Central to this account is the claim that "motives do not act upon the mind … but 'tis rather the mind that acts by virtue of the motives, which are its dispositions to act" (ibid.). Whilst it is not entirely clear how Clarke conceives of motives, he seems not to think of them as intrinsic features of an agent, but rather as extrinsic features that may be acted upon or not as a matter of the agent's preference, the content of which preference is not amenable to characterization that is independent of the extrinsic motives.

According to Leibniz, this view is one which "divide[s] the mind from its motives, as if they were without the mind … as if the mind had, besides motives, other dispositions to act by virtue of which it could reject or accept motives" (ibid). In contrast, his own is one on which "the motives comprehend all the dispositions, which the mind can have to act voluntarily; for they include not only the reasons, but also the inclinations arising from passions or other preceding impressions" (ibid). For Leibniz, reasons are a subset of the motives that give rise to mental activity, thus for him it is "a manifest contradiction" to claim, as Clarke does, that there could be reasons to act and yet the mind remain indifferent with regard to them, or even choose in spite of them.

The model of agency that Leibniz employs is one on which mental activity arises from a resolution of the motivational power of all the dispositions to act, whether rational or otherwise. As he observes, "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" (ibid). But Clarke's response to this in his 5th letter, to which Leibniz never responded, is unsurprising. He insists that Leibniz is "denying the mind to have in itself a principle of action" and continues to claim that "the motive, or thing considered as in view, is something extrinsic to the mind" and that "the impression made upon the mind by that mind is the perceptive quality, in which the mind is passive" (CL 5.1-20/Al 97).

For Leibniz rational agency is to be conceived univocally, with the source of activity entirely internal to the mind of the agent. What seems to be at issue here is that by constrast Clarke embraces a characterization of rationally agency is equivocal. In situations where differences in the goodness of external circumstances determine the choice that is made, but in other cases rationally agency is of a completely different character. For it is something that involves determination of the mind that is wholly spontaneous and uninfluenced by the external conditions given that they are identical in all relevant respects. And, perhaps most importantly for the current debate, Clarke is adamant that there are situations in which God's activity is in accordance with the PSR whilst being an entirely spontaneous choice between situations whose goodness is identical – a central case being God's decision to create matter at a determinate position in an infinite homogenous space (see CL 3.7 and 8/Al 32).

If we take a step back from the issue of the possible the resolution of the debate between Leibniz and Clarke, something else comes into view, namely a disagreement regarding the content of the concept to which each of the two men attach the word 'God'. Furthermore, it is a disagreement that is rendered particularly opaque, given that they each agree that God's nature conforms to the traditional triune conception. For this entails that both men regard divine reasonableness as sufficient for God's acting. In other words, and as we have seen, both are in their own way wholly committed to taking something that is plausibly termed the Principle of Sufficient Reason as a principle that holds of the created world in virtue of the divine activity that gave rise to it.

Nonetheless, we are now in a position to understand a crucial difference between these conceptions of rational agency. For, at least in the divine case, it is Leibniz's view that acting on a reason requires: 1) that the content of that which is willed be internal to the agent and fully determinate; and 2) that the activity takes place in virtue of an awareness of that determinacy and the fact that it is the best option available. However, for Clarke, God can be a fully reasonable agent and yet there be an indeterminacy among that objects of choice with regard to goodness, and hence a situation in which divine action emerges through a decision in favour of a course of action, the content of which cannot be rendered fully and determinately intelligible even by God. What we are not in a position to do, however, is to see how Leibniz thought this impasse might be resolved. Leibniz's and Clarke's Gods seem to be different, but Leibniz has not told us why his should be regarded as the true God?

When Leibniz returns to the PSR at the end of his 5th letter a number of additional claims are made that appear to speak to why Leibniz thinks we should adopt the principle and I will turn to those in sections 5-7 below. Unfortunately, it seems to me that they take us little further in resolving the impasses that has been exposed. However, in section 8 I will suggest that one interpretation of what Leibniz may have had in mind when he spoke of the ideas that he deemed "too abstruse for the present dispute" (LC 5.130/Al 96) might go some way toward resolving things.

5. PSR and the truths of natural philosophy and metaphysics

In section 126 of Letter 5, Leibniz suggests that "without this great principle [i.e., the PSR], one cannot prove the existence of God, nor account for many other important truths" (LC 5.126/Al 95). This is a recapitulation of a point made in Letter 2 in slightly more grandiloquent terms. Here, in addition to "the being of God", PSR is said to enable us to "demonstrate … all the other parts of metaphysics or natural theology; and even, in some

measure, those principles of natural philosophy that are independent upon mathematics" (LC 2.1/Al 16).

Throughout the correspondence we find various examples of things that Leibniz attempts to establish on the basis of PSR, or mentions as dependent on it, which fill out these more abstract claims. Most famously it is employed in arguing against the existence of absolute space (e.g. LC 4.13/Al 38).[9] But Leibniz also invokes the PSR to reject the existence of atoms and the vacuum (LC 4 postscript/Al 44) and to argue for the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (LC 5.21/Al 61 and LC5.26/Al 61-62).[10] Among the things that are mentioned as positive consequences of the PSR, we are told that "in order to proceed from mathematics to natural philosophy, another principle [i.e., PSR] is requisite" (LC 2.1/Al 15). And Leibniz illustrates this by claiming that PSR plays this bridging role in Archimedes *On the Equilibrium of Planes* mentioned above when "[h]e takes it for granted, that if there be a balance, in which everything is alike on both sides, and if equal weights are hung on the two ends of that balance, the whole will be at rest" (LC 2.1/A 16.). Closer to home, Leibniz also suggests the PSR is used to establish "the dynamic principles or the principles of force. (LC 2.1/Al 16).

Some of the claims that count as "important truths" receive no further elaboration in the correspondence. Others receive discussion and defence where they are presented as at odds with the claim that they are truths about a world created by the rational agency of God. But, perhaps unsurprisingly, they are all claims that Clarke rejects, and which he is no more inclined to accept when it is pointed out that God, as Leibniz conceives of him, did not create a world in which they were true. For, given that Clarke takes the will of God to be a sufficient reason in a way that is completely independent of any specification of the content of that will, there is no way for the kind of constraints that Leibniz invokes to receive any purchase.

That said, one truth on which both men agree, of course, is the proposition that God exists. A number of puzzles arise in connection with Leibniz's suggestion that the PSR is required to demonstrate this. It is not surprising to find Leibniz claiming that God's existence can be proved in this way, given that it is a 'cosmological argument', one of the most common forms of argument for God's existence in natural theology. But it is *prima facie* surprising that Leibniz suggests that without the PSR one *could not* prove God's existence. It is true that Leibniz sometimes emphasizes this kind of reasoning in considering the existence of God and that there are contexts where it is presented alone.[11] However, he employs several other strategies for arguing for God's existence throughout his career, and in the contemporary *Monadology* we find versions of the ontological argument (Section 45 – GP VI, 614/AG 218) and the so-called 'argument from eternal truths' (ibid.).[12]

The text of the correspondence does not allow us to resolve this. But one possibility is that Leibniz thought that the other arguments would have had no purchase in the context of a discussion with Clarke, or at least that this one would have been uncontentious in a way that might not have been true of the others. Furthermore, as Ezio Vailati observes (1998, 195 note 2), Clarke not only offered a version of this argument, the whole of his *A Demonstration of the Being*

[9] For helpful discussion of these arguments see Section 2 of Brown (forthcoming) 'The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence' in P. Lodge and L. Strickland eds. *G.W. Leibniz: Key Philosophical Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[10] For differing views of the ways in which this argument proceeds, see Jauernig (2008, 208-12) and RodriquezPereyra, (2014, 104-14).

[11] For example, it is the focus of detailed elaboration in the piece *On the Ultimate Origination of Things* of 1697 (GP VII, 302-8/AG 149-55) and is the only argument for God's existence that appears in Leibniz's only published book *The Theodicy* as the focus of Section 7 of Part 1 (GP VI, 106-07/H 127-28).

[12] See Look (2014) for a useful overview of Leibniz's arguments for the existence of God.

and Attributes of God And Other Writings can be regarded as an extended cosmological argument. Thus, it makes some sense for the cosmological argument to be a topic of discussion in the correspondence. However, this still leaves us without a way of defending Leibniz's claim that the fact that the PSR can be used in this way is grounds for the PSR itself. Moreover, it is hard to see how such a strategy could go.[13]

One might also worry that Leibniz appears to be opening himself up to a charge of circularity by claiming that the PSR is required to prove God's existence whilst offering it as an argument for the PSR. Two avenues seem worthy of consideration here. We have already seen that Leibniz embraces non-PSR grounded arguments for God's existence. But it is also worth noting that the argument occurs in the context of a correspondence in which his opponent has granted that God exists. And, as we have seen, a central part of the dispute concerns the relation between two competing conceptions of divine agency and what is involved in a commitment to the PSR. Both men agree that the two go hand in hand. Thus, at least in this context, it might have been legitimate for Leibniz to regard the circle as virtuous. But, again, it leaves the claim that the PSR can be justified on the basis of its employment in proving God's existence looking implausible.

Section 127 is also devoted to claims about the relation between the PSR and natural philosophy. Here Leibniz suggests that there are "chimeras" (LC 5.127/Al 96), "fictions [or] spectres of imagination" (LC 5.48/Al 72), belief in which has resulted from the fact that that "it [i.e., PSR] has been neglected, out of carelessness, on many occasions" (LC 5.127/Al 95). Leibniz offers several examples, namely "an absolute real time or space, a vacuum, attraction in the scholastic sense, a physical influence of the soul over the body [and of the body over the soul][14] and a thousand other fictions, either derived from erroneous opinions of the ancients, or lately invented by modern philosophers" (ibid.), among which he explicitly mentions, for the moderns Henry More's "spirits that can make themselves impenetrable" (LC 5.48/Al 72), and for the ancients Epicurus's "groundless declination of atoms" (LC 5.128/Al 96). But here again there is little of dialectical significance as Leibniz is drawing attention to claims that Clarke would or does either reject or embrace on different grounds.

6. The ubiquitous use of PSR

The previous section was concerned with arguments that turn on the relation between particular empirical truth claims and the PSR. But Leibniz also tries to argue for the PSR on more generic empirical grounds. In section 127 of Letter 5 we find the observation, "Has not everybody made use of this principle upon a thousand occasions?" (LC 5.127/Al 95). Leibniz does not say more about why he takes this to be significant, but we might assume he is suggesting that some kind of support for the PSR is to be found by observing that people have found using the principle to be a worthwhile thing and are aware that other people seem to have acted in this way as well.

In Section 129 of Letter 5 Leibniz turns again to facts about the actual use of PSR. He notes that he has "often defied people to allege an instance against that great principle, to bring any one uncontested example wherein it fails. But they have never done it, nor ever will" (LC 5.129/Al 96)). In light of this, Leibniz suggests that "one may reasonably judge, that it will succeed also in unknown cases, or in such cases as can only by its means be known" (ibid.) and

[13] It is interesting to note that Leibniz also restricts himself to the cosmological argument when presenting reasons for believing in the existence of God in Section 7 of *The Theodicy* (GP VI, 106-07/H 127-28

[14] Material in brackets added by Clarke.

that the principle can be justified "according to the method of experimental philosophy which proceeds *a posteriori*" (ibid.).

Construed literally the claim that we know from experience *everyone* uses the PSR on many occasions is clearly problematic. But a more charitable reading, namely that experience shows that people generally employ the principle is more persuasive, at least if we understand it to mean that people generally engage in the practice of looking for reasons for things until they take themselves to have found a reason that satisfies their search. But to claim that this amounts to there being a general tendency to search for genuinely sufficient reasons is harder to sustain. As I noted at the beginning of the paper, Leibniz provides no examples of sufficient reasons that have been given, and leaves us with the thought that "the principle of the best" might really be the only one where we are restricting our attention to claims about created reality.

But, in addition to this, some of the best-known receptions of Leibniz's writings provide us with examples that strike some people as clear cases that defy the PSR. Here I am thinking of the various examples of 'senseless' suffering in Voltaire's *Candide* and the only slightly less famous passages from Dotoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov,* in which Ivan discusses the problem of evil with his brother Alyosha and contemplates the torture of innocent children – focusing in particular on the case of an eight year old deliberately torn apart by hunting dogs in front of his mother on the command of a nobleman for a minor misdemeanor. Ivan takes it to be "beyond a shadow of doubt what [he has] to say" (Dostoyevsky 1958, 286). We can interpret these examples in the conventional way, namely as challenges to Leibniz's thesis that the actual world is the best of all possible worlds. But another way to put the point is to suggest that insofar as there are events of this kind, they are events for which no reason could be given that would render their taking place intelligible.

At least as problematic is Leibniz's claim that the methods of experimental philosophy, i.e., inductive reasoning, can be used to justify employing the PSR. This is perhaps most straightforwardly read as the claim that past experience of the kind evinced suffices for not more than the rational expectation that PSR will succeed in future cases. But Leibniz makes the stronger claim that those who attempts to provide a counterexample "never will", i.e., that the PSR is both an infallible principle and that this can be established through induction. Indeed, this is something that is further compounded by the fact that Leibniz is committed to the existence of an actual infinity of created beings (e.g., see GP I, 416; A IV, 1393/Ar 234-35). There is clearly scope for turning to Leibniz's views about the logic of the experimental philosophy at this point. But, to the extent that he is serious in his claim that the PSR holds universally, it is hard to see how there could be a plausible empirical justification.

For all of this, however, it is clear that Leibniz is onto something. For it is hard to deny that a commonplace aspect of human thinking and communication is the tendency to ask why, and to be satisfied only when one has been given reasons that render events, situations, and truths intelligible to one. And, whilst it may not be the case that the answers in such cases are sufficient reasons in the strict sense, there is a more ordinary sense in which we relent in a satisfied way when, and only when, we discover or are convinced that conditions the obtaining of which suffice for that about which we asked have been found to obtain. Thus, although our search for sufficient reasons always fails, it seems as though we continue to search for them, and, moreover, that we stop at the point where it seems to us as though we have found them. One need only interact with an inquisitive three year old to be reminded all too much of this phenomenon, and the even more interesting phenomenon of the child who has to be told to stop asking for reasons! So one might wonder where Leibniz's point is that as a matter of fact the PSR is ubiquitous in the sense that its functions, sometimes unconsciously as a regulative

idea in our deliberation. But whatever is the case here, it becomes clear from the following section of Letter 5, that Leibniz does not want to rest his case entirely on such claims.

7 To deny PSR is to be reduced to absurdity

When offering his *a posteriori* justification in Section 129 of Letter 5 Leibniz adds that it would hold "even if the principle were not otherwise justified by pure reason, or *a priori*" (LC 5.129/Al 96). And, whilst he is not explicit, it appears that Section 130 is intended to provide this *a priori* justification. Here Leibniz observes that "To deny this great principle, is likewise to do as Epicurus did; who was reduced to deny that other great principle, namely, the principle of contradiction; which is that every intelligible enunciation must either be true or false" (LC 5.130/Al 96). Leibniz does not explain just what the connection is between the denial of the PSR and PC, however he adds "I believe reasonable and impartial men will grant me that having forced an adversary to deny that principle [i.e., PSR] is reducing him *ad absurdum*" (LC 5.130/Al 96-97).

Leibniz is clearly less transparent than we might wish here. But what we seem to be hovering around at this point is the thought that it is somehow a requirement on being a "reasonable" person that one accept the PSR, just as it would be unreasonable to deny the PC. One might wonder whether there are resonances here with the justification of induction that we find in the work of P. F. Strawson, namely that it is constitutive of the practice of thinking rationally about unobserved cases that we utilize induction (see Strawson 1952, 256-63). Might Leibniz be claiming that is constitutive of thinking rationally more generally that one act in accordance with the PSR?

If this is the position, one obvious worry is that there is nothing new here and that, just as Leibniz has isolated one feature of the divine nature and offered a conception of its necessary conditions, such a strategy might be available to Clarke as well. Thus, we seem to face the very same impasse that has arisen again and again in the debate between the two men. For why couldn't Clarke make exactly the same Strawsonian move? Leibniz is making a pitch for the claim that we our understanding of what it is to be rational involves a commitment to the intelligibility of things in his sense. But surely Clarke would have claimed the same for his view. In the next section, I will build on this thought in offering a speculative rendition of the "abstruse" justification that Leibniz did not share with Clarke.

8. An abstruse justification?

At this point we have covered almost all of what Leibniz has to say in favour of the PSR in his swansong. Indeed, in Section 130, the very last of the correspondence, Leibniz claims that he has "already said, what is sufficient to justify [the PSR]" (LC 5.130/Al 96). But he then adds "I might say something more upon it, but perhaps it would be too abstruse for this present dispute" (ibid.). Unfortunately, nothing more is said, but at the risk of going completely off piste, I want to end with some speculative thoughts about what Leibniz's abstruse thoughts might have been based on writings other than the correspondence.

As we have now seen, the issue between Leibniz and Clarke appears to turn on a dispute over the proper conception of rationality, and thus the concept of God that includes this conception. The question at hand is what other "abstruse" reason Leibniz might have given for arbitrating between them. I want to consider three separate approaches that have some basis in

things that Leibniz says elsewhere, in order of abstruseness. Clearly, it is impossible to know which, if any, of these Leibniz might have had in mind. But I want to use the opaque nature of this claim to take the opportunity to engage in some more speculative exegesis, recognizing that the main part of what I will say invites and demands a good deal of further exploration.

The first kind of consideration that Leibniz may have had in mind should probably not really count as abstruse, given that it is a complaint that he levels throughout his life at those whom he perceives as defending a 'voluntarist' conception of God of the kind that Clarke does.[15] But I think it is nonetheless worth mentioning. As we have seen, Clarke allows that divine willing might take place in situations where there was no intelligible content to that which was willed. For Leibniz, this leaves Clarke in the position where there is no intellectual basis on which a judgement of the goodness of God's action can be determined. Furthermore, Leibniz believes that this leaves Clarke (assuming he wishes to claim that God's activity is good) in an untenable position. For his is required to maintain that God's activity and its consequences are good simply in virtue of God having willed them so, much as he was willing to claim that God's activity is reasonable simply because it is the product of a wise creator. The problem with this from Leibniz's perspective is that it entails that anything that God had willed would have counted as good, something that reduces God to a tyrant who is to be feared, rather than a good God who deserves our love.

Aside from the fact that it is too commonplace in Leibniz's writings to really deserve the title 'abstruse', dialectically, this again moves things along no further. For as should be obvious by now, this kind of response would not have moved Clarke. For it is simply a part of the package to which he was self-consciously committed. Indeed, it may have been for this reason that Leibniz did not think it worth adding this consideration despites is being common in his other work.

Another strategy that Leibniz might have adopted is more abstruse, at least in the sense that it is not one that he appeals to as often. Indeed, the only occasion of which I am aware in which he does use this strategy is in a letter to Burcher de Volder, with whom he corresponded between 1698 and 1706. One of the key disputes between the two men concerns the proper conception of substance. Whilst the debate is very complex, we need take note of very little of that here. The key point is that during the debate De Volder offers a conception of substance as that which can exist independently of anything else.[16] Among a number of objections which Leibniz raises is the following from his letter of July 6, 1701: "I might point out that your concept of substance does not seem to agree with those things that are commonly so called" (LDV 207). And he elaborates in his letter of December 27, 1701:

> I admit that you are within your rights to understand the word *substance* so that God alone is a substance and other things are called something else. But it is my intention to look for a notion that will apply to others and agrees with ordinary ways of speaking, according to which you, I and others are counted as substances. (LDV 223)

What we see here appears to offer a means by which Leibniz might try to arbitrate between his and Clarke's conception of God, namely on the grounds that the proper conception ought to track the extension of the word 'God' as commonly employed. But, interesting as this strategy is, it is again hard to see that Clarke should have been moved by anything of this kind.

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[15] For a particularly clear discussion, see the *Meditation of the Common Concept of Justice* dating from 1703 (PW 45-51). For useful discussion see Arthur (2014, 170-71).

[16] For further discussion of De Volder's views and other responses that Leibniz offered, see LDV li-lx.

For one thing, the analogy with the concept of God is a little awkward. With the case of substance, Leibniz points to the fact that a class of entities that would generally be called substances, namely human beings, do not fall under the extension of De Volder's definition of the term. But Leibniz and Clarke are arguing about the properties that should be ascribed to a being to whom they both take themselves to have successfully referred. Nonetheless, one might think that Leibniz could appeal to the thought that appeal to traditional understanding of the term should prevail in the case of the dispute. But whatever the merits in the case of the term 'substance', this strategy would have been weak in the current context. It is true that in being adamantly opposed to divine voluntarism, Leibniz stood in a long line of philosophical theologians, stretching at least as far back as St Thomas Aquinas, who would have agreed with him. But there is an equally well-established tradition of divine voluntarists, including the other 'giants' of later medieval philosophy Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, who would have opposed him. Thus, to the extent that Leibniz could have appealed to common usage, he would have met equivocation of a kind that would help neither him nor Clarke. I want then to turn to another, even more speculative suggestion, which at least has the hermeneutic virtue of tracking Leibniz suggestion that he had something abstruse in mind.

This consideration is drawn from a discussion of a little-known piece, which probably dates from around 1693, that was given the title "Leibniz's Philosophical Dream" by an early keeper of Leibniz's papers.[17] In this complex piece, which might be thought to be Leibniz's attempt at a version of Plato's allegory of the cave, a journey is described in which Leibniz is brought by a pair of guides to the use of "intelligence or reason". My analysis of it will be based on the admittedly questionable hermeneutic principle that we should take it as an account of Leibniz's actual experiences in its essentials if not in all its imagery.

At the start of the piece Leibniz portrays himself as someone who "naturally loved to act well and to know the truth," (LH 108) but adds: "I was satisfied with what I was among men, but I was not satisfied with human nature" (ibid.). He describes the problem as arising because he "often considered with chagrin the hardships to which we are subjected" (ibid.) The particular hardships that Leibniz mentions at this point are "the shortness of our life, the vanity of glory, the improprieties that are born of sensual pleasure, the illnesses that overwhelm even our spirit; finally, the annihilation of all our greatness and all our perfections in the moment of death, which appears to reduce to nothing the fruits of our labors" (ibid.) Leibniz then adds: "these meditations left me full of melancholy," and that "it appeared that I punished myself unnecessarily, that a successful crime was worth more than an oppressed virtue, and that a madness that is content is preferable to an aggrieved reason" (ibid.)

Implicit here is the thought that Leibniz was tempted to turn away from acting well and the pursuit of truth, given the despair he suffered when contemplating the stark reality of a finite human existence and the fact that acting well was often less well-rewarded than "successful crime" (ibid.). But next we are told that, at this point in his life, he "resisted these objections and directed [his] spirit on the right course by thinking about the divinity who must have given a proper order to everything and who sustained my hopes with the expectation of a future capable of redressing everything" (ibid.) However, he goes on to suggest that this alternate focus on a mode of life governed by religious belief was of limited help:

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[17] See LH 108-111. This piece is also translated in the original *Everyman* edition of *The Philosophical Writings of Leibniz* which was translated by Mary Morris and published in 1934 (PWL 253-57). However, it is notable that is was left out of the volume, which was the standard introductory selection for many years, when it was re-edited by G. H. R. Parkinson in 1973 (MP). I quote from the translation by Donald Rutherford, from whom I take the dating, at http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/rutherford/Leibniz/translations/Dream.pdf

> This conflict was renewed in me by the sight of some great disturbance, either among men, when I saw injustice triumph and innocence chastened, or in nature, when hurricanes or earthquakes destroyed cities and provinces and caused thousands to die without distinguishing the good from the wicked, as though nature cared no more for us than we trouble ourselves about ants or worms that we encounter in our path. I was greatly moved by these spectacles and could not stop myself pitying the condition of mortals. (ibid.)

What follows next is a description of a dream which occurred at some point when Leibniz found himself "fatigued from these thoughts" (ibid.). The dream comprises a situation in which Leibniz finds himself in a cavern surrounded by people pursuing "luminous trifles they called 'honors', or glittering little flies they called 'riches'" and by "many who searched the ground for bright bits of wood they called 'sensual pleasures'" (LH 108-09). The fate of those following these "evil lights" vary. Some switched from one evil to another, some are said to have "quit the chase altogether because of exhaustion or despair", some "who ran blindly and often believed they had reached their goal fell into crevasses", and some "were bitten by scorpions and other venomous creatures that left the wretched and often mad" (LH 109) But not only does the dreamscape contain people who are drawn to worldly pursuits and suffer as a consequence, they are people who appear bound to this fate. For Leibniz adds:

> Yet neither these examples nor the arguments of persons better informed stopped others from chasing the same hazards and even entering into fights in order to forestall rivals or keep themselves from being forestalled. (ibid.)

In the world of the dream, the tendency to fall prey to the horrors that befall those who choose worldly pursuits is portrayed as impervious both to the observation that it yields misery and to the persuasion of those who might be able to provide arguments for behaving otherwise.

It is natural to ask at this point, where Leibniz positions himself in this scenario. But this is only possible once we add his description of the ultimate escape route.

> In the vault of this huge cavern there were little holes and almost imperceptible cracks. Here a trace of daylight entered; yet it was so weak that it required careful attention to notice it. One frequently heard voices which said, "Stop you mortals, or run like the miserable beings you are." Others said, "Raise your eyes to the sky." (ibid.)

Leibniz suggests that "no one stopped" on account of these additional features. But this is not meant to imply that no one paid attention, since he quickly adds "I was one of those who was greatly struck by these voices. I began often to look above me and finally recognized the small light which demanded so much attention" (ibid.) As the dream continues, the light becomes the focal point of attention. Leibniz tells us that:

> It seemed to me to grow stronger the more I gazed steadily at it. My eyes were saturated with its rays, and when, immediately after, I relied on it to see where I was going, I could discern what was around me and what would suffice to secure me from dangers. (ibid.)

At this point, Leibniz is told that the light signifies "what is called 'intelligence' or 'reason' in us" by a "venerable old man who had wandered for a long time in the cave and who had had thoughts very similar to mine" (ibid.).

In conjunction with the passage above, we can see that Leibniz is constructing a story according to which he chances upon the faculty of reason, is drawn to and overcome by it, and then relies on it. Leibniz is not explicit about the nature of this faculty, but throughout the discussion with Clarke we have seen Leibniz return to the thought that adherence to the PSR is at least partially constitutive of what it is to think properly and engage in rational agency. Indeed, it seems to me that this is what is implied in Sections 31 and 32 of the contemporary *Monadology*, when Leibniz observes that "Our reasonings are based on two great principles, that of contradiction … and that of sufficient reason" (GP VI, 6612/AG 217). Thus I want to suggest that Leibniz's commitment to being guided by this "light" is a comitment to a practice which has the PSR (and the PC) as constitutive foundational principles.[18] This is clearly related to the Strawsonian idea mentioned above, but here there is something additional. For Leibniz suggests that "a venerable old man", i.e., someone with legitimate authority (Plato himself perhaps?) has anchored the terms "reason" and "intelligence".

In this context there is no other game in town, so the contrast with Clarke's conception of intelligence or reason is not made explicit. But there can be no doubt that it is the one that is favoured by Leibniz himself that is being discussed and sanctioned and, as such, that Clarke's is being implicitly rejected. Thus, we find something that, to Leibniz's mind at least, might lead us out of the impasse in his dealings with Clarke and voluntarism more generally. For what we also see is that Leibniz offers considerations that speak to why we might commit to a mode of being which is grounded in acting in accord with his conception of reason, and hence of the PSR. More precisely, he suggests that he in virtue of this commitment he could: 1) see where he was going; 2) see what was present in his environment; and 3) see what would protect him from danger.

If we take these claims to be expressions of a justification for employing the PSR, they are perhaps best construed as pragmatic. For it is not so much that the PSR yields beliefs in propositions that are true, or indeed because it is true itself that stands in its favour. Rather, it is because it is partially constitutive of a practice whose value is said to lie in the facilitation of behavior that leads the world to show up to us in ways that enable Leibniz to avoid the dangers to which other less luminous beings fall foul. So, in addition to the Strawsonian claim that Leibniz thinks of the PSR as constitutive of rational engagement with the world, we have a higher-order, *a posteriori*, justification for taking this conception of rational agency seriously. But, of course, it is not one whose grounds are represented as plausible as a matter of inductive generalization. If it is to provide additional warrant, we need to trust the dream Leibniz as a reliable authority independently of our own practice, or the practice of others.

If this were all Leibniz said, it would be interesting. But this is not the end of the dream. And what follows will perhaps be even more surprising to some readers. As dream-time proceeds, Leibniz describes himself exploring the ways in which reason might operate. Here he starts to make more of the fact that there is more than one hole through which the light shines, and talks of "chang[ing] position in order to test" (ibid.), presumably with regards to the benefits mentioned above. These experiments lead him to discover situations in which "several beams could be seen at once from their true point of view," and observes that in cases such as these "I found a collection of rays which greatly enlightened me. This technique was of great help to me and left me more capable of acting in the darkness" (ibid.)

Finally Leibniz "was led by … good fortune" to a position that "was unique and the most advantageous in the cave, a place reserved for those whom the divinity wished to remove

[18] As Sleigh points out (1983, 192-96), the matter is complicated by the fact that Leibniz often appears to invoke other principles. However the constitutive nature of the PSR and PC does not appear to be in much doubt.

completely from this darkness" (LH 109-10) At this point he became "surrounded by a bright light shining from all sides [and] the whole cave and its miseries were fully disclosed to [his] eyes" (LH 110) Next Leibniz goes on to describe a more enlightened state to which he is led by "a celestial messenger" (ibid.) The messenger tells him "Give thanks to the divine goodness which releases you from this madness," and takes him beyond the cave altogether to "a high mountain, which revealed to [him] the face of the earth" (ibid.) Here Leibniz finds he has a kind of telescopic vision available which allows him to focus on any part of the world and magnify it so that he can "see it as though it were next to [him]" (ibid.).

Leibniz mentions two consequences of this. He reports that first it "gave me a marvelous pleasure" (ibid.); but in addition that it "emboldened me to say to my guide: 'Mighty spirit--for I cannot doubt that you are of the number of those celestial figures who make up the court surrounding the sovereign of the universe--since you have wanted to clarify so my eyes, will you do as much for my mind?'" (ibid.) The celestial figure, at whose identity we can but guess, then grants the wish, given that he believes that Leibniz "holds wisdom above the pleasure of those vain spectacles the world presents to [his] eyes," (ibid.) with the following promise:

> However, you will lose nothing that is substantial in those same spectacles. You will see everything with eyes clarified in a completely different way. Your understanding being fortified from above, it will discover everywhere the brilliant illumination of the divine author of things. You will recognize only wisdom and happiness, wherever men are accustomed to find only vanity and bitterness. You will be content with your creator; you will be enraptured with the vision of his works. Your admiration will not be the effect of ignorance as it is with the vulgar. It will be the fruit of knowledge of the grandeur and marvels of God. Instead of scorning with men the unraveled secrets, which in earlier times they regarded with astonishment, you will find that when you are admitted into the interior of nature your raptures will go on growing the farther you advance. For you will only be at the beginning of a chain of beauties and delights that go on growing into infinity. The pleasures that enchain your senses and that Circe of your legends who changes men into beasts will have no hold on you, so long as you attach yourself to the beauties of the soul, which never die and never disappoint. You will belong to our fold and will go with us from world to world, from discovery to discovery, from perfection to perfection. With us you will pay court to the Supreme Being, who is beyond all worlds and fills them without being divided. You will be at once before his throne and among those who are distant from it. For God will establish his siege in your soul and heaven follows him everywhere. (LH 110-11)

What Leibniz depicts here is an initiation into a mode of being which involves transportation into the presence of the "supreme being" with "eyes clarified in a completely different way". In other words, there is another step on the journey which involves commitment to the PSR, which appears to offer something even more precious as a reward for adherence to that principle, namely acquisition of capacity for intellectual perception of a different order that allows telescopic acquaintance with the whole endlessly rich universe and the ability to navigate it seamlessly. Arguably then there is a "justification" for the PSR, or rather for comporting oneself in accordance with adherence to the PSR which inducts one into a practice that is "cognitive" and yet not governed by the PSR, i.e., a beatific vision which arises from intuitive cognition of the way things are which is also attended by a sense of being in the presence of the divine and of being a cosmic traveler.

If anything like this reading is correct, then we are being offered yet another *a posteriori* justification for the PSR, but, of course there is an added dimension. For in order to find any of

this remotely motivating one would have to be willing to listen to the testimony of the dreamer who is telling the story in ways that might sound even less plausible than the story about the security brought through taking the PSR as a principle that governed ones activity. Moreover, what we would be trusting is that a transformation whose nature is not described at all other than as something delivered by a "celestial figure" will take place if we become servants of reason in the more straightforward sense. Here it seems that what we will have to take on trust can perhaps only be characterized as a report of the fruits of an instance of personal revelation to Leibniz, albeit one which chimes with claims made by many authors in the Platonic tradition and, arguably in non-Western traditions as well. Leibniz seems to be suggesting that the capacity to live in accordance with the PSR is a gift he received at some point by chance by trusting the authority of another, and that this led him first to a situation in which he could cope in the world, but also on a road to an even more mysterious path where he was led by another authority to a place where he acquired a mode of cognition that transcended this.

Now, of course none of this is revealed to Clarke, and one can imagine why. Leibniz has not managed to persuade Clarke that his version of PSR is constitutive of rationality using his more mundane tools, which at least have the appearance of possessing argumentative structure. Here he is saying something like "trust me in the way I have trusted others". But setting its relation to Clarke aside, there is of course the question of whether this could have been what Leibniz thought. There is nothing even this explicit in any other writing of Leibniz's that I know – though I think one might be able to marshal a case that there are strong hints in the places where he is writing about natural theology in ways that break free of its relation to Christianity. So, in pointing to these passages I certainly don't take myself to be making a water-tight scholarly case for the claim that Leibniz conceived of adherence to the PSR as having merely instrumental value, or for the rejection of the more traditional conception of Leibniz as concerned with offering the "true picture of reality" where truth is the product of "reason". Indeed, there is never a suggestion that the final step in the process would require one to abandon the practice of following reason or relying on its products.[19] But what we do seem to find if we trust the authority of Leibniz, however mysterious the process by which it is achieved, is an additional and perhaps the ultimate 'reason' to care about the pursuit of the activity that is the pursuit truth and governed by the PSR. It is part of the journey to ultimate enlightenment!

Abbreviations of Leibniz Texts

A = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Darmstadt and Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1923–). Cited by series, volume, and page.

AG = *Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989).

Al = *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence with Extracts from Newton's Principia and Opticks*, ed. by H. G. Alexander.

Ar = *The Labyrinth of the Continuum: Writings on the Continuum Problem,* ed. and trans. by R.W. Arthur (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002)

[19] The issue of the relation between Leibniz's commitment to the PSR and the truth-values of the beliefs generated as a result of this commitment, and the truth of the principle itself are interesting questions to which I will not turn here.

CP = *G. W. Leibniz, Confessio philosophi: Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil*, *1671–1678*, ed. and trans. Robert C. Sleigh, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

CL = Letters from Samuel Clarke to G. W. Leibniz. Cited by letter and section.

DSR = *G. W. Leibniz: De Summa Rerum: Metaphysical Papers, 1675-76,* ed. and trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

GP = *Die Philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, 7 vols., ed. C. I. Gerhardt (Berlin, 1875–90). Cited by volume and page.

Gr = *G. W. Leibniz: Textes inédits d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provincial de Hanovre* (Paris, 1948).

H = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrar, trans. E. M. Huggard (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1985).

LC = Letters from G.W. Leibniz to by Samuel Clarke. Cited by letter and section.

LDV = *Leibniz's Correspondence with De Volder*, *with Selections from the Correspondence between Leibniz and Johann Bernoulli*, ed. and trans. by P. Lodge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013)

LH = *Die Leibniz-Handschriften*, ed. by E. Bodemann (Hannover und Leipzig, 1895).

PWL = *The Philosophical Writings of Leibniz*, ed. and trans. M. Morris (London: Dent, 1934)

MP = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Philosophical Writings*, ed. by G. H. R. Parkinson. Trans. by M. Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Dent, 1973).

NE = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. and trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

PW = *Leibniz: Political Writings* (2nd ed), ed. and trans. by P Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

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