

Leibniz and the Stoics: Fate, Freedom, and Providence

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1. Against “The Sect of the New Stoics”

In an essay dated to the late 1670s, Leibniz declares his allegiance to Socrates and to the Plato of the *Phaedo* against the modern revival of the Stoic and the Epicurean sects. The Epicurean materialism of Hobbes represents an obvious danger to piety, but Leibniz claims that the “sect of the new Stoics” led by Spinoza (and, by implication, Descartes) is no less dangerous. Although the new Stoics reject materialism, they nevertheless assert “a mechanical necessity in all things” that rules out final causes or purposes in the world. On such a view, God could not be a transcendent, wise governor who chooses what is best, but at most a “blind” power immanent within the world (G VII 333 = AG 282). This complaint reflects an old worry about the Stoics, having appeared e.g. in late antiquity in Boethius and in modern times in Bramhall.¹ Leibniz would have been familiar with a version of the worry as articulated by his former teacher in Leipzig, Jacob Thomasius.² Accordingly, in criticizing the advocates of predestination among his contemporaries (in a text from 1698), Leibniz complains that that they speak “as the Stoics do about fate” insofar as they maintain an “absolute necessity” arising out of the nature of the world itself (*ex natura rei*) that thereby subjects even God to fate (A IV.vii 508).

¹ On Boethius, see Colish 1990: 2.275. On Bramhall, see Brooke 2012: 648. For another example, see Sellars 2012 on Cudworth. Cf. Plutarch *De fac.* 927a–d.

² According to Thomasius, “Plato said that God was the voluntary cause of the world, Aristotle and the Stoics that he was the necessary cause” (*Excerptatio de Stoica mundi exustione*, Diss. II, §38; as translated in Santinello 1993: 426).

2. Metaphysical Rationalism: The Identity of Indiscernibles and the “Stoic Connectedness”

Leibniz is justified in associating such a necessitarianism with Stoicism to the extent that the ancient Stoics, quite unlike the Platonists, claim “all things happen by fate”³ such that ‘necessity’ (*anangkê*) serves for Chrysippus as a synonym for the divine, active principle of the universe.⁴ But despite siding with Plato against the new Stoics regarding the “necessity” of things, Leibniz’s thought has a deep affinity with Stoicism on account of his commitment to the principle of sufficient reason: for both Leibniz and the Stoics *nihil fieri sine causa*.⁵

Leibniz is well known for drawing the controversial conclusion from this principle that no two things can be alike in all respects (or that no two things can differ in number alone). This is the principle of the identity of indiscernibles or “Leibniz’s Law”: “For it certainly must be possible to explain why [two things] are different, and that explanation must derive from some difference they contain.”⁶ A parallel principle can be found in the Stoic view that all distinct individuals are “peculiarly qualified” (*idios poion*) as such. For both Leibniz and the Stoics, there would be something irrational about a world in which there would be no way to explain what makes two things different in terms of their own natures. Whereas Leibniz requires that God be able to distinguish individuals *qua mere possibilia* in his intellect,⁷ the Stoics insist that it is the sage who must be able to distinguish any two

³ Diog. Laert. 7.149.

⁴ *Ap. Stobaeus, Eclog. phys.* I.5.15 (Wachsmuth & Hense 1.79.10 = SVF 2.913 = LS 55M3); Plutarch, *Stoic. repug.* 1056c (SVF 2.997).

⁵ Cicero, *Div.* 2.61; Ps.-Plutarch, *De fato* 574e (SVF 2.912); Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1045c (SVF 2.973); cf. Alexander *Fat.* 191.30–192.28 (SVF 2.945 = LS 55N). Leibniz also uses the slogan (G VII 300), but typically speaks instead of the principle that nothing happens without a *reason* (*ratio, raison, Grund*). Compare this with Calcidius’s report of Plato’s view: “some things result from providence alone, some from destiny, some from our free will, some also from the vicissitudes of fortune, while a great many things happen by chance” (*in Tim.* 144b–145; as quoted in den Boeft 1970). ~~For his part, Leibniz claims: “nothing happens without it being possible for someone who knows enough things to give a reason sufficient to determine why it is so and not otherwise” (*Principles of Nature and Grace*, G VI 602 = AG 210).~~

⁶ “Primary Truths,” Couturat 519 = AG 32. See *Discourse on Metaphysics* §9, AG 41–42.

⁷ E.g. Letter to Casati of 1689, A II.ii 288; see Rodriguez-Pereyra 2014, 91–92. Also see Rutherford 1995, 141–144.

individuals in terms of individuating qualities.⁸ Cicero's Academic spokesman ridicules the Stoics for thinking that everything is *sui generis* since that leads them to their implausible view that "no strand of hair in the world is just like another, nor any grain of sand."⁹ Leibniz seems to be in a better position to resist this implausible implication on account of his view that the objects of human experience are merely "well-regulated phenomena."¹⁰ But Leibniz instead enthusiastically embraces the implication, even suggesting that it provides empirical corroboration for the identity of indiscernibles: "for never do we find two eggs or leaves or two blades of grass in a garden that are perfectly similar."¹¹

The Stoics were not the first to appeal to something like the principle of sufficient reason. It can be seen playing a role in the cosmological views of the pre-Socratics Parmenides and Anaximander.¹² But it is the Stoics who embrace its application even to the minutest details of human life.¹³ For the Stoics, *all* things are connected in single causal nexus that they called a chain (*heirmos*) of fate (*heirmarmenê*).¹⁴ On this view, everything is knowable ahead of time, at least in principle. Accordingly, many Stoics, including Chrysippus, apparently accepted the reality of divination.¹⁵ And Leibniz, too, allows that

⁸ Cicero, *Acad.* 2.77–78. See Lewis 1995 and Sellars 2006, 73.

⁹ *Acad.* 2.85 (SVF 2.113 = LS 40J); *cf.* 50. Also see Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1077c–e (LS 280).

¹⁰ Philosophical disputes among sects arise largely because they suppose "a greater reality in things outside of us than that of well-regulated phenomena" (G IV 523 = L 496). Although there is a reason why any fact is true "most of the time these reasons cannot be known to us" (*Monadology* §32, AG 217).

¹¹ "Primary Truths," AG 32 = Couturat 519–520. Also see Leibniz's Fourth Paper against Clarke §4 (G VII 372) and his Fifth Paper §23 (G VII 394). Cicero mentions eggs at *Acad.* 2.58.

¹² See Hankinson 2001: 14–15.

¹³ According to Chrysippus, "it is impossible for any of the parts, even the smallest one, to turn out differently than according to its common nature and reason" (*ap.* Plutarch *Stoic repug.* 1050a = SVF 2.936 = IG 104; 1056c). According to the Stoics even "a chance turning of the neck or extension of a finger or raising of the eyebrows" are governed by fate such that the contrary movement is impossible (*Alex. Fat.* 175.9–10).

¹⁴ See e.g. Cicero, *Div.* 1.55, 1.122.

¹⁵ Chrysippus argues that "the prophecies of diviners would not be true unless all things were governed by fate" (Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 4.3.1 [SVF 2.939 = LS 55P]). *Cf.* Cicero, *Fat.* 33, and Ps-Plutarch *De fato* 574e.

prophecy is in principle consistent with his system, namely because “the present is pregnant with the future” and because of the “perfect interconnection of things.”¹⁶ Indeed:

That everything is brought about through a determined destiny [*ein festgestelltes verhängniß*] is as certain as three times three being nine. For destiny consists in the fact that everything is connected together [*an einander hängen*] as in a chain and that everything just as infallibly *will* happen, before it happens, as it infallibly *has* happened when it happens. ... so that if someone could have sufficient insight into the internal components of things—and also enough memory and understanding to perceive all the circumstances and include them in his calculations—he would be a prophet who could see the future in the present just as if in a mirror. ... [T]he whole future world is hidden and perfectly prefigured in the present world since no chance can come to it from without, for there is nothing outside of it.¹⁷

Leibniz thus appears to accept the reality of fate as defined by Chrysisppus, namely (as Leibniz puts it in 1710) “the inevitable and eternal connection of all events” (*Theodicy* §332).¹⁸ Christian August Crusius (1715–1775) thus remarks aptly that Leibniz’s principle

¹⁶ Letter to Coste on Human Freedom of 1707, G III 403 = AG 195–6. Also see *Theodicy* §360 and *Monadology* §22.

¹⁷ “Von dem Verhängnisse,” G VII 117–118. This unpublished essay is commonly dated to 1695. Kuhn (1913: 72–3) and Rutherford (2003: 66) note the Stoic character of this text. Bobzien claims that Stoic determinism differs from modern counterparts insofar as it is not only (1) expressly teleological but also (2) not realized by universal causal laws (1998: e.g. 32–33). Bobzien has been challenged on the second point by Salles (2005), but Leibniz’s determinism is in any case not “modern” in Bobzien’s sense: the *existence* as well as any miraculous *exceptions* to general laws of nature would both be rooted in the more fundamental reason for things, namely the goodness of a world so constituted (see *Theodicy* §54).

¹⁸ Leibniz attributes the definition to Gellius by way of Justus Lipsius. But this is not evidence for Leibniz’s independent knowledge of Lipsius’s Stoicism (*pace* Rutherford 2001, 157n5 and 2003, 66), let alone of Gellius, since Leibniz is simply paraphrasing Bayle’s discussion in Note H of his *Dictionary* article on Chrysisppus. Leibniz follows Bayle, and in turn Lipsius, in referring to Gellius 6.2, but the passage appears at 7.2.3 (= LS 55K) in more recent editions.

of sufficient reason “introduces fate anew,” namely the “immutable entanglement of all things” of the sort asserted by the Chrysippus and other ancients.¹⁹

The rationalism inherent in the Stoic view implies that things are not fated “simply” or independently of other things, but rather as part of a whole causal nexus: Chrysippus holds that “everything comes about by fate according to antecedent causes” (Cicero, *Fat.* 41 = LS 62C5). And for the Stoics, this connectedness implies not just that all things stand in *some* chain of causes or other, but rather that all things are linked together in a *single* “web” of fate.²⁰ The Stoic account of this web of fate is bound up with their view that the single divine principle is the reason and the fiery breath (*pneuma, spiritus*) that pervades the world in all its parts. According to this Stoic cosmobiology, the divine principle is the “world soul” that animates and unifies the whole cosmos in such a way that all its parts stand in a relationship of mutual “sympathy” (*sympatheia*).²¹ Cicero thus attributes to the Stoics a picture of the “sympathy, conspiring, and unbroken affinity of all things” (*tanta rerum consentiens conspirans continuata cognatio*) (*Nat. D.* 2.19). The general features of this account of a universal harmony among creatures are not particularly Stoic; its essential elements can be found in Plato and (according to ancient sources) the Pythagoreans.²² What is distinctly Stoic is the marriage of this account of the interconnectedness of things with the rationalism that interprets this interconnectedness as a universal causal inter-determinism.

Leibniz too upholds not just causal determinism, but also this universal interconnectedness: “all things are connected in each one of the possible worlds: the universe, whatever it may be, is all of one piece, like an ocean” (*Theodicy* §9).²³ It is in this

¹⁹ *De usu* §7, referring the same Gellius passage.

²⁰ E.g. Alex., *Fat.*, 192.8–13 (SVF 2.945 = LS 55N) and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 4.40.

²¹ See Brouwer (forthcoming)2015.

²² See Hahm 1977: 137 and Wright 1995: 118. Hence Jakob Thomasius does not discuss sympathy in his dissertations against Stoic cosmology.

²³ The Stoic character of this passage is noted by Platz (1973: 101) and Rutherford (2003: 66). Note that this interconnectedness is a feature of each possible world and thus should not be confused with the harmony that makes for the perfection of a world.

sense that Leibniz tells us that the true metaphysics embraces the “Stoic connectedness” (*la connexion Stoïcienne*).²⁴ Leibniz even echoes the Stoic cosmobiology when he says that “everything conspires [*sumpnoia panta*] in the universe, as Hippocrates says of the human body.”²⁵ As on the Stoic view, this interconnectedness has a theological basis: every created substance “expresses, however confusedly, everything that happens in the universe, whether past, present, or future” since each “is like a complete world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way” (*Discourse on Method* §9, AG 42). We have these confused perceptions of everything since “our body receives the impression of all other bodies, since all the bodies of the universe are in sympathy [*sympathisent*]” (§33, AG 65). Leibniz is even willing to acknowledge (at least in an early text) that the underlying principle here that “God is diffused through everything” has something in common with the Stoics’s “establishing God as the substance of the world.”²⁶ But Leibniz is of course unwilling to follow the Stoics in explaining the interconnection of things in terms of an *immanent*, let alone a material, God. Indeed, on Leibniz’s mature view, the interconnection of things is not even one of *direct* causal influence, since each substance is “a world apart, being independent of all other things, except for God,”²⁷ such that the harmony of all things is “pre-established.” In that respect, his mature account of the interconnection of creatures in terms of their common divine source appears instead to be Platonist in inspiration.²⁸ Nevertheless, Leibniz’s own account

²⁴ G IV 523 = L 496. This passage is noted by Platz (1973: 205) and Rutherford (2003: 66).

²⁵ Letter to Masson of 1716, G IV 627 = AG 228. See *Monadology* §61 and “Sur le principe de raison” §10, Couturat 14–15. Also see Rutherford 1995, 166n11.

²⁶ “On Transubstantiation” (of 1688 or 1669) A VI.i 510. In keeping with his “eclecticism,” he compares his view with Plato and others as well. See Mercer 2001, 211.

²⁷ *Discourse on Method* §14, AG 46.

²⁸ See Mercer 2001: 192, 273–6. Mercer notes that the Platonist conception of interrelation is itself influenced by earlier Stoic ideas. She notes further that as early as the *New Physical Hypothesis* (of 1671) Leibniz utilizes the world soul of “Plato and the Stoics” to explain creaturely activity (273–6), likening it to “an invisible fire that permeates all the things in our world” (Letter of June 1671 to de Carcavy, A II.i 128, as quoted in Mercer 2001: 278; but also see Garber 2009: 39). [In the decades prior to Leibniz’s activity, several thinkers employed the idea of “sympathy” to account for phenomena that seemed to escape mechanistic explanation. Mercer finds traces of a Stoic influence](#)

of interconnection remains more Stoic in one essential respect: since God's decree reaches even to the minutest details of things, their interconnection is characterized not merely by a *general* orderliness or harmony, but also by the complete co-fatedness of all things: "there is a perfect [i.e. complete] interconnection between things, no matter how distant they are from one another, so that someone who is sufficiently acute could read the one from the other."²⁹

4. Against Indeterminist Freedom

In the passage where Leibniz affirms the "Stoic connectedness," he adds that this connectedness can be taken to be "compatible with the spontaneity held to by others."³⁰ That qualification seems to imply that the Stoics themselves lack an adequate account of the spontaneity required for moral responsibility. But, in fact, Leibniz is not willing, any more than the Stoics, to make exceptions to his determinism for the sake of human freedom.

In the face of the apparently commonsense view that some things happen merely by chance without any determinate cause,³¹ the Stoics assert that when we say that something happens by "chance" (*tuchê*), there is in fact a determinate cause that is "non-evident to human calculation."³² Leibniz agrees. The thought that the future itself is uncertain arises when people mistake their lack of knowledge of minor causes for a knowledge of a lack of causes. In this way, they "imagine that things happen through chance [*ohngefähr*] and not destiny," for example that "the numbers on dice come up by chance." Like the Stoics,

[here \(2015, 113–21\), but also notes the inseparability of Platonic influences \(114, 121–128\). The Hermetic tradition is also essential here. See Hermes *ap. Stobaeus, Eclog. phys.* I.49.3 \(Wachsmuth & Hense 1:321.23–27/Mead 3:74\).](#) For further thoughts on possible inspirations for Leibniz's account of universal harmony, see Antognazza 1999.

²⁹ Letter to Coste on Human Freedom of 1707, G III 404 = AG 195; see G IV 626 = AG 228.

³⁰ G IV 523 = L 496.

³¹ See Aristotle, *Metaph. E* 1025a25, and the Platonist view cited in note 5, above.

³² Aët., 1.29.7 = SVF 2.966 = IG 183. Cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* 2.4 196b5–6.

Leibniz concludes that the difference between fate and chance exists not in fact but only in our understanding.³³

Leibniz is equally unwilling to make exceptions to the rationalist principle when it comes to the particular case of human actions and decisions. For Leibniz, the human will is always determined by an inclination or motive consisting in a representation of what would be best to do. To suppose that we could act without being determined in this way would be to suppose that our future actions “have the privilege of exemption” from the principle of sufficient reason (*Theodicy* §45). This would be the “indifference of equipoise” (or “of equilibrium”: *indifference d’equalibre*) of de Molina and his followers, which supposes that motives do not determine the will, that if all motives or inclinations were equally balanced in the mind, the agent could still choose a course of action (§46–48).³⁴ For Leibniz it is impossible in the real world for motives to be truly equally balanced in this way since the universe cannot be divided in half “so that all is equal and alike on both sides” (§49); we seem to find ourselves in such cases only because of our imperfect knowledge (§46).³⁵ But the main point is that the freedom imagined in to lie in such indifference is “chimerical” (§45) and a “fiction” because it would lack a cause.³⁶

Something like the freedom of the “indifference of equipoise” was proposed in antiquity, and Chrysippus’s Stoic response anticipates Leibniz’s own in a striking way, even illustrating our ignorance of causes with the same example of dice.³⁷ Leibniz may well have worked out the main contours of his view on this matter independently of Stoic sources. However, Leibniz is also willing to side with the Stoics against their adversaries when these ancient debates are brought to his attention by Pierre Bayle in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (which started appearing 1696) and in the subsequent *Reply to the Questions of*

³³ “Von dem Verhängnisse,” G VII 118–119.

³⁴ Clarke articulates a version of this view in his exchange with Leibniz (G VII 381).

³⁵ See Letter to Coste of 1707, AG 196 = G III 402; and “Von dem Verhängnisse,” G VII 118.

³⁶ Leibniz’s Fourth Paper against Clarke §2, G VII 371–372.

³⁷ Plutarch, *Stoic. repug.* 1045b–c in IG 103. Bobzien analyzes the passage in great detail (1998: 34–44 and 274–6).

a *Provincial*. For example, Note U of Bayle's *Dictionary* entry on Epicurus, contains a lengthy extract from Cicero's *De Fato* 22–25 (in LS 20E) regarding alternatives to Chrysippus's Stoic conception of fate. In Leibniz's own comment on Bayle, he shares, or rather amplifies, Cicero's dismissive attitude toward the swerve of Epicurus and Lucretius, calling it a "comical" self-contradiction (*Theodicy* §321). But Leibniz faults Cicero (and Bayle) for taking Carneades' revision to be an improvement: it merely obscures the same absurdity of the swerve by transferring the uncaused motion from the body to the soul "where it is easier to confuse matters ... as if the great principle which states that nothing comes to pass without cause only related to the body" (*Theodicy* §322; cf. §§308, 135).³⁸ Carneades' alternative seems absurd to Leibniz because he assumes with Chrysippus that an indifferent mind could not cause any motions.

5. The Idle Argument

A different sort of objection to the Stoic conception of fate is represented by the ancient "idle argument" (*argos logos, ignava ratio*), which Leibniz calls the "lazy sophism" or "lazy reason" (*le sophisme paresseux, la raison paresseuse*). Leibniz discusses the idle argument in texts from throughout his career, in each case to similar effect.³⁹ In Leibniz's rendering, the argument concludes: "if the future is necessary [then] that which must happen will happen, whatever I may do" (*Theodicy*, Preface, G VI 30 = H 54; see §55). Chrysippus' response to the argument as recounted in Cicero's *De Fato* 28–30 (in LS 55S) is the only extant ancient source that provides a refutation of the argument attributed to a particular person or

³⁸ Also see *New Essays* II.xxi.13, A VI.vi 179.

³⁹ Thus there is no question of Bayle's influence. See "Von der Allmacht und Allwissenheit Gottes" §13 (from 1671), the "Confessio Philosophi" (from 1672 or 1673), A VI.iii 129 = CP 59, the "Discourse on Metaphysics" §4 (from 1686), the "Dialogue on Human Freedom" (from 1695), Grua 363, and the "Theodicaea" (from 1695 or 1696), Grua 370.

school.⁴⁰ Since Leibniz identifies the argument by name, it is probable that he is at least indirectly familiar with Cicero's presentation and Chrysippus' response.

The idle argument as presented by Cicero concludes that there would never be any point in undertaking any action, for example in calling a doctor when sick, since "if it is fated for you to recover from this disease, then you will recover whether you call in a doctor or do not" (*Fat.* 28). But on the Stoic view, my death will be fated *together with* the particular causes that will lead to my death. Chrysippus is therefore correct that the Stoics can deny the premise that if I am fated to survive the disease, I will survive *whether or not I call the doctor*.⁴¹

In the Preface to the *Theodicy*, Leibniz tells us that refuting the idle argument will be an essential part of his account of freedom in that work (G VI 37 = H 61); and indeed it is the first topic he discusses in regard to the question of the free and the necessary in the origin of human evil (G VI 29–30 = H 53–4). Leibniz's refutation itself does not differ much from that attributed to Chrysippus: he denies not the immutability of fate, but rather that things are fated *simply*, i.e. "that the thing will happen, whatever I do."⁴² Instead: "the effect being certain, the cause that shall produce it is certain also; ... We see, therefore, that the *connection of causes with effects*, far from causing an unendurable fatality, provides rather a means of obviating it" (*Theodicy* §55). Leibniz adds that this (Chrysippean) response to the idle argument fits with his own distinction between hypothetical and absolute necessity: because the predetermination of my punishment presupposes my will to sin, the necessity of my punishment is called "conditional" or "hypothetical" (G VI 380–1 = H 381–2).⁴³

⁴⁰ Bobzien 1998: 181–2. Bobzien also discusses and compares the similar presentations in Origen and Eusebius.

⁴¹ Whether that is sufficient to counter the basic thrust of the argument is a separate question. See Brennan 2005: 270–87.

⁴² "Dialogue on Human Freedom," Grua 363 = AG 113.

⁴³ Leibniz distinguishes hypothetical from absolute or metaphysical necessity in *Discourse on Metaphysics* §13 (G IV 436–439 = AG 44–6) in letters to Arnauld (G II 37–8 = AG 69–70), and the *Theodicy* (§§37, 52–3), among other places.

Leibniz notes in this context that “what is called the *Fatum Stoicum* was not so black as it is painted: it did not divert men from the care of their affairs” (*Theodicy*, Preface, G VI 30 = H 54). However, Leibniz does not mean thereby to acquit the Stoics of attributing an absolute necessity to things: Leibniz also denies that Spinoza and Hobbes would be vulnerable to the idle argument; indeed, he denies that their views rob human beings of authentic agency or even of all freedom (§§67, 71).⁴⁴ An absolute necessity would rob us only of the kind of freedom underwriting the ultimate sort of responsibility that makes us liable to *punitive*, as opposed to merely corrective, punishments (as well as to corresponding rewards) (§77).

6. Future Contingents

For Leibniz, although it is certain that I *shall* choose according to my preponderant motive, nothing *necessitates* me to so choose since that choice is not absolutely (or geometrically or metaphysically) necessary: the unchosen alternative remains possible for me in the sense that neither my choice by itself, nor the whole world that is inseparable from that choice, is necessary by its own nature. Leibniz famously articulates this contingency in terms of a metaphysics of unactualized possible worlds—something clearly foreign to anything in Stoicism.⁴⁵ Despite this, [when Leibniz considers the views of the early Stoics presented in Bayle's Dictionary, he recognizes them](#) as aiming at a *desideratum* of his own, namely an account of the “third course” (not allowed by Bayle) between the indifference of equipoise of the Jesuits and the absolute necessity of the Jansenists and Calvinists (*Theodicy* §370–371) and thus an account of God’s decrees that can “keep the mean between geometrical truths, absolutely necessary, and arbitrary decrees” (*Theodicy*, Preface, G VI 37 = H 61).

⁴⁴ See Leibniz’s Fifth Paper to Clarke §77 (G VII 409= L 710), but also “Causa Dei” §20, G VI 441.

⁴⁵ Moreover, as noted above, the kind of human freedom that this metaphysics is meant to underwrite is one that the Stoics don’t seem to require since they are not interested in defending the Christian doctrine of God’s punitive justice, namely that the wicked will be punished (and the blessed be rewarded) for “eons of eons” in the life to come.

Leibniz thus tells us that the Chrysippus “sought a middle course”; the ancient Stoics “were at the same time in favor of determination and against necessity, although they were accused of attaching necessity to everything” (§331; cf. Cicero *Fat.* 39).

Leibniz’s presentation of the Stoic view on future contingents (in *Theodicy* §170) is unusual in that it consists in a brief comment following upon a very long extract from Bayle’s *Dictionary* (from Note S of the entry on Chrysippus) that itself includes Bayle’s own lengthy extract from Cicero’s *De Fato* (from 12–13; in LS 38E), supplemented by other ancient texts. The Cicero passage in question relates Chrysippus’s response to the position of dialectician Diodorus Cronos that “everything that is said to be false in the future cannot happen” (*Fat.* 12) while “whatever is going to happen must necessarily happen” (13). Chrysippus is said there to hold the view “that things that will not happen, too, *can* happen, for example that this precious stone should be broken can happen, even if this is never going to happen, and that it was not necessary for Cypselus to rule in Corinth although this had been declared by the oracle of Apollo a thousand years before” (13). In his comment, Bayle follows Plutarch in taking Chrysippus to be contradicting his own account of fate in order to evade its paradoxical consequences.⁴⁶ Leibniz is more circumspect, noting that the views are difficult to decipher since we aren’t given much of the underlying argumentation.

Chrysippus’s account of necessity actually bears little resemblance to Leibniz’s, relying as it does on a conception of physical hindrances to propositions turning out to be true.⁴⁷ On Chrysippus’s account, all facts about the past are necessary and some (but, crucially, not all) facts about the future are necessary as well. For Leibniz, by contrast, contingency is a feature of the created world quite generally since there would be no logical self-contradiction in things being different from how they are. Nevertheless, what Leibniz

⁴⁶ Bayle refers to *Stoic. repug.*, presumably 1055d–f. See Bobzien 1998: 123–4.

⁴⁷ See Bobzien 1998: 101–12, esp. 112–16. Platz erroneously claims that Chrysippus identifies the possible with the thinkable (1973: 26–9) and thus that Leibniz employs the same concept of possibility that appears in the Cicero passage (1973: 103). For Leibniz, “when one speaks of the *possibility* of a thing it is not a question of the causes that can bring about or prevent its actual existence” (*Theodicy* §235; cf. *New Essays* II.xxi.11, A VI.vi 176). Also see Rutherford (2001: 140).

recognizes and appreciates is that Chrysippus aims to accommodate an indifference of alternative possibilities without compromising the account of the certainty of a future that comes to be through determinate causes. Hence when Leibniz, in the *Theodicy*, identifies figures committed to the offending “absolute necessity” of things, he points not to the Stoics, but to Strato (the Peripatetic) from antiquity and to Abelard, Spinoza, Hobbes, and others among the moderns.⁴⁸

7. Spontaneity

For Leibniz, the fact that my future actions are not part of a world that is itself logically necessary ensures that my representations of the good, my motives, “incline without necessitating the will” in such a way that my will “has the power to do otherwise.”⁴⁹ But since all of creation is equally contingent, human freedom obviously requires something more: “Aristotle has already observed that there are two things in freedom, to wit, spontaneity and choice, and therein lies our mastery over our actions” (*Theodicy* §34). And an agent is spontaneous when the principle of its action lies within itself (*Theodicy* §301).⁵⁰

Whereas the contingency condition for freedom is forward-looking in the sense that it requires that my future actions be non-necessary, the spontaneity condition is backward looking in the sense that it places a restriction on what type of cause could result in a free action: if something *outside* of a person caused her to behave in a certain way, if something thereby *forced* her to act, then we would not be tempted to hold her responsible for what she has done.

⁴⁸ In the “Causa Dei” appended to the *Theodicy* Leibniz does accuse “the Stoic Diodorus” of falling into that error (§22, G VI 442), but he presumably means the dialectician Diodorus Cronos with whom Chrysippus is engaged in a “great struggle” over future contingents (according to the Cicero passage extracted in §170).

⁴⁹ *Discourse on Metaphysics* §30.

⁵⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* III.1 1111a22–24. (‘Spontaneum’ translates ‘kekousion,’ which is usually rendered as ‘voluntary’ in English.) Also see Couturat 474.

For Leibniz, the spontaneity of the will cannot, of course, rest in the uncaused motion of Epicurus or Carneades. Leibniz stresses instead that the thoroughgoing dependence of voluntary actions upon their determinate causes “does not fundamentally preclude the existence within us of a wonderful *spontaneity*, which in a certain sense makes the soul in its resolves independent of the physical influence of all other creatures” (*Theodicy* §59). Although Leibniz identifies Aristotle’s conception of the voluntary as his inspiration here, it is the Stoics who articulate a conception of spontaneity in the context of a challenge that might seem to confront Leibniz as well: if all things are fated, or necessary given God’s choice to create this world, it might seem as if I am *always* forced when I act. It is in this sense that an unnamed opponent of Chrysippus claimed it would be unjust to punish criminals “if human beings do not do evils voluntarily [*sponte*] but are dragged by fate.”⁵¹ Cicero thus reports that Chrysippus, in response, “distinguished types of causes so that he could both escape necessity and retain fate” (*Fat.* 41). The context here is the objection that if everything happens by fate and antecedent causes, then we would have to say that our choice or assent [*assensio*] is caused by something not in our power, namely the impression to which we assent (40). Chrysippus’s response, in brief, is that these external causes form only *part* of the complete causal background to our assent—and not the most important part. In particular, although our assent is “set in motion by an impression,” the impression is a merely “auxiliary and proximate” and not a “perfect and principal” cause. (Chrysippus allows that if the external causes were “perfect and principle” that assent would not be in our power.)

Chrysippus illustrates his opponents’ error with an analogy. If someone sets in motion both a cylinder (or “roller”) and a cone (or “spinning top”), then we commonly say that the person who pushed them caused their movement. But that person hasn’t given the cylinder the capacity to keep rolling straight ahead or given the cone the capacity to spin. The

⁵¹ Gellius *NA* 7.2.5 (tr. Bobzien 1998: 243). Leibniz summarizes the passage at *Theodicy* §332.

explanation for that difference in movement is obviously the differing natures of each object rather than a cause lying outside of them (*Fat.* 42–3).⁵² And assent, likewise, is explained by the disposition of our own mind rather than by external causes. Thus the foolish “go astray through their own impulse [*hormê*] and are harmed by their own purpose and determination [*dianoia kai thesis*].”⁵³

This account (if successful) meets Leibniz’s requirements for a spontaneity compatible with causal determination. But Leibniz’s own mature metaphysics provides a short-cut to this conclusion: each created substance is a “world apart,” there being no metaphysical influx of properties from one substance to another. This is a central feature of his system of pre-established harmony, and Leibniz notes that it ensures that each substance is perfectly spontaneous (*Theodicy* §§59, 65, 296). Despite this, Leibniz’s account of the spontaneity of created substances faces a potential difficulty analogous to the one faced by Chrysippus. For Leibniz, the threat to spontaneity comes not from the causal force of sense impressions or objects of desire, but rather from the omnipotent God who creates these substances (all of whose actions will then play out in accordance with their own natures). The threat is that God seems to be the only real agent and cause, whereas creatures, including intelligent ones, are merely “dragged by fate.” And it is in this connection that Leibniz appeals to Chrysippus’s account of spontaneity, namely as that account appears in the texts and commentary given by Bayle.⁵⁴ Regarding the “cylinder of Chrysippus,” Leibniz remarks: “He is right in saying that vice springs from the original constitution of some minds” (*Theodicy* §335).

Bayle objects that the shapes of Chrysippus’ cylinder and cone do have their own more remote external causes, for example in their craftsman: the analogy thus implies that our

⁵² The Cicero passage appears as SVF 2.974 = LS 62C.

⁵³ Chrysippus *ap.* Gellius 7.2.12 (LS 62D). See Bobzien 1998 (255–71) for an analysis of these portions of Cicero’s *De Fato* and Gellius. The Gellius passage makes clear that the cylinder and cone represent good and bad moral characters.

⁵⁴ In his *Dictionary* article “Chrysippus,” Note H.

bad moral disposition likewise has various external causes—all of which could be traced to God as their ultimately cause. This objection to the cylinder analogy is not mentioned in extant ancient sources.⁵⁵ But, as Bayle notes, Plutarch levels the related but more general accusation that the Stoics's all-encompassing fate makes God the cause of all evil.⁵⁶ Bayle notes, further, that Lipsius ventures a response due to Seneca: the Stoics located evil not in God, but in the corruption of matter.⁵⁷ Since this response denies God's omnipotence, Leibniz obviously rejects it (*Theodicy* §333). But, significantly, Leibniz thereby rejects what appears to be a Platonizing tendency in Seneca that would concede to Plutarch that fate is not truly all-encompassing after all.⁵⁸

In keeping with his own account of spontaneity, Leibniz thinks of the cylinder and cone as analogous to substances *qua* merely possible essences (rather than to one's moral character at a particular time) and the push as analogous God's action in actualizing those essences. On Leibniz's account, the imperfections of created substances are already included in the essences of the best arrangement of compossible substances and hence are not due to a defect in or hindrance to God's action in actualizing those essences. To illustrate this, Leibniz draws his own analogy. God's action is like the current of a river, and substances are like boats of varying weights moving at different speeds down the river. The current does not slow down the heavier boats, but rather moves them forward as much as their own natures allow; and it is likewise not God's action that brings about sin, but rather the imperfection contained in the eternal essences of things (*Theodicy* §30). Leibniz thus remarks that the cylinder of Chrysippus "does not differ greatly" from his boat: "These comparisons tend toward the same end; and that shows that if we were sufficiently

⁵⁵ Bobzien nevertheless considers the prospects for a Stoic rejoinder to such an objection (1998: 290–301).

⁵⁶ *Dictionary* article "Paulicians," Note G, referring to Plutarch, *Not. comm.* 1076c–1077a.

⁵⁷ *Dictionary* article "Chrysippus," Note H, quoting Lipsius (*Physiologia stoicorum*, I §14), who quotes Seneca (*Quest. nat.* 1 *praef.* 16). Cf. Seneca, *De prov.* 5.9.

⁵⁸ Cf. note 86, below.

informed concerning the opinions of ancient philosophers, we should find in them more reason than is supposed" (§332).⁵⁹

8. Intelligence as the "Soul of Freedom" and the Freedom of the Sage

In the terminology of the early Stoics, action does not occur without assent (*sunkatathesis*) and a resulting rational impulse (*logike hormê*).⁶⁰ If one values as good (or disvalues as bad) what is by nature merely indifferent, then one will act foolishly. The cylinder analogy serves to remind us that no one is *forced* to respond foolishly to one's impressions: it is only because one continues to assent to false impressions that one continues to be foolish. There would be something paradoxical in complaining that one's own values are forced upon you.

Since both spontaneity and contingency are ubiquitous in Leibniz's system of pre-established harmony, Leibniz shares the Stoic view that it is intelligence that sets human beings apart from the rest of nature as beings who are responsible for what they do: intelligence is the "soul of freedom" (*Theodicy* §288).⁶¹ In a very early attempt at a theodicy, Leibniz appears to hold that such intelligence is even a *sufficient* condition for moral responsibility: only the sophistry of philosophers could lead one to deny that it is sufficient for freedom that the human being "can do what he wills and will what he finds good."⁶²

⁵⁹ Leibniz's treatment of Chrysippus' cylinder is discussed by Kuhn (1913: 65–6), Platz (1973: 189) and Rutherford (2001: 141).

⁶⁰ In a (possibly later) Stoic view reported by Nemesius (105–6), the distinguishing feature of free actions is that the impulse is based on judgment (*krisis*). See Salles 2005.

⁶¹ "[S]pontaneity and intelligence ... are found united in us in deliberation, whereas the beasts lack the second condition" (*Theodicy* §302). Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 3.2 1111b5–10, 1112a14–19. Thus: "true spontaneity is common to us and all simple substances, [but] in the intelligent or free substance this becomes mastery over its actions" (*Theodicy* §291).

⁶² "Von der Allmacht und Allwissenheit Gottes" §19, CP 23 = A VI.i 545. In this text, Leibniz appears to deny that spontaneity with respect to God is a condition on freedom: "it is enough that you did not want to give up your sinning and take responsibility for your salvation" (§13', CP 17 = A VI.i 542). And in his famous letter to Wedderkopf from the same year, Leibniz notes that necessity "takes nothing away from freedom because it takes nothing away from the will and the use of reason [... i.e.] the freedom of willing the best" (A II.i 117–18 = CP 4–5).

This basic approach carries over into Leibniz's mature period, supplemented of course by his accounts of spontaneity and contingency.

Within Leibniz's system of pre-established harmony, the ordinary difference between forced and unforced actions and, more generally, between things we do and things we suffer, is marked by the quality of the relevant perceptions. For example, when we speak of the mind being "affected" by the body or being "swayed by the passions arising out of corporeal representations," what is really going on is that the mind is "imperfect or confused," such that God accommodates the mind to the nature of the body; and when we speak of the body executing the orders of the mind, what is really going on is that the mind "has perfection and distinct thoughts" (*Theodicy* §66).⁶³ The problem on the horizon here is that if our intelligence or reason is what makes us responsible agents, then it seems that whenever that intelligence is defective we will also be less than fully responsible for what we do. The intelligence that grounds our freedom "involves a distinct knowledge of the object of deliberation," while "we are immune from bondage insofar as we act with distinct knowledge, but we are the slaves of passion insofar as our perceptions are confused" (*Theodicy* §§288–289). In one fragment, Leibniz defines 'freedom' as the spontaneity of an intelligent being and then later on concludes:

There is more freedom where more is done from reason, and there is more slavery where more is done from the passions of the soul. For the more we act from reason, the more we follow the perfection of our own nature. And surely the more we act from passions, the more we are enslaved to the power of external things. (G VII 108–109)

⁶³ See *New Essays* II.xxi.12, 19–21, 72, A VI.vi 177, 180–1, 210.

Although this manner of dependence on external things obviously could not do damage to the *spontaneity* of a monad or of a simple substance existing as a “world apart,” it might seem to do damage to the *freedom* of such a substance since its intelligence is what allows us to say that it is master and author of its actions (see “On Free Choice,” A VI.iv 1406–8).

The view that the person who acts according to reason instead of passion is *freer* can be traced to the Socratics. The Stoics, in particular, were known for asserting that the sage alone is truly free since he alone lacks the passions that make one dependent on external things. And Leibniz might seem to undermine his own account of moral responsibility by embracing this aspect of Stoicism.⁶⁴ But on the Stoic view, the fool is not *forced* to act in the way he does by the external things to which he has made himself dependent. It is the fool’s defective rational assent that engenders his dependence on external things rather than the other way around. Indeed, the early Stoics would have been little tempted to confuse the freedom possessed by the sage with the freedom required for moral responsibility since their word for ‘freedom,’ ‘*eleutheria*,’ was not used at all in the context defending their account of fate and moral responsibility.⁶⁵

Although Leibniz does not have the convenience of such a terminological segregation, he nevertheless recognizes the need to distinguish two very different senses of freedom here: in one meaning of ‘freedom to will,’ freedom contrasts with imperfection and *slavery*, and in another meaning it contrasts with *necessity*. “Employing the former sense, the Stoics said that only the sage is free,” and in this sense it is actually only God who is wholly free. But when we speak of ‘free will’ (*le franc-arbitre*), by contrast, we are not speaking of the degree of perfection of the intellect, but instead referring to the fact that motives of the

⁶⁴ Seidler (1985) notes the Stoic character of Leibniz’s account of psychic slavery and claims that Leibniz’s method for attaining a contrasting freedom reflects the influence of the Roman Stoics and as well as modern Neostoics such as Lipsius, DuVair, Grotius, and Scioppius. Seidler claims further, following Platz (1973: 177–8), that Leibniz’s reliance on these Stoic antecedents leaves him without a coherent conception of freedom (34–5).

⁶⁵ See Stough 1978, esp. 224, and Bobzien 1998.

intellect to do not *necessitate* but only *incline* us to action.⁶⁶ Leibniz's account of freedom as intelligent spontaneity supposes, with the Stoics, that we are morally responsible because we organize our practical lives around what we *take* to be best to do or because we act according to the *apparent* good (*Theodicy* §289).⁶⁷ By distinguishing the Stoic freedom of the sage from free will, Leibniz is able to assert without contradiction that "a free will and an enslaved will are one and the same thing" (§277).⁶⁸

10. Providence and Evil

We have seen that Leibniz objects that the "new Stoics" imagine God's creation to be an act of necessity that precludes any wisdom or providential care. But the ancient Stoics intended fate to embody providence (*pronoia*).⁶⁹ It is a Stoic view that the manifest goodness of creation—in terms of both the hospitability of the earth and the "ordered beauty" of the heavens—leads all peoples to agree on the existence of the gods (Cicero, *Nat. D.* 2.13–15). Indeed, the world could not be any better: anyone who tries "to improve some detail will either make it worse or will be demanding an improvement impossible in the nature of things" (2.86).

It is of course far from obvious that the universe we live in actually is the best: even if the heavens move in an orderly fashion, there is plenty of suffering here on earth. Stoic axiology seems to provide a ready response: virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness since only the health of the soul is a true benefit to its possessor. Epictetus thus stresses repeatedly that nothing can truly harm us except for our own opinion that something other than virtue is valuable. Thus one should consider one's children and one's

⁶⁶ *New Essays* II.xxi.8, A VI.vi 175–6.

⁶⁷ Leibniz criticizes Descartes for his "physiological" conception of the passions, stating that it is perhaps "useful for medicine" but "inadequate for morals." "The Stoics were wrong, perhaps, in defining the passions by general opinion as by their popular classification, but they were right in examining the opinions which contributed toward forming and maintaining these" (G III 427 = L 632; cf. *New Essays* II.xx.9, A VI.vi 167).

⁶⁸ Also see Forman 2008.

⁶⁹ See Frede 2002.

own well-being to be dispensable (*Ench.* 14 and 16). Otherwise, one will hate the gods when one's children are taken away or one experiences pain: the gods "govern the universe well and justly," but you will hate them unless you place your conception of good and bad "in those things alone that are within our power," namely our own good and bad dispositions (*Ench.* 31.1–2; see *Disc.* 1.22). In short: "If anyone suffers misfortune, remember that he suffers it through his own fault, since God created all human beings to enjoy happiness, to enjoy peace of mind" (*Disc.* 3.24.2). On this theodicy, God can be considered provident because the sufferings we experience and the injustices we perceive are actually not evils at all. God has given us everything we need to be happy (*Disc.* 1.6).⁷⁰

Leibniz is unwilling to follow the Stoic "cloud dwellers" in supposing that we could dispense with pleasure (A VI.i 464 = L 136). Hence he needs a different strategy for explaining how physical evil is part of the world produced by an omnipotent, provident God. Leibniz occasionally takes advantage of the privation theory of evil associated with Augustine, especially in the context of his own response to the Manichaeism that occupied Bayle (e.g. *Theodicy* §153). Leibniz links the privation theory to Stoicism insofar as he finds it expressed in Epictetus' claim that "just as a target isn't set up to be missed, so nothing that is bad by nature comes into being in the universe" (*Theodicy* §378).⁷¹ But Leibniz rejects the privation theory outright in earlier texts, relying instead on the strategy of contrasting our local and finite understanding of what is good and evil with an understanding that encompasses the whole universe. The beauty of things might not be apparent when things are "detached from their wholes," but we nevertheless can see by means of reflection on God that these detached things "must have not less of justice and beauty."⁷² In this vein, Leibniz derides

⁷⁰ This strand of Stoic thought is noted by Kuhn (1913: 61–2) and Rutherford (2001: 146–7).

⁷¹ Leibniz quotes a Latin version of *Ench.* 27 that appears (along with a discussion of Simplicius's commentary) in Bayle's *Dictionary* article "Paulicians," Note N.

⁷² "Meditation on the Common Concept of Justice" §1, PW 52–3.

those foolish critics of providence who, having heard a few beats of a song, rush headlong to an unreasonable judgment of the whole melody ... For they are not aware that in this near infinity of things ... it is impossible for a mortal, who is not yet purified, to grasp the whole melody. They do not recognize that these dissonances interspersed in the parts make the consonance of the universe more exquisite. ("Confessio philosophi," A VI.iii 146 = CP 103; see A VI.iii 126 = CP 53)

The same accounting for evil appears in Leibniz's mature thought: "the most distinguished masters of composition quite often mix dissonances with consonances."⁷³ Leibniz acknowledges Stoic antecedents to this view. He cites Chrysippus's view in this connection that "there are sometimes portions in a comedy which are of no worth in themselves and which nevertheless lend grace to the whole poem" and defends this view from the objections of Plutarch (*Theodicy* §334).⁷⁴

Bayle objects that God should be able to achieve what he wants without recourse to evil and connects the view that "the evil of the parts is often the good of the whole" (*Theodicy* §214) with the "blasphemous" Stoic view of Marcus Aurelius that God is narcissistically concerned to create a harmony pleasing to Himself (§217). Despite reaffirming here his own view that "evil serves to augment the good" (§216), Leibniz actually agrees with Bayle's negative assessment of Marcus. For Leibniz, Marcus's view amounts to the claim that we should be content with what happens to us "just because it is necessary" and can't be avoided.⁷⁵ Leibniz allows that this view could engender a tranquility of *patience*, but asserts that *contentment* could arise only if "the general good becomes in reality the good of those who love the author of all good" since "what for me would be an evil would not cease to be such because it would be my master's good, unless this good reflected back on me"

⁷³ *The Ultimate Origination of Things*, G VI 116 = AG 153.

⁷⁴ See Plutarch *Not. comm.* 1065d (which is extracted in Bayle's *Dictionary* article "Paulicians," note G).

⁷⁵ See Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 5.8.

(§217). To this end, Leibniz claims that when evils contribute to the good of the whole, it is at least in part because it contributes to the welfare of *human beings*. God wills physical evil “to prevent greater evils or to obtain greater good,” for “[e]vil often serves to make us savour good the more; sometimes too it contributes to a greater perfection in him who suffers it” (*Theodicy* §23). Thus “afflictions, especially those the good have, only lead to their greater good.”⁷⁶ God does not, by contrast, will moral evil (*Theodicy* §23), but he can nevertheless permit it since “it happens very often that it may serve as a means of obtaining good or of preventing another evil” (§24).⁷⁷

Despite his criticism of Marcus, Leibniz’s own more anthropocentric conception of the goodness of the world has its antecedents in early Stoic thought. Chrysippus and the Stoics claim against Epicurus and others who would deny providence that the gods are lovers of humankind (*philanthrôpoi*)⁷⁸ and that the gods made us “for our own and each other’s sake,” whereas animals are made for us: “horses to help us in war, dogs in hunting, and leopards, bears and lions to give us practice in courage.”⁷⁹ Chrysippus is reported by Plutarch to have claimed that bedbugs, too, serve human welfare since they prevent people from sleeping too long.⁸⁰ And even Epictetus asserts that there is a reason for his physical suffering: God is “training me and making use of me as a witness in front of everyone else” (*Disc.* 3.24.113). In this way, the Stoics do not simply deny that physical evils are evils, but instead say that they serve a human good or to else to punish the wicked. Plutarch

⁷⁶ *The Ultimate Origination of Things*, G VI 116 = AG 153.

⁷⁷ Thus the crime of Sextus Tarquinius “serves for great things” (§416; also see Cameron 1997). Leibniz also invokes the *felix culpa* in this connection (§10 and Appendix, G VI 377 = H 378; cf. “Examen religionis christianae,” A VI.iv 2359). See Kuhn 1913: 47.

⁷⁸ Plutarch, *Stoic. repug.* 1051d–e.

⁷⁹ Porphyry, *Abst.* 3.20.1 (SVF 2.1152 = LS 54P). The Stoic account in Cicero’s *Nat. D.* goes even further. God cares for human beings not merely in the sense that happiness is in our power because virtue is (see 2.167), but also such that providence even appears to be a “disciple of Epicurus” by providing swarms of delicious fish and other such gifts (2.160). Indeed, this bounty is intended *for man alone* even if animals sometime plunder it (2.157–8). Cicero links this account to Chrysippus by attributing to him the view (also noted in the Porphyry passage) that the soul of the pig serves the (anthropocentric) purpose of keeping its flesh from rotting (2.160).

⁸⁰ *Stoic. repug.* 1044d (LS 540).

complains that on this view punishment would be unjust since the origin of vice is itself “in accord with the reason of Zeus.”⁸¹ But Leibniz seems to positively embrace such a view—at least in an early letter: “Taken together with punishment or atonement, sins are good, i.e. harmonious. For there is no harmony except as a result of contraries.”⁸² Commenting later on Bayle’s claim that the rationalism of the Stoics leads them to the absurd view vice is *useful*, Leibniz notes that “they were right, it’s the truth”: without vice, there would be less virtue and it would be less great. And rejecting the ridicule heaped upon the Stoics by Plutarch, Leibniz affirms that even gout can be useful.⁸³ Leibniz’s principal complaint against the Stoics’s account of the usefulness of ~~the~~ evil is merely that “they fail by wanting to explain exactly how it is useful.”⁸⁴

For the mature Leibniz it is essential not just that God chooses the best world, but also that He wills the good and even the salvation of *each* rational being. To account for evil in this picture, he claims that insofar God considers us as detached from the whole, He aims at only our well-being through an “antecedent will,” but that on account of the logical limitations of what is compossible, God also wills a world in which we suffer evils through a “consequent will” (*Theodicy* §§22, 222).⁸⁵ In this scheme, physical evil often serves for “amendment and example” (§23). Leibniz remarks that “the ancient Stoics were not far removed from this system,” referring in particular to the claim attributed to Chrysippus that the original intention (*consilium principale*) of providence or nature was to bring about only what is good for human beings whereas evils are merely the inevitable consequences of the good things, arising not by nature (*kata phusin*), but rather by way of “concomitance” (*kata parakolouthêsin*). Leibniz notes, in particular, Chrysippus’s claims about the fragility of the human skull and our susceptibility to disease and to vice (*Theodicy* §209; see

⁸¹ *Stoic. repug.* 1050e (SVF 2.1176).

⁸² Letter to Wedderkopf (from 1671), A II.i 118 = CP 5.

⁸³ “Notes on Bayle’s *Dictionary* Article ‘Paulicians,’” FdC 185–6. (See Note G of Bayle’s article, referring to Plutarch, *Not. comm.* 1065d.)

⁸⁴ FdC 185. Leibniz repeats the claim at G IV 567 = L 582.

⁸⁵ Cf. Aquinas *ST* I^a q. 19 art. 6 ad 1.

§336).⁸⁶ Although the early Stoics do not claim that *matter* resists God's forming power, it is far from obvious (from our limited sources) how these attempts to deny a divine source for physical evil could be consistent with their account of an all-encompassing fate.⁸⁷ In that respect, Leibniz's view that these concomitances are due to wholly *logical* restrictions on what is compossible could be seen as an advance.

Leibniz complains that the "new Stoics" are able to admit providence in name only. For them,

there is no happiness other than the tranquility of a life here below content with its own lot, since it is madness to oppose the torrent of things and to be discontented with what is immutable. If they knew that all things are ordered for the general good and for the particular welfare of those who know how to make use of them, they would not identify happiness with simple patience.⁸⁸

Leibniz repeats this critique in the *Theodicy*, noting that although the *fatum Stoicum* did not divert men from their affairs (i.e. is not vulnerable to the idle argument), it gave men mere tranquility "through the consideration of necessity, which renders our anxieties and our vexations needless" and thus imparted a merely "forced patience" (Preface, G VI 30 = H 54). This matches Leibniz's account of the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, which instructs us how to achieve tranquil *patience*, but which cannot offer true *contentment*. For Leibniz, we can

⁸⁶ Leibniz does not present any of this material in his own words, but rather quotes a lengthy passage from Note T of Bayle's article on Chrysippus, which includes Gellius 7.1.7–13 (also in LS 54Q) together with Bayle's paraphrase and commentary. The skull example is due to Plato (*Tim.* 75b–c); see Bryan 2013.

⁸⁷ See Algra 2003: 170–3. Cicero relates a different Stoic argument for the view that providence pertains not just to the whole but to each individual (*D. Nat.* 2.164–167).

⁸⁸ G VII 334 = AG 282. See *Codex juris gentium*, Preface §13 (A IV.v 63 = PW 173–4); and *New Essays* IV.viii.9, A VI.vi 432 (where he claims that without the expectation of afterlife, the sage attains mere tranquil patience). Rutherford 2003 provides an analysis of the role of hope in Leibniz's theodicy and theories of virtue and happiness in a way that shows both important affinities and differences between Leibniz and Stoics.

be content only if we consider God as taking providential care of his creatures, particularly the rational ones. However, as we have seen, Leibniz's principal attempts in the area have Stoic antecedents that Leibniz acknowledges in the body of the *Theodicy*. In that regard, we can see that views of the early Stoics provide important materials for an account of fate that approaches what Leibniz calls the *fatum Christianum*, which says: "Do your duty and be content with that shall come of it, not only because you cannot resist divine providence or the nature of things (which may suffice for tranquility, but not for contentment), but also because you have to do with a wise master" (G VI 31 = H 55).⁸⁹

Further Reading

Kuhn's 1913 dissertation—which builds on a suggestion of his adviser Paul Barth (1908, 293–5)—remains the most complete treatment of the relation between the Leibnizian and Stoic theodicies. Rutherford's essays on the same general topic (2001, 2003) have a narrower but philosophically richer focus. Platz (1973) argues that Leibniz's compatibilist conception of freedom is in substantial agreement with Stoic views, particularly as the latter appear in Cicero's *De fato*. Spanneut (1973: 295–9) usefully collects some Stoic-sounding passages from Leibniz, but does not offer much by way of analysis and appears to follow Erdmann's questionable assumption that Leibniz's notes on Descartes' *On the Passions* (appearing under the name *De vita beata* at A VI.iii 636–644) represent his own views. In the essay "Αποκατάστασις" (translated as "Revolution") and related texts in the volume *De l' Horizon de la Doctrine Humaine* edited by Fichant (1991), Leibniz entertains and partly defends the ancient doctrine of the eternal return of the same; these texts are discussed by Fichant (1991a-b) and Rescher (2013, ch. 6).

⁸⁹ Also see Leibniz's Fifth Paper against Clarke §13 (G VII 391 = L 697–698). In the essay on fate discussed above, Leibniz implies that cosmological considerations alone are sufficient for such contentment (G VII 119–120) and hence form "the proper basis of the true religion" (121). In this text at least, there is no mention of the hope for justice apportioned in the next life, nor indeed of any anthropocentric considerations whatsoever. In short, Leibniz sounds like Marcus. But the *Theodicy* and other texts show that Leibniz is not satisfied with such a view.

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