

LEIBNIZ, A FRIEND OF MOLINISM

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Abstract: Leibniz is commonly labeled a foe of Molinism. His rejection of robust libertarian freedom coupled with some explicit passages in which he distances himself from the doctrine of middle knowledge seem to justify this classification. In this paper, I argue that this standard view is not quite correct. I identify the two substantive tenets of Molinism. First, the connection between the conditions for free actions and these free actions is a *contingent* one: free actions follow contingently from their sufficient conditions. Second, God knows what creatures would freely do in different possible circumstances *prevolitionally*—that is, prior to God willing anything. I argue that Leibniz himself endorses a version of both tenets and utilizes them for theoretical purposes similar to those of Molinists. I conclude that Leibniz is much closer to Molinism than is typically acknowledged. Leibniz is best characterized as a friend—rather than a foe—of Molinism.

Molinism is the view that God has prevolitional knowledge of contingent subjunctive conditionals of freedom—that is, of propositions of the form “if agent *S* were in circumstance *C*, then *S* would freely ϕ .”¹ This view has seen a resurgence in contemporary analytic philosophy.² There is again a live controversy over whether Molinism has the theoretical tools to plausibly reconcile a robust libertarian account of freedom with traditional theological commitments like divine foreknowledge and a robust account of divine providence.³ Like in most other philosophical debates, much light can be shed on the crucial philosophical ideas driving this controversy by looking at the historical context in which those ideas were first articulated and defended. Molinism was first advanced by sixteenth-century Jesuit Luis de Molina, from whom it gets its name, and it gave rise to fierce theological controversies between Jesuits and Dominicans regarding the nature of

¹ I spell out this view in more detail below.

² Alvin Plantinga (1974, 165–196; 1977) reintroduced Molinism to develop a compelling free-will defense in response to the problem of evil, and in doing so he placed Molinism back into mainstream philosophical discussion.

³ See for example, Craig 1988, 1990, 1994; Fales 2010; Fischer 2008; Gaskin 1993, 1994, 1998; Hasker 1986, 1989, 1992, 1999; Perszyk 1998a,b, 2011, 2013; Flint 1988, 1992, 1998, 1999; Adams 1977, 1991; O’Connor 1992.

freedom and its relationship to traditional theological commitments. This genesis of the Molinism controversy has already received fruitful attention in the secondary literature.⁴ There is a crucial development in the history of this controversy, however, that has been mostly neglected and even misunderstood in the secondary literature. This crucial development was advanced by Leibniz. In the present paper, I aim to fill some of this gap in the secondary literature by developing Leibniz's novel contribution to the history of the Molinism controversy. Understanding Leibniz's positions on these theological debates is intrinsically valuable, to be sure. Yet, I will argue, it can also shed important light into the contemporary debate. Leibniz challenges some central assumptions driving the controversy, and in so doing he opens conceptual space for a plausible and novel position that deserves a place in the contemporary discussion.

Leibniz's views on this topic have received some attention in the secondary literature, but mostly to portray him as a traditional opponent of Molinism.⁵ This common classification is not without reason. Leibniz objects to robust libertarianism, one of the main purported theoretical benefits of Molinism,⁶ because it violates his much-championed principle of sufficient reason (G 3.471-3; WFI 180; T §§175, 199, 303, 349; Grua 271, 176-7, 280).⁷ It would be contrary to wisdom to demand a freedom that violates this principle, Leibniz insists, providing a criticism reminiscent of Dennett's famous objection that libertarian freedom is not *worth wanting* (Dennett 1984). Furthermore, Leibniz also seems explicitly to dismiss a distinctive thesis of Molinism—namely, the doctrine of middle knowledge.⁸ He writes, for example, “Thus we can see that, in order to account for the foreknowledge of God, one may dispense with both the middle knowledge of the Molinists and the predetermination which a Bañez or an Alvarez

⁴ See for example, [Freddoso 1988](#), “Introduction”; [Kaphagawani 1999](#); [Smith 1966](#); [Murray 1995](#), 1996, 2004; [Craig 1988](#), 169–218.

⁵ See, for example, [Bruntrup and Schneider 2013](#), 97, 99; [Kaphagawani 1999](#), Ch. 6–7; [Begby 2005](#), 84; [Griffin 1999](#), 330–333, 2013, 145–184; [Greenberg 2005](#); [Davidson 1996](#), 104–105, 2005, 238, 2011. There are couple of exceptions to this trend: [Knebel \(1996\)](#) and [Anfray \(2002\)](#) argue that Leibniz endorses a version of middle knowledge.

⁶ This already constitutes an important departure from the common way of framing the debate regarding Molinism. As we shall see below, Leibniz utilizes core Molinist tenets to defend a non-libertarian conception of the kind of contingency that is required for freedom, thus carving intelligible conceptual space for these tenets divorced from libertarianism. It is worth noting that some contemporary libertarians find Molinism objectionable precisely because they think the kind of libertarianism that is accommodated by Molinists is not robust enough: [Hasker 2011](#) and [Zimmerman 2009](#), for example.

⁷ Where G = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*. Cited by volume and page. [Leibniz 1875–1890b](#); WFI = Leibniz's “New System” and Associated Contemporary Texts. Cited by page number. [Leibniz 1997](#); T = *Theodicy*. (1710). G 6:102–365. Cited by section number. [Leibniz 1985 \[1710\]](#); and Grua = *Textes inédits d'après des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque provinciale d'Hanovre*. [Leibniz 1948b](#).

⁸ I discuss this doctrine in more detail below. I also address the passages where Leibniz seems to distance himself from this doctrine.

(writers otherwise of great profundity) have taught” (T §47). This is not an isolated remark by Leibniz (see also, A 6.4.1660–61 n.145, and CD §§16, 17).⁹ Given all of this, it is no surprise that Leibniz is commonly classified as a foe of Molinism.

Yet, this common appearance is not entirely correct. It is my contention that closer inspection of Leibniz’s views reveals that he has remarkable affinities with the Molinist tradition. In fact, I shall argue that Leibniz himself endorses a version of two tenets essential to Molinism. These two substantive tenets of Molinism are the following. First, the connection between the conditions for free actions and these free actions is a *contingent* one: free actions follow contingently from their sufficient conditions. Second, God’s knowledge of what creatures would freely do in different possible circumstances is *prevolitional* (i.e., prior to God actually willing anything). In other words, God’s knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom is prior to or independent of God’s volitions.¹⁰ Because Leibniz endorses a version of each of these tenets, I conclude that far from being a foe, Leibniz is best characterized as a friend of Molinism.¹¹

My plan is the following. In [section 1](#), I present the basic tenets of traditional Molinism—I use Molina’s views as representative. I also contrast these views with Dominican Domingo Bañez, as representative of traditional Dominican views. In [section 2](#), I argue that Leibniz endorses a version of both Molinist tenets; in Leibniz’s hands, these tenets are significantly molded by his commitment to a strong version of the principle of sufficient reason. I illustrate how Leibniz’s version of these Molinist tenets allows him to provide a plausible account of providential control over creation. In doing so, it becomes clear that Leibniz’s views in this domain depart in several crucial respects from traditional Molinist views, like Molina’s, while still preserving the core of the two Molinist tenets. Thus, Leibniz’s views constitute a novel and plausible development in the history of the Molinism controversy.

⁹ Where A = *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Cited by series, volume, and page. [Leibniz 1923](#); and CD = *Causa Dei asserta per justitiam ejus, cum caeteris ejus perfectionibus, cunctisque actionibus conciliatam* (1710). G 6:439–462. [Leibniz 1875–1890a](#). English translation from S 114–145. Cited by section number. Where S = *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays*. Cited by page number. [Leibniz 1965](#).

¹⁰ For illuminating discussions on this second tenet of Molinism see: [Murray 1995, 1996, 2004, 2005](#); [Davidson 1996, 2005](#); and [Freddoso 1988](#). It is worth noting that early in his career Leibniz explicitly denied this tenet; he does this in *De Libertate, Fato, Gratia Dei et Connexis*, Grua 306–322 and A 6.4:1595–1612. [Leibniz 1948a](#).

¹¹ I use the admittedly vague category of ‘friend’ to gesture toward the important similarities between Leibniz’s views and those of Molinism. In the main text below, I articulate those similarities more carefully, yet a more precise classification of Leibniz’s views, in this domain, requires careful attention to the different versions of Molinism, especially as they developed in the early part of the seventeenth century. I illustrate some of these connections in [section 2.3](#), but I take the project of more precise classification of Leibniz’s views to be a slightly different project than the one I undertake in this paper.

1 Molina and the Doctrine of Middle Knowledge

1.1 The Basic Tenets of Middle Knowledge

Before addressing Leibniz's views, it is important to present the basic shape of the philosophical debates he saw himself as entering and in relation to which he defined his own views. Leibniz directly addresses Molina's views (DPG §16; T §§38-47; *Scientia Media* A 6.4.1373-4),¹² so this is a good place to begin. As Molina sees it, the doctrine of middle knowledge is a doctrine about God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom. This knowledge is said to be 'middle' because, according to Molina, it lies between the two other kinds of knowledge that God is traditionally said to have. These two other kinds of divine knowledge are traditionally known as "God's knowledge of simple intelligence" and "God's knowledge of vision."¹³ God's knowledge of simple intelligence is the kind of knowledge that God has in virtue of knowing His own essence and what follows from His essence, whereas God's knowledge of vision is the kind of knowledge that God has in virtue of knowing His will.

On the one hand, it is traditionally thought that what follows from God's essence are all and only necessary truths, and so that the objects of God's knowledge of simple intelligence are all and only necessary truths.¹⁴ Furthermore, because these truths are settled prior to any of God's actual decisions or volitions, God's knowledge of them is called 'prevolitional.' Molina talks about these propositions being true 'prior' to God's will. It is illuminating to state this priority using temporal language and thus think of these propositions as being true *before* God wills anything (C IV.52.10).¹⁵ As Molina sees it, however, this temporal language is only metaphorical, for Molina endorses the traditional doctrine that God is atemporal. The more accurate way of capturing the relevant priority is as ontological independence: these truths do not ontologically depend on God's will. Rather, God's will is constrained by these truths which He knows prevolitionally.

God's prevolitional knowledge is best understood in contrast to His *postvolitional* knowledge. God has the latter kind of knowledge in virtue of

¹² Where DPG = *Dissertation on Predestination and Grace*. Cited by section number. [Leibniz 2011](#).

¹³ God's knowledge of simple intelligence is also known as 'God's natural knowledge' and God's knowledge of vision is also known as 'God's free knowledge.' This terminology is commonly used in contemporary discussion and even Molina himself used it (C IV.52.10). Where C = Luis De Molina, *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia*. Cited by section number. [De Molina 1953](#).

¹⁴ Aquinas, for example, adheres to this (ST Ia.14.9, SCG 1.66.8). Where CT = Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Corpus Thomisticus: Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia*. [Aquinas 2001a](#); ST = Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*. In CT. Cited by part, question, and article numbers. [Aquinas 2001c](#); and SCG = Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*. In CT. Cited by book, chapter and section number. [Aquinas 2001b](#).

¹⁵ Please see [footnote 13](#) for more citation details.

knowing His own will—that is, God has this kind of knowledge by *willing*. In general, God has postvolitional knowledge that p by willing that p (C IV.52.9, 13). This kind of knowledge is labeled ‘postvolitional’ because it is posterior to or dependent upon God’s will or volitions. It is again illuminating to use temporal language and say that God has postvolitional knowledge *after* willing. Though, again, this is merely a metaphorical way of taking about ontological dependence.

In sum, God’s knowledge of simple intelligence is said to be both prevolitional and necessary. God’s knowledge of vision, on the other hand, is the kind of knowledge that God has in virtue of knowing His own will or more precisely by willing. Traditionally, the objects of God’s knowledge of vision are all and only contingent truths (ST Ia.14.9, 12; SCG 1.66.8). God’s knowledge of vision is thus both postvolitional and contingent.

God’s knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom lies between these kinds of knowledge because it fits into neither category and yet it shares characteristics with both; it is prevolitional, like God’s knowledge of simple intelligence, and it is contingent, like God’s knowledge of vision (C IV.52.9-10). As Molina sees it, then, the basic tenets constitutive of the doctrine of middle knowledge are the following (note that these are my labels):

Contingency Condition: Subjunctive conditionals of freedom are *contingent*.

Prevolitional Condition: God knows subjunctive conditionals of freedom *prevolitionally* (i.e., prior to God actually willing anything, or prior to any actual volition).

Middle Position Condition: God’s knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom is different from, and in some sense between, God’s knowledge of simple intelligence and vision.

The doctrine of middle knowledge gets its name from the Middle Position Condition, but, as already alluded to, I will argue that the philosophical substance of Molinism lies in the Contingency and Prevolitional conditions. In the next section, I will present Molina’s theoretical motivations for advancing these tenets.

1.2 Theoretical Motivations for the Three Tenets

As Molina sees it, the Contingency Condition shields freedom from the threat of causal necessitation. This condition requires that the connection between the conditions for action, specified in the antecedents of subjunctive conditionals of freedom, and the free actions, specified in the consequents, is a contingent one. Molina understands this kind of contingency in the following way: “a given future state of affairs is called contingent . . .

because it rules out . . . the fatalistic and extrinsic necessity that results from the arrangement of causes” (C IV.47.2; AF 86-7).¹⁶

As Molina sees it, the kind of contingency that matters for freedom requires lack of necessitation from causes and their arrangements—I shall call this kind of contingency ‘causal contingency.’ More precisely, a state of affairs *S* is causally contingent if and only if it is possible for *S* to obtain and possible for *S* not to obtain given all its causal conditions and their arrangements.¹⁷

The robustness of this kind of causal contingency depends on what should be included as conditions for free action. It is crucial for Molina’s understanding of causal contingency that the conditions for action include everything but the act of the will itself (C I.2.3). As Molina sees it, freedom requires the absence of necessitation from causes external to the agent and from causes internal to the agent that are external to the will. Thus, Molina insists, a will is said to be free only if nothing external to it necessitates its acts; that is, freedom requires that, given all conditions external to the will, it is possible for the will to act and possible for the will not to act.

This kind of causal contingency matters for freedom, Molina insists, because it opens conceptual space for understanding the will as a self-determining faculty. Molina insists that the self-determining nature of the will is protected only if all the conditions for action are insufficient to causally determine which of the possibilities will be actualized—that is, only if the connection between the conditions for action and the act of the will is causally indeterministic. Rather, freedom requires that it is the will that causally determines which of the alternative possibilities is actualized. A bit more precisely, the will is a self-determining faculty if and only if it is the will itself that determines which of the possibilities available to it (given all conditions for action excluding only the act of the will) is actualized. As Molina sees it, then, freedom requires a self-determining will, and the self-determining nature of the will requires causal indetermination and causal contingency. This is the core of the theoretical motivation for the Contingency Condition as understood by Molina.

The core of Molina’s theoretical motivation for the Prevolitional Condition, on the other hand, is the following. Molina thinks that it is not enough for freedom that the will is able to act or not to act given the sufficient conditions for action. It must also be the case, Molina insists, that how the will *would* act in different possible circumstances is not settled by divine decree. In other words, Molina thinks that if subjunctive conditionals of freedom have the truth value that they have due to divine decrees or volitions, then human freedom would be compromised. As Molina sees it, then, the Prevolitional Condition is essential for protecting human freedom because it prevents God’s will from having undue control over human actions.

¹⁶ Where AF = Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge* (Part IV of Concordia). Cited by page number. [De Molina 2004](#).

¹⁷ I will not further pursue the sense of ‘possible’ that is relevant for causal contingency.

Human freedom is preserved only if subjunctive conditionals of freedom have their truth independently of God's will (C IV.52.9, IV.53.1.20).

The final tenet of middle knowledge is The Middle Position Condition. As far as I can tell, the only theoretical motivation Molina presents for this condition is that neither God's knowledge of simple intelligence nor His knowledge of vision can contain His knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom; the reasons for this are the ones we have already discussed. Subjunctive conditionals of freedom must be contingent, and God's knowledge of them must be prevolitional; therefore, this kind of knowledge fits into neither traditional category of God's knowledge. This fact about Molina's theoretical motivation for advancing this third tenet clearly supports my contention that this tenet is not philosophically substantive. This will be quite clear in Leibniz's own views. Before looking at Leibniz's views, however, it is worth our while to see the doctrine of middle knowledge at work.

1.3 Middle Knowledge at Work

The doctrine of middle knowledge enables Molinists to reconcile libertarian freedom with several traditional theological doctrines. For example, it explicates how God can foreknow creature's future free actions. God foreknows what humans *will* freely do by knowing (via middle knowledge) what humans *would* freely do if they were placed in different circumstances, and by knowing (via knowledge of vision) in what circumstances He *will* place them. The integrity of human libertarian freedom is not threatened by God's foreknowledge because humans are free to act or not to act in the causally indeterministic circumstances they find themselves in just the way that Molinist think is required for freedom (C IV.52.10, 29). As we have already seen, this is guaranteed by Molina's understanding of the Contingency Condition.

There is an important complication to this basic picture, however. It depends on more than merely God's will whether an agent *S* will find herself in some circumstance *C*. Importantly, *C* includes free choices of other agents $S_1 . . . S_n$, and *ex hypothesi* God has no direct control over these free choices. This is, of course, no problem for the Molinist; it merely makes the Molinist explanation of divine foreknowledge more complex. For God to know what *S* will freely do, God also has to know what agents $S_1 . . . S_n$ will freely do, but God knows this as well. His middle knowledge also extends to agents $S_1 . . . S_n$. By knowing both what agents $S_1 . . . S_n$ would freely do together with His knowledge of vision, God knows in what circumstances *S* will find herself; and, as we have seen, by knowing the latter together with His knowledge of vision, God knows what *S* will freely do. And, of course, the same is true for God's knowledge of the circumstances in which agents $S_1 . . . S_n$ will find themselves, for these circumstances also include free choices of other agents,

and so on. This makes God's foreknowledge incredibly complex, but this is no problem for an infinite mind, so it is ultimately no problem for the Molinists account. In sum, for God to foreknow what a single agent will freely do requires knowing what many other agents will freely do, but the doctrine of middle knowledge provides God with the tools to do so while respecting the libertarian freedom of all agents involved.

The doctrine of middle knowledge also enables Molinists to retain a robust account of divine providence. The general doctrine of divine providence is the doctrine that everything that happens in creation happens because it is part of God's plan and is ultimately within His control.¹⁸ According to the Molinist, then, God has control over everything that happens in creation by having control over the circumstances in which creatures will find themselves and by knowing what they would freely do in those circumstances. That is, God's prevolitional knowledge of contingent subjunctive conditionals of freedom together with His control over which antecedents of these conditionals will be actualized suffices to provide a robust account of divine providence, Molina insists (C V.4.10).¹⁹ We will revisit providential control in [section 2.3](#).

1.4 A Contrast to Molinism: the Dominican Views

Before looking at Leibniz's contribution to the controversies surrounding Molinism, it is helpful to present the basic shape of the views advocated by the main opponents of traditional Molinism—namely, traditional Dominicans. I will use Domingo Bañez as representative of this alternative set of views.

Bañez postulates a kind of divine grace that causally necessitates human actions but is nonetheless compatible with human freedom. According to Bañez, God has the power to provide divine premotions that are intrinsically efficacious—that is, premotions which always bring about their intended result (i.e., efficacious), and that do so only in virtue of what they are in themselves and not in virtue of what they are in relation to something else (i.e., intrinsic; B 1.9.1-3, 1.9.7, 1.12.2, 1.14.3).²⁰ These divine premotions

¹⁸ This is just the core of the doctrine of Providence. This core is typically developed into a more robust doctrine by different philosophers or theologians. Molina, for example, insists that God's providence also provides the *end*, or that for the sake of which, everything in creation exists (C V.1.1.).

¹⁹ It is important to note that this kind of providential control has limitations imposed on God by the truth values of subjunctive conditionals of freedom. If it is true that *S* would freely ϕ if in *C*, then it is not possible for God to create *S* in *C* and have *S* not freely ϕ . Plantinga (1974, 165–196; 1977) relies on this kind of limitation on God's power to advance his free will defense. Flint (1998, 35–74) presents, as far as I can tell, the most detail articulation of the way in which middle knowledge limits providential control to make room for freedom.

²⁰ Where B = Domingo Bañez et Diego Alvarez, *Apologetica fratrum prædicatorum in provinciâ Hispaniæ sacræ theologiæ professorum, adversus novas quasdam assertiones cuiusdam doctoris Ludovici Molinæ nunciati*. Cited by section number. Bañez and Alvarez 1595.

are to be included in the conditions for action, and thus will ensure that an intended human action will come about. Bañez argues that in his infinite power God can necessitate a free human action even if it escapes human comprehension how this can be (B 1.16.7).²¹

According to his picture, then, God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom is included under God's knowledge of vision. That is, God knows the truths of subjunctive conditionals of freedom by willing that they be so; these conditionals are true because God wills it. God's knowledge of these conditionals is thus postvolitional; God foreknows what creatures would freely do if placed in different circumstances precisely by knowing whether or not *He* will provide or fail to provide necessitating promotions in those circumstances (B 1.14.3, 1.16.2). Divine providence is thus quite robust; God has direct control over everything in creation, including what humans *would* freely do. God has the freedom and control over whom to grant divine aids, and He also has the freedom and control over who would freely accept these graces. Furthermore, in His distribution of graces and execution of His divine plans, God invites no uncertainty and takes no risks precisely because God has the power to causally necessitate human free actions. God has infallible foreknowledge of how creatures will respond to divine graces by having power to provide graces that are impossible to resist. God's will to provide these necessitating promotions suffices to ground infallible foreknowledge and providential control over creation.²²

This is the basic shape of the contrasting accounts of divine foreknowledge and providence advanced by Dominicans. Because the Dominican views makes explicit use of divine graces to account for subjunctive conditionals of freedom, it is worth our while to see how the Molinists accommodated divine graces. Doing so would give us a fuller account of the kinds of debates that informed Leibniz's views.

According to Molina, the legitimacy of human freedom requires that nothing necessitate free actions, and this, Molina insists, applies to divine graces as well (C IV.52.10). That is, as Molina sees it, if God's graces necessitated human actions, these actions would not be free. For the traditional Molinist, then, divine assistances or graces are not necessitating; it is possible for these graces to fail to bring about their intended results. Furthermore, and crucially for our purposes, whether this possibility is actualized depends on the way free agents utilize their freedom. Humans retain the freedom to refuse divine graces, Molina insists. God's graces are to be included in the antecedents of contingent subjunctive conditionals

²¹ Bañez also accuses Molina of relying too much on his own understanding regarding the divine. The mere fact that Molina cannot conceive how God can causally necessitate a free human action does not count against God having this power. It is impious to rely on one's own conceptual powers in this way, Bañez insists (B 1.16.7).

²² For brief and illuminating discussions on Bañez's views in the secondary literature see Murray 1995, 1996, 2004, 2005; Freddoso 1988, Introduction; and Davidson 1996.

of freedom much like other conditions for action, and these conditionals including divine graces are to be understood as retaining the same kind of causal contingency as those that do not include these graces in their antecedents (C IV.53.30).

As Molina sees it, God's graces are intrinsically sufficient (they lack nothing in themselves for bringing about the desired effect) but only extrinsically efficacious (they bring about the desired effect only together with the extrinsic fact of the creature's free choice; C III.40.4-5, IV.53.30). It is possible for intrinsically sufficient graces to fail to bring about their intended result, and the actualization of this possibility is up to the Molinist self-determining will. However, this modal fact does not undermine the efficacy of intrinsically sufficient graces, nor does it invite any risk or uncertainty in God's plans or distribution of these graces. God knows with certainty that things will turn out in accordance with His plans by knowing with certainty His own causal contributions to creatures and by knowing with certainty contingent subjunctive conditionals of freedom. When God distributes merely extrinsically efficacious graces, He knows with certainty that these graces will not fail because He knows with certainty via His middle knowledge that the possibility of these graces failing will not be actualized by the creature's self-determining will. We can thus see how in the Molinist picture God can dispense intrinsically sufficient graces which respect the robustness of libertarian freedom while also being extrinsically efficacious and compatible with infallible divine foreknowledge and a robust account of divine providence.

This concludes my sketch of the debate between Jesuits and Dominicans that Leibniz entered and which informed his views on this topic. I turn next to Leibniz's novel contributions.

2 Leibniz and Molinism

Leibniz addressed the controversy between Jesuits and Dominicans on multiple occasions. He even wrote an entire treatise, *Dissertation on Predestination and Grace* (DPG), with the goal of reconciling analogous versions of these views in the Protestant tradition: Calvinists (whose views are roughly analogous to Dominican views) and Arminians (whose views are roughly analogous to Jesuit views). Leibniz presents a very interesting position. On the one hand, Leibniz agrees with the Dominicans that God has the power to provide intrinsically efficacious graces which are nonetheless compatible with human freedom (DPG §4). This is an important concession, yet, Leibniz insists, against the Dominicans, that these intrinsically efficacious graces are not necessitating, otherwise they would preclude human freedom (DPG §4). Additionally, Leibniz also insists that God's wisdom requires that He not rely on this kind of intrinsically efficacious graces unless it is necessary (DPG §4). As a result, and despite this important concession, Leibniz thinks

that in the vast majority of cases, God dispenses only extrinsically efficacious graces. Furthermore, and crucially for our purposes, despite accepting that God has the power to dispense intrinsically efficacious grace, Leibniz does not rely on these kinds of graces to ground the truth of subjunctive conditionals of freedom in God's will or volitions; that is, Leibniz refuses to construe God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom as postvolitional. Instead, Leibniz sides with Molinists in insisting that God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom is prevolitional. Because of this, Leibniz ends up siding with the Molinists on most of the disputes regarding divine foreknowledge and divine providence.²³

2.1 Leibniz on the Doctrine of Middle Knowledge

A main thesis of this paper is that Leibniz is best characterized as a friend of Molinism. This thesis might first appear to be a surprising one, for Leibniz sometimes seems to distance himself from the doctrine of middle knowledge. Leibniz writes, for instance:

[God's] knowledge of actual things, that is, of the world produced into existence and all past, present, and future states of the world, is called knowledge of vision. It differs from the knowledge of simple intelligence of this same world considered as merely possible only in that it contains, added to the latter, the reflexive knowledge whereby God knows his decree to produce it into actual existence. Nothing more is needed as a foundation for the divine foreknowledge. (CD §16; S p. 116)

There are more passages in which Leibniz articulates the same point (see, for example, CD §17; A 6.4.1789; Grua 349; A 6.4.1660-61 n.145). Yet, it would be a mistake to read these passages as rejections of all tenets that constitute the doctrine of middle knowledge. As I see it, the best way of reading these passages is as merely rejecting the Middle Position Condition—that God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom lies between His knowledge of simple intelligence and His knowledge of vision.

As we have seen, the Contingency and Prevolitional conditions constitute the philosophical substance of Molinism, and Molina himself seems to have endorsed the Middle Position Condition only because he thought it followed from the Contingency and Prevolitional conditions. Following tradition, Molina thought that God's knowledge of simple intelligence included all and only necessary truths (C IV.52.9-10). Leibniz, however, breaks from this tradition and allows that God's knowledge of simple intelligence includes

²³ As Michael Murray notes in DPG Introduction, p. xxxvii.

contingent truths.²⁴ Leibniz writes: “Knowledge of *simple intelligence* could be taken so as to include . . . not only the necessary connections, but also the contingent ones, that is, those which merely incline” (DPG §16a).

Because Leibniz departs from this tradition, he no longer has much philosophical motivation for endorsing the Middle Position Condition. As a result, he sometimes tries to ground God’s knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom in God’s knowledge of simple intelligence. He says: “The knowledge commonly called middle knowledge is contained in the knowledge of simple intelligence” (CD §17). There are many similar passages (see, for example, DPG §§16a, 49a; T §42; A 6.4.1789).

At other times, Leibniz is willing to accept something like the Middle Position Condition, but treats this issue as a merely terminological one. He suggests, for example:

If, however, one wants a knowledge midway between the knowledge of simple intelligence and the knowledge of vision . . . one could assign to middle knowledge not only the knowledge of conditional future events but, generally, the knowledge of all contingent possibles. Thus knowledge of simple intelligence would be taken in a more restricted sense, namely, as dealing with possible and necessary truths, while the knowledge of vision would deal with contingent actual truths. Middle knowledge and knowledge of simple intelligence would have this in common, that they both deal with possible truths, while middle knowledge and the knowledge of vision would both deal with contingent truths. (CD §17)²⁵

Here Leibniz is willing to accept that God’s knowledge of subjunctive conditionals is in some sense between God’s knowledge of simple intelligence and knowledge of vision. Importantly for our purposes, Leibniz is treating endorsing the Middle Position Condition as something of mere terminological convenience. Thus, it seems that for Leibniz this tenet is not a substantive one. Hence, it is most reasonable to treat the passages in which Leibniz seems to reject the doctrine of middle knowledge as merely rejecting that there is anything of philosophical substance in the Middle Position Condition. This rejection, of course, should not be treated as also rejecting either of the two substantive Molinist tenets.

²⁴ Carriero (1995) makes the same point. He writes “Leibniz’s ‘compromise’, however, involves a quiet but important break with the tradition over God’s knowledge of simple intelligence. Leibniz includes contingent truths (e.g., ‘Judas will betray Christ’) under God’s knowledge of simple intelligence, whereas both the Molinist and their adversaries restricted such knowledge to necessary truths (e.g., ‘It is possible that Judas will betray Christ’)” (6).

²⁵ Note: I have modified the translation a bit to better fit the terminology in this paper. I translated ‘scientia’ as ‘knowledge’ and ‘media’ as ‘middle’ instead of Schrecker’s ‘science’ and ‘intermediate.’

2.2 Leibniz on the Substantive Molinist Tenets

In the previous subsection, I argued that the passages in which Leibniz seems to distance himself from the doctrine of middle knowledge are best understood as denying any philosophical substance to the Middle Condition Position. In the present subsection, I will argue that Leibniz endorses a version of the two substantive tenets of Molinism—namely, the Contingency and the Prevolitional conditions.

2.2.1 Leibniz on the Contingency Condition

The first substantive tenet of the doctrine of middle knowledge, the Contingency Condition, states that the connection between the conditions for action specified in the antecedent and the free action specified in the consequent is a contingent one. Leibniz explicitly endorses this tenet:

When we propose a choice to ourselves, for example, whether to leave or not, it is a question whether, with all the circumstances, internal or external, motives, perceptions, dispositions, impressions, passions, inclinations taken together, I am still in a state of contingency, or whether I am necessitated to take the choice to leave, for example, i.e., whether in fact this truth and determined proposition—in all these circumstances taken together, I will choose to leave—is contingent or necessary. I reply that it is *contingent*. . . . And assuming that by freedom of indifference we understand a freedom opposed to necessity (as I have just explained it), I agree with that freedom. (*Letter to Coste, On Human Freedom*, G 3.400-4, AG p. 194)²⁶

Here Leibniz describes a conditional whose antecedent includes all conditions for a given free action and whose consequent describes this free action, and clearly states that he takes the connection between these to be a contingent one. Leibniz's account of this kind of contingent connection, however, is significantly different from the accounts of traditional Molinists like Molina. As we have seen, it is essential to Molina's understanding of freedom that it requires the connection between conditions for action and free actions to be causally indeterminate. Leibniz, on the other hand, thinks that such a radical contingency is problematic because it violates his strong version of the principle of sufficient reason. For the strictures of this principle to be satisfied, it must be the case that the free actions specified in the consequents be *explained* by the conditions for action specified in the antecedents; these conditions for action must explain why the free action is the way it is and not otherwise. This, however, is compatible with free

²⁶ Where AG = *Philosophical Essays*. Cited by page number. Leibniz 1989.

actions being contingent, Leibniz insists, because these conditions for action merely *incline* but do not necessitate these actions. Leibniz writes:

Freedom of the will consists in that wherein we act not only spontaneously but also in a deliberated way; nor are we necessitated to what we decide, but only inclined to it. . . . Now every effect is determined by its causes and their dispositions, such that there is always some reason why it exists rather than not, . . . the reasons that determine a free cause are never necessitating but only inclining, and to that extent the indifference or contingency in them is preserved. (*On God and Man*, G 3.28-38, LGR 297)²⁷

Leibniz's basic philosophical insight here is that determination and necessitation come apart. That is, conditions for action fully explain, and thus determine, those free actions, but this determination need not amount to necessitation. What this doctrine of inclination without necessitation amounts to is itself a large and vexed topic in Leibniz scholarship, and the details need not detain us here. It will suffice for our present purposes to adumbrate the core idea underlying what I take to be a plausible interpretation of Leibniz's account of contingency as inclination without necessitation.²⁸

The basic idea of my interpretation is based on Leibniz's account of the will, which I think is best understood as returning to a more traditionally Thomistic account. As Leibniz sees it, the will of a rational agent is a rational inclination whose strength is proportionate to the apprehended goodness of the object of choice. Importantly, rational inclinations in the agent *just are* merely inclining reasons, and these rational inclinations are constitutive parts of what it is for an agent to be rational in a value-responsive sense. If the apprehended goodness is maximal, the choice of a rational agent is necessitated by the goodness of the object of choice, and if the apprehended goodness is not maximal, the choice of a rational agent is only *contingently* inclined (i.e., not necessitated) by the goodness of the object of choice.

Crucially for our purposes, rational inclinations together with the apprehended goodness of the object of choice suffice to explain actions *qua* rational actions in a way that meets the strictures of the principle of sufficient reason. This kind of explanation is one that does not require that the explanans necessitate the explanandum, for value-responsive rationality does not require that rational action be necessitated by the apprehended goodness of the object of choice. The rational inclination of a rational agent together with the apprehended goodness of the object of choice determines rational action, *qua* rational action, but it does not necessitate it.

²⁷ Where LGR = *Leibniz on God and Religion*. Cited by page number. [Leibniz 2016](#).

²⁸ I dedicate one chapter of my dissertation to defend and elaborate this view.

The details of this account need not detain us here. What matters for our purposes is that Leibniz endorses a version of the Contingency Condition. Yet, Leibniz's views depart from traditional Molinism in important ways, and this is manifested in Leibniz's account of the contingent connection between conditions for action and free actions which meet the strictures of the principle of sufficient reason. Despite these differences in details, the crucial fact for our purposes is that Leibniz endorses a version of the Contingency Condition.

2.2.2 Leibniz on the Prevolitional Condition

The second substantive Molinist tenet is the Prevolitional Condition. This tenet states that God knows subjunctive conditionals of freedom prior to His will being involved or prior to any volition. In this section, I will argue that Leibniz endorsed a version of this tenet.

An important complication for Leibniz's views in this domain, and another departure from traditional Molinism, is that his strong version of the principle of sufficient reason requires that all effects can in principle be known and made intelligible on the basis of their causes. This applies to future contingents as well. Leibniz insists: "[It] is both most true and implied in our view . . . that even future contingents are known determinately from their causes" (DPG §16a). This understanding of the principle of sufficient reason has important consequences for understanding God's knowledge. As Leibniz sees it, it is not enough that God knows all truths; God must be in a position to understand why all truths are the way they are and not otherwise on the basis of their causes. More directly relevant for our purposes, God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom requires that God know the free actions specified in the consequents on the basis of the conditions for action specified in the antecedents.²⁹ Leibniz writes, for example:

Yet there remains the difficulty urged by some against divine omniscience, namely how can God know what another mind will choose according to the pleasure of its own free will? . . . [We can] solve the problem without difficulty, for since God foresees contingent things from his own free decrees, he will also know from those what the state of a free mind deliberating about some choice will be at any given

²⁹ This marks a crucial difference between Leibniz's views and those of Francisco Suarez, another great defender of middle knowledge. Suarez relies on the principle of conditional excluded middle as sufficient grounds for God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom. This principle is the principle that for any pair of conditional proposition of the form "If it were the case that *P*, it would be the case that *Q*" and "If it were the case that *P*, it would be the case that not *Q*" one of these conditional propositions is true. See Suarez, *Tractatus de gratia Dei*, II, cap. VII, §21, OO vol. 7, 94. Where OO = Francisco Suarez, *Opera omnia*. Cited by volume and section. [Suarez 1856–1878](#).

time, i.e., how the arguments for each side will appear to it. Therefore he knows on which side of those presented the greater good or evil will be found, and hence what a mind will freely but certainly choose. From this it is also straightforwardly obvious how God knows what any free mind would choose if it were to find itself in any situation which nevertheless will not actually occur. (*Rationale of the Catholic Faith* §7, LGR 74-75)

Here Leibniz argues that God knows what a free agent would do on the basis of knowing how things would appear to this agent. How things would appear to an agent is part of the agent's deliberation process, and thus part of the conditions for free choice.

It is crucial to note that Leibniz is not merely talking about what will *in fact* happen to any substance, but also about "any situation which nevertheless will not actually occur." That is, Leibniz is not just talking about future contingents; he is also talking about subjunctive conditionals some of whose antecedents will not be realized. God knows what agents would freely do even in situations in which those agents are never going to be. As Leibniz sees it, God has knowledge of free actions on the basis of their conditions for action; or, in other words, God has knowledge of the truth of subjunctive conditionals of freedom by knowing how the free actions specified in the consequents are explained by the conditions for actions specified in the antecedents. This understanding of the implications of Leibniz's version of the Prevolitional Condition, on the basis of the strictures of the strong version of the principle of sufficient reason, also marks a significant departure from traditional Molinist views like Molina's.

Leibniz utilizes his version of the Prevolitional Condition in much the same way as traditional Molinist do—namely, to account for fundamental theological commitments. For example, Leibniz uses this view to illustrate how God distributes the graces required for salvation. He notes:

Undoubtedly, it must be conceded that God foresees conditionally how someone would use his free choice, were certain aids are afforded; and relying on knowledge of that, along with knowledge of all others, He renders his decisions concerning the division of humanity with respect to salvation. (DPG §9d)

This passage sounds as if it were written by a traditional Molinist. God's decision to elect some people for salvation depends on His knowledge of what people would freely do if afforded different kinds of divine graces or aids. In traditional Molinist fashion, in this passage it seems clear that God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals is prevolitional, and so it limits God's actual decisions. And God's foreknowledge about salvation itself is postvolitional—the result of deciding what to do given the constraints provided by the prevolitional knowledge about what possible creatures

would do. Hence, it is clear that Leibniz endorses a version of the Prevolitional Condition and utilizes it to account for fundamental theological doctrines in much the same spirit as traditional Molinists.

2.3 Divine Freedom and Providential Control

So far, I have shown that Leibniz endorses a version of both substantive Molinist tenets, and so that he is best characterized as a friend, rather than a foe, of Molinism. What still needs to be established is that Leibniz's views in this domain constitute a novel and plausible advancement in the history of the Molinism controversy, rather than some minor variation. A good way of taking a firm step in this direction is by presenting how Leibniz's views accommodate divine providential control over creation. In the process of articulating Leibniz's account of providential control, crucial details of Leibniz's version of the two substantive Molinist tenets will come to the fore and their novelty and unique strengths will become more apparent.

At first sight, it may seem that Leibniz is committed to a very attenuated version of providential control, because Leibniz insists that God's knowledge of a single complete individual concept provides God with enough information to know everything that is ever going to happen to the corresponding substance, if created (DM §9).³⁰ Leibniz writes:

[S]trictly speaking it is neither the foreknowledge of God, nor his decisions, that determines the sequence of things, but the *mere comprehension* of possibles in the divine understanding; or the idea of this world, seen as a possibility prior to the decision to choose and create it. It is therefore the nature of things themselves which produces their sequence, prior to all decisions [of God]; God chooses only to actualize that sequence, the possibility of which he finds ready-made. (*Leibniz letter to Jaquelot, September 1704, §4, WFI 188*)

Here Leibniz insists that God's decisions do not determine the sequence of things, but that God merely decides to actualize a 'ready-made' possibility found in His intellect. This seems to deprive God of active control over anything that happens to any given possible substance beyond creating or not creating it as found in His intellect. This indeed seems like a very thin conception of providential control.

However, Leibniz also insists that God's plans, resolutions and deliberations are essential to the very building of possible worlds. Leibniz insists:

³⁰ Where DM = *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686). G 4:427–463. [Leibniz 1875–1890c](#); English translation from AG 35–68. Cited by section number.

So no human event could not fail to happen as it actually has happened, once the choice of [creating] Adam is made; but not so much because of the individual notion of Adam, although that notion involves it, but because of God's plans, which also enter into that individual notion of Adam, and which determine that of the whole of this universe, and consequently both that of Adam and that of the other individual substances of this universe. For each individual substance expresses the whole universe of which it is a part according to a certain relation, thought the interconnectedness which exists between all things because of the links between God's decisions and plans. (A 2.2.73-4, WFII 107-108)³¹

In passages like this one, it seems quite clear that Leibniz wishes to endow God with a robust amount of active control over creation and the very building of the content of possible worlds. In fact, Leibniz seems to give God's plan some important explanatory priority. He insists that Adam's complete individual concept is what it is, or contains what it contains, "because of God's plans," which are part of its content.

Leibniz seems to be in an uncomfortable position here. On the one hand, Leibniz insists that complete individual concepts are in some sense already made in God's intellect prior to God's actual free decisions. On the other hand, Leibniz also insists that God actively plans and decides what goes into the actual world. In the quoted passage, for example, Leibniz says that it is "God's decisions and plans" that are partly constitutive of Adam's complete individual concept itself, and by implication the entire possible world which Adam mirrors. Thus, Leibniz wants to say that God's knowledge of the content of entire complete individual concepts is in some sense prevolitional, for it is simply 'found' in His intellect, yet there is also an important sense in which God's plans, decisions, and resolutions are constitutive of the very content of these complete individual concepts and have explanatory priority.

I believe that Leibniz can have it both ways. The key idea that enables him to do so is that included in possible worlds, and in complete individual concepts themselves, are God's free decisions considered as possible, or possible free decrees.³² The basic idea here is that in the very prevolitional construction of a possible world in God's intellect, God's will is not entirely absent. The construction of a possible world does take place prior to any of God's *actual* decisions or decrees, but, crucially, this process includes God's *possible* free involvement with the created world. Leibniz writes:

³¹ Where WFII = *Philosophical Texts*. Cited by page number. [Leibniz 1998](#)

³² Anfray (2002) points out interesting similarities between Leibniz's views on divine possible decrees and the views of early seventeenth-century Jesuit Gabriel Vazquez.

God's free decisions, considered as possible, enter into the notion of the possible Adam, and the actualizing of these same decision is the cause of the actual Adam. I agree . . . that possibles are possible before any of God's actual decisions, but not without sometimes presupposing those same decisions considered as possible. For the possibilities of individuals or of contingent truths involve in their notion the possibility of their causes, namely God's free decisions. (LA 5, July 1686, WFII 107)³³

As Leibniz sees it, Adam's complete individual concept already includes God's free decisions considered as possible, or God's possible free decrees. Furthermore, these possible free decrees are included in the conditions for human action, and thus are included in the antecedents of subjunctive conditionals of creaturely freedom. God's knowledge of these conditionals is thus prevolitional in the sense that they have their determinate truth value prior to God's actual will being involved or prior to any of God's actual volitions. However, God's will is not entirely absent from the determination of these conditional truths, for God's possible free involvement with these possible creatures is already included in the content of His prevolitional knowledge. That is, Leibniz only endorses the Prevolitional Condition with respect to God's actual will, but not with respect to God's possible will.

This mixed view provides Leibniz with some theoretical tools not available to Molina. Crucially for our purposes, on Leibniz's view God can have prevolitional knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of freedom about Himself (i.e., "if God were in C, God would freely ϕ "). Leibniz notes:

God knows future absolute things [*futura absoluta*] because he knows what he has decreed, and future conditionals [*futura conditionata*] because he knows what he would have decreed. Moreover, he knows what he would have decreed, because he knows what in this case would be best, for he would have decreed the best. (*Scientia Media*, CP 133, A 6.4.1374)³⁴

Leibniz does not utilize our terminology here, but during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was common to use the expression '*futura absoluta*' to talk about future contingents and the expression '*futura conditionata*' to talk about subjunctive conditionals. The most natural reading of this passage, then, is that God has *postvolitional* knowledge of future contingents, and *prevolitional* knowledge of subjunctive conditionals of creaturely freedom partly on the basis of His *prevolitional* knowledge of

³³ Where LA = *The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence*. G 2:3138. Cited by letter and section number. Leibniz and Arnauld 1967.

³⁴ Where CP = *Confessio Philosophi: Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil, 1671-1678*. Leibniz 2005.

subjunctive conditionals about Himself.³⁵ If so, Leibniz's view allows that the antecedents of subjunctive conditionals of human freedom include what God *would do*, and not merely what God *could do*.³⁶ In other words, Leibniz has the theoretical tools to allow for two kinds of possible divine decrees to be included in complete individual concepts: a) those representing what God could freely do in circumstance C; and b) those representing what God would freely do in circumstance C. Allowing possible divine decrees of kind (b) as ingredients in the very building of complete individual concepts, and thus also possible worlds, enables Leibniz's God to have a significant amount of *control* in the very prevolitional building of possible worlds. This kind of control in the process of building possible worlds is analogous to the kind of active control that the God of traditional Molinists has in arranging creation.

To better appreciate this, consider the following comparison. As the traditional Molinist sees it, prior to creation God had prevolitional knowledge of a set of essences of possible creatures and a set of conditional truths about them (subjunctive conditionals of creaturely freedom). God has a significant amount of control, for He is free to create any subset of essences, and place them in any circumstances He wishes, depending on His plans for them. Furthermore, a single essence is compossible with an infinite number of ways in which it can come together with other essences in different circumstances. In actively deciding which essences to actualize, and in what circumstances to place them, God is actively building the entire actual world in accordance with His plans.³⁷

At first glance, Leibniz's God seems to face a significantly different creation situation. However, an analogous process of building a possible world takes place prevolitionally in God's intellect in Leibniz's picture.

³⁵ Griffin (2013, 165–184) provides a different reading of this passage. Griffin thinks that Leibniz is saying that God knows what He would do by *willing* it, and so that God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals about Himself is postvolitional.

³⁶ Molina can accommodate the latter (C IV.52.31.), but not the former. Molina insists that God's knowledge regarding His own will is *postvolitional* (C IV.52.13.). Molina worries that God's freedom would be compromised if He knew what He would do in a particular set of circumstances prior to actually willing anything. Such infallible prevolitional knowledge about Himself would render His decisions necessary and thus undermine His freedom, Molina insists (C IV.53.19.). This claim does not introduce a double standard for human and divine freedom, however. The worry is a general one. Any agent who knows prevolitionally, and with certainty, what she would do in a particular set of circumstances is thereby deprived of the contingency of her actions and thus of her freedom (C IV.52.12, IV.53.19.). Humans cannot, in principle, have this kind of knowledge about themselves (C IV.52.11.), however, so middle knowledge places no legitimate threat to human freedom. It is important to note that Suarez, another great defender of middle knowledge, disagrees with Molina here. As Suarez sees it, the principle of conditional excluded middle (see footnote 29) suffices for God to have prevolitional knowledge about Himself as well—otherwise it would constitute a limitation of His omniscience, Suarez insists. See Suarez, *Tractatus de gratia Dei*, II, cap. VII, §§20–21, cap. VIII, §5, OO vol. 7, 93–4, 98 (see footnote 29 for further citation information). Suarez's views thus mark a position midway those of Molina and Leibniz.

³⁷ Flint (1998, 35–74) presents a precise and detailed account of this basic picture.

By including possible divine decrees of type (b) in the very prevolitional process of building a complete possible world, Leibniz's God has a kind of *prevolitional control* over the very content of complete individual concepts themselves, for this process includes what God *would* freely do. That is, the very content of complete individual concepts themselves depends partly on God's possible will (including, importantly, what God would do). God decides, or wills, which complete possible world to create, but importantly, the very content of possible worlds depends on God's possible free decrees of both type (a) and (b).

The best of all possible worlds, as found in God's intellect, is best partly because it includes prevolitionally what God would freely do, or possible divine decrees of type (b). God wills to create this world because it is best, but possible divine decrees of type (b) are partly constitutive of the best possible world being the best. Because the very content of the best possible world depends on God's possible will, God has a kind of control in arranging creation. The kind of control that Leibniz's God has in arranging creation, via His possible free decrees of type (b), is analogous to the kind of control that the traditional Molinists' God has, via His actual will. Divine freedom as control over the content of creation seems preserved to similar extents on both views, though in importantly different respects.

3 Conclusion

There is again a live controversy surrounding the plausibility of Molinism. In contemporary discussions, Leibniz is commonly classified as a foe of Molinism. Leibniz's explicit rejection of the main purported theoretical benefit of Molinism—namely, a robust libertarian account of freedom, together with some remarks in which Leibniz seems to distance himself from the doctrine of middle knowledge—seems to provide ample support to this common interpretation of Leibniz. I have argued, however, that closer inspection Leibniz's texts reveal that his views are much closer to Molinism than is commonly acknowledged in the secondary literature, for Leibniz endorses a version of both substantive Molinist tenets—namely, the Contingency and Prevolitional Conditions. Leibniz's version of these tenets is significantly molded by his commitment to a strong version of the principle of sufficient reason, and, as such, is not to be simply assimilated to traditional Molinism. Instead, Leibniz's views constitute a novel and plausible development that deserves a place in contemporary discussions about the plausibility of Molinism.

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