

# Protestant Scholasticism and the Philosophy of Gottfried Leibniz

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Secular readings of G. W. Leibniz are traceable to his own day and continue to the present.<sup>1</sup> Viewed through the secular lens, Leibniz is a product of Modern rationalism; and, though he may retain a superficial commitment to Christianity, the sincerity of his Christian commitment is questionable, as is the orthodoxy of the philosophical theology he espouses. Leibniz's views on free choice and providence are a quintessential example of this type of assessment.

Just prior to Leibniz's death in 1716 and continuing thereafter, the eighteenth century is pregnant with accusations that Leibniz espouses a deistic God-world relationship in his notion of pre-established harmony.<sup>2</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations of Leibniz's works are as follows: A = *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, hg.v. The Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (Darmstadt, 1923-, Leipzig, 1938-, Berlin, 1950-); B = *Die Leibniz-Handschriften der Königlichen öffentlichen Bibliothek zu Hannover*, hg.v. Eduard Bodemann (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966); C = *Opusculæ et fragments inédits de Leibniz*, hg.v. L. Couturat (Paris, 1903); Careil = Foucher de Careil, *Nouvelles Lettres et opusculæ inédits de Leibniz* (Paris, 1857); E = *Opera philosophica quae exstant latina, gallica, germanica omnia*, hg.v. J. E. Erdmann (Berlin: G. Eichler, 1839-40); G = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, hg.v. C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1875-90); GP = *G. W. Leibniz, Mathematische Schriften*, 7 vols., hg.v. C. I. Gerhardt (1849-63, reprinted 1971 Hildesheim: Olms); Grua = *G. W. Leibniz: Textes inédits*, hg.v. G. Grua (Paris, 1948); P = *Leibnizens Gesammelt Werke*, Reihe I, vol. 4, hg.v. G. H. Pertz (1847 Hanover). Citations of Leibniz's writings are embedded in the body of the essay. The following translations are employed throughout: *Leibniz: Philosophical Writings*, hg.v. G., H. R. Parkinson, trans. Mary Morris / G., H. R. Parkinson (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1973); and G. W. LEIBNIZ, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God and the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, trans. E. M. Huggard (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1997). Translations have been modified based on the original Latin / French where necessary.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., "An Account of the Book Entitled *Commercium Epistolicum Collinii Aliorum, De Analysipromota*; Published by order of the Royal-Society, in relation to the Dispute between Mr. Leibnitz and Dr. Keill, about the Right of Invention of the Method of Fluxions, by some call'd the Differential Method," *The Royal Society of London, Philosophical Transactions (1683-1775)*, Vol. 29, No. 342 (1714), 224; THOMAS REID, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: John Bell / G., G., J. & J. Robinson, London, 1788), 338-39; THOMAS REID, *Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man*, 3 vols. (Dublin: P.

metaphysic, combined with Leibniz's rejection of freedom as indifference (e.g., C., 25; Grua., i, 384-86), was taken by many to be clear evidence of his necessitarianism.<sup>3</sup> In the 1800s the assumptions of the 1700s continued,<sup>4</sup> but were coupled with a new-found distrust of the Augustinian notion of moral necessity in God and angels, a notion Leibniz defends.<sup>5</sup> These necessitarian suspicions reached their height in the late-1800s/early-1900s, when Leibniz was

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Byrne / J. Milliken, 1790), vol. 1, 263-64; and, though less explicit, JULIEN OFFFRAY DE LA METTRIE, *Œuvres philosophiques* (Berlin: chez Jean Nourse, 1751), 222-26. Note also the exchange between Louis Racine, Le Chevalier De Ramsey, and Alexander Pope, which—though nowhere referencing Leibniz, only fatalism and errors of the Spinozists and the deists or deism (LOUIS RACINE, *La religion, poème; par Monsieur Racine, De l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres*, 2 vols. [Londres, 1785], 299; 301; 303; and 306)—Pope lists this correspondence under the heading, “As some passages in the Essay on Man have been suspected of favouring the schemes of Leibnitz and Spinoza, or of a tendency towards Fate and Naturalism, it is thought proper here to insert the two following Letters, to show how ill-grounded such a suspicion is,” thus indicating that Leibniz was understood by, at least Pope, to be synonymous with Spinozistic fatalism, deism, or both. See ALEXANDER POPE, *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, with His Last Corrections, Additions, and Improvements. From the Text of Dr. Warburton. With the Life of the Author.*, 2 vols. (London: Paternoster-Row, 1795), vol. 1, 243. Exceptions in the 1700s include JOHANN JAKOB BRUCKER, *The History of Philosophy, from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Present Century; Drawn up from Brucker's Historia Critica Philosophiæ. By William Enfield, LL.D.*, 2 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1791), vol. 2, 563-65; as well as William Jones, who, while not giving an extensive treatment of Leibniz on free choice, recognizes Leibniz's affirmation of divine concurrence, and leaves the charge of necessitarianism in the conditional. See WILLIAM JONES, *An Essay on the First Principles of Natural Philosophy: Wherein the Use of Natural means, or Second Causes, in the Oeconomy of the material world, is demonstrated from Reason, Experiments of Various Kinds, and the Testimony of Antiquity* (Oxford, 1762), 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., REID, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, 335-37; Voltaire also appears sympathetic to freedom as indifference. See VOLTAIRE, *The Metaphysics of Sir Isaac Newton: or, a Comparison between the Opinions of Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Leibnitz*, trans. David Erskine Baker (London: R. Dodsley / M. Cooper, 1747), 19-20; and “Elements of the Newtonian Philosophy,” in VOLTAIRE, *Philosophical, Literary, and Historical Pieces*, 2nd ed., trans. W. S. Kenrick (London: Fielding and Walker, 1780), esp. 11-20, although Voltaire offers a more charitable reading of Leibniz in “Dialogue XVII: On Curious Subjects,” 411-12; and “A Short Answer to the Long Discourses of a German Doctor,” 171, both in *Philosophical, Literary, and Historical Pieces*.

<sup>4</sup> For linking of pre-established harmony and deism in the 1800s, see RICHARD FALCKENBERG, *History of Modern Philosophy*, 3rd English ed. from 2nd German ed., trans. A. C. Armstrong, Jr. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1897), 270-80 (First edition: 1888; second edition: 1892). For affirmation of freedom as indifference, see FALCKENBERG, *History of Modern Philosophy*, 274; and 277-78; and LUCIEN LÉVY-BRUHL, *History of Modern Philosophy in France* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1899), 118.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., F. W. J. VON SCHELLING, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 82-83 (suggested to have been written either 1833-34 or 1836-37—see ix).

accused of secretly holding to a virtual Spinozism, while disingenuously espousing compatibilistic theism in his public philosophy.<sup>6</sup> Though more charitable and nuanced readings of Leibniz have emerged since the twentieth century—many of which move toward soft-determinism or, in very rare instances, libertarianism<sup>7</sup>—the charge of overt necessitarianism remains dominant to this day.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For late-1800s representatives, see SCHELLING, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, 77-83; FALCKENBERG, *History of Modern Philosophy*, 277f.; cf. ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Oxford, 2001), vol. 1, 6-8 (first published in 1851); and perhaps Friedrich Ueberweg, who, while recognizing that Leibniz's theodicy presumes free choice (113), lumps Leibniz in with the determinism of later Leibnizians, such as Christian Wolf and, without correction or qualification, Johann Joachim Lange (1670-1744), "who was the cause of Wolff's expulsion from Halle, [and] sought ... to demonstrate the Spinozistic and atheistic character of the Wolffian doctrine and the danger with which it was fraught for religion; he took especial offence at the doctrine of Determinism taught by Wolff." See FRIEDRICH UEBERWEG, *History of Philosophy from Thales to the Present Time* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1876), vol. II, 116; cf. also 111. For early-1900s advocates, see LOUIS COUTURAT, "Sur la Métaphysique de Leibniz," *Revue de Métaphysique et de morale*, vol. 10 (1902); Couturat's Spinozistic reading of Leibniz came in response to BERTRAND RUSSELL's *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1937), which defended the idea that Leibniz's God chooses to create the world, even though Russell understood Leibnizian choice in determinist terms. Russell was eventually persuaded by Couturat, evident in his reviews of COUTURAT's *La Logique de Leibniz d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1901) and *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz*. Russell's reviews appeared in *Mind* 12 (1903), 177-201 and *Mind* 13 (1904), 131-32, respectively. Both reviews have been reprinted in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, eds. Alasdair Urquhart / Albert C. Lewis (New York: Routledge, 1994), 537-63. For a survey of Russell's and Couturat's respective research and subsequent exchanges, see E. M. CURLEY, "The Root of Contingency" in *Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays*, hg.v. Harry G., Frankfurt (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972). See also "Headnote to Two Reviews of Work on Leibniz," in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, 535-36.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., FREDERICK COPLESTON, *A History of Philosophy* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD., 1958), vol. IV; MICHAEL J. MURRAY, "Leibniz on Divine Foreknowledge of Future Contingents and Human Freedom," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55:1 (Mar., 1995), 75-108; and MICHAEL J. MURRAY, "Spontaneity and Freedom in Leibniz," in *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom*, hg.v. Donald Rutherford / J.A. Cover (Oxford University Press, 2005). See also the singularly unique essay by R. CRANSTON PAULL, "Leibniz and the Miracle of Freedom," *Noûs* 26:2 (June, 1992), 218-235, who defends a libertarian reading of Leibniz.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., ROBERT MERRIHEW ADAMS, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); S. H. MELLONE, *The Dawn of Modern Thought: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 97-115; B. A. G., FULLER, *A History of Modern Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960; first published 1938), 118; R. P. SERTILLANGES, *Le Problème du Mal l'Histoire* (Paris: Aubier, Éditions Mouton, 1948), 234-35; SAMUEL ENOCH STUMPF, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 273; C. D. BROAD, *Leibniz: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975); D. W. HAMLYN, *A History of*

Contrary to prominent trends in Leibniz interpretation, the aim of this paper is to show that Leibniz's thought sits comfortably within the Christian tradition. Focusing on free choice and providence, I will argue that Leibniz's mature thought on free choice and providence is best read in light of the Protestant scholastic reception of Augustine and the schoolmen.<sup>9</sup> I would go so far as to suggest that Leibniz's thought on free choice and providence is so closely aligned with and influenced by Augustinian Protestantism that it would be more accurate to place him in the annals of Protestant scholasticism than among the offspring of Enlightenment rationalism.

Assuming my inklings are right and Leibniz's philosophical theology is best read in light of Protestant scholasticism, the implications are significant, for the assumptions of traditional Augustinian Protestantism contrast starkly with the assumptions of much of Leibniz interpretation over the past three centuries. While space does not permit a detailed survey of this interpretive history, suffice it to say that I identify eight underlying assumptions in this history that fuel the heterodox-necessitarian portrayal of Leibniz, four of which are relevant to the issues in view here. Those four are as follows:

- (1) Libertarian free choice is not possible without indifference, while intellectual preference yields psychological determinism.
- (2) If God is not indifferent, then God is psychologically determined and our world, which he has decreed, is the only possible world.
- (3) If the future is the product of divine decree, then the future is determined and incompatible with libertarian free choice.
- (4) Free choice requires moral indifference (the freedom to do good or evil), while moral necessity (the ability to do only good) amounts to determinism.

Those familiar with current trends in the literature on free choice in the Augustinian tradition generally and its Reformed incarnation in particular will immediately recognize these assumptions as utterly contrary to this tradition.

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*Western Philosophy* (London: Viking, 1987), 160-64; R. C. SLEIGH, JR., *Leibniz & Arnauld: A Commentary on Their Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); R. C. SLEIGH, JR., "Leibniz on Freedom and Necessity: Critical Notice of Robert Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, and Idealist*," *The Philosophical Review* 108:2 (Apr., 1999), 245-77; and ROBERT SLEIGH, JR. / VERE CHAPPELL / MICHAEL DELLA ROCCA, "Determinism and Human Freedom," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, 2 vols., hg.v. Daniel Garber / Michael Ayers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), vol. 2, 1195-1278.

<sup>9</sup> When using the term "Reformed scholastics" or "Reformed scholasticism" in this essay, I am affirming Richard Muller's conclusion that a specific method of medieval theology was employed by Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. For a full treatment of the matter, see RICHARD A. MULLER, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520-1725*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003-), vol. 1, "Introduction."

(For those less familiar with these trends, this contrariety will become clear in my exposition of Leibniz below.) Therefore, if Leibniz is as closely aligned with Protestant scholasticism as I contend, then the traditional portrait of Leibniz is in need of repair.

All this, however, begs the question: do we have reason to read Leibniz as a member of mainstream Protestantism? I believe we have ample reason. A mere survey of the names scattered throughout Leibniz's works establishes his familiarity with both well-known and lesser-known figures within the Augustinian tradition, including Augustine, Aquinas, Scotus, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Junius, Gomarus, Rutherford, Voetius, Twisse, and Turretin—to name a few. And his grasp of this tradition goes well beyond a catalog of names. Throughout his writings he displays an unusual mastery of historical theology and scholastic minutia. His corpus is filled with detailed notes on various theological figures (e.g., *Grua.*, i, 76-80; 338-46; 347-59; ii, 560-1; *A.*, 6, 4b, 1680-90); he has scattered writings on topics such as purgatory, transubstantiation, election, and middle knowledge (*Grua.*, i, 150-55; 380-88; *C.*, 25-7);<sup>10</sup> and he produced lengthy, systematic treatments on historical theology such as *Examen religionis Christianae* (*A.*, ser.6, b.4c, 2355-455). Moreover, Leibniz does not isolate his theology from his philosophy, as philosophers such as Pierre Bayle did.<sup>11</sup> As *Essais de theodicée* plainly shows, Leibniz casts the problem of evil on a uniquely Christian backdrop of God's eternal decrees, and the creation-fall-redemption story (*G.*, vi, 102-5); he demonstrates in his "Discours preliminaire sur la conformité de la Foy avec la Raison" (*G.*, vi, 49-101) both his grasp of historical theology and the historical orthodoxy of his stance on faith and reason; and in the fourth appendix of the original edition he includes in Latin a formal scholastic summary of his arguments, complete with charts reminiscent of Reformed encyclopedists, such as Alsted (*G.*, vi, 439-62).

Though one could try to dismiss the foregoing as the mere byproduct of Leibniz's prolific genius, theology was no hobby for him but part of his professional life.<sup>12</sup> Leibniz, in an effort to promote Protestant-Catholic reunion, met with figures such as Cristóbal de Rojas y Spinola, Bishop of Tina, who had

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<sup>10</sup> For an extended treatment of Leibniz's various writings on Trinity and Incarnation, see MARIA ROSA ANTIGNAZZA, *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, trans. Gerald Parks (New Haven: Yale, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> On the relationship between philosophy and theology in the works of Pierre Bayle, see HUBERT BOST, "Pierre Bayle, un «protestant compliqué»," in *Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), le philosophe de Rotterdam: Philosophy, Religion and Reception, Selected Papers of the Tercentenary Conference held at Rotterdam, 7-8 December 2006*, hg.v. Wiep van Bunge / Hans Bots (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 83-101.

<sup>12</sup> My synopsis of the historical background of Leibniz's *De Praedestinatione et Gratia Dissertatio* is based largely on MICHAEL MURRAY's Introduction, part A, in his forthcoming translation of this work.

received papal permission to negotiate reunion with the Princes of Germany; Leibniz was privy to the plan for Catholic-Protestant reunion, drafted by Molanus, a plan about which Leibniz wrote with some success to French bishop, Jacques Bossuet, concerning; and Leibniz continued to play a role in Protestant-Catholic negotiations at the request of Georg Ludwig after the apparent failure of these negotiations in 1691. Leibniz's later efforts focused on Protestant reunion of Lutheran and Reformed. While he conceded that reunion could be had by mere civil union and ecclesiastical tolerance for theological differences, he believed theological reunion should be sought; and, in keeping with this idea, he drafted *De praedestinatione et gratia dissertatio*, wherein he navigates the fine points of predestination among Protestants by commenting on article 17 of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England by Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, in an effort to show how theological divisions might be mended.

In addition to the foregoing, Leibniz's intellectual biography also points toward the importance of the Augustinian-Protestant tradition in his intellectual formation. Leibniz's father, Friedrich, was a professor of moral philosophy at University of Leipzig; and Leibniz's recollections demonstrate that Friedrich combined his intellectual prowess with genuine Christian piety (see P., 165).<sup>13</sup> Following his father's death, Leibniz gained access to his father's library, and gave himself over to Latin classics, Hellenistic philosophy, Patristic works, and scholastic theology (both medieval and contemporary) from age eight onward.<sup>14</sup> As E. J. Aiton notes, "Alongside the logical exercises performed in school, Leibniz pursued at home, in his father's library, the study of metaphysics, both scholastic and more recent, as well as theology, concentrating especially on the works of the famous Catholic and Protestant controversialists" (cf. P., 168).<sup>15</sup>

The significance of the scholastic facet of Leibniz's studies is testified to by which works Leibniz chose to keep from his father's library. As Maria Rosa Antognazza notes, when Leibniz reluctantly agreed to sell off the library to settle his schooling debts, he requested to keep only a handful of books:

These included works by five figures closely related to the post-Ramist tradition and the Herborn school—most notably Keckermann's voluminous *Opera omnia*, the juridical encyclopaedia of the famous Herborn political theorist, Johannes Althusius (1557-1638), and the brilliant logical and encyclopaedic works of Johann Heinrich Bisterfeld, several of which the young Leibniz had annotated apparently between 1663 and 1666. Miscellaneous sources also document Leibniz's familiarity with other key writers in this tradition around the same time. By 1664 he was acquainted with some of Alsted's writings; in 1667 he quoted several works by Comenius; and by the latter date he had read works by Johannes Piscator (1546-1625), the longstanding rector of the Herborn academy and pioneer of its Ramist approach to philosophy and theology. Later

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<sup>13</sup> See also E. J. AITON, *Leibniz: A Biography* (Bristol, England: Adam Hilger Ltd., 1985), 9.

<sup>14</sup> AITON, *Leibniz*, 10-2.

<sup>15</sup> AITON, *Leibniz*, 13.

still, his private library included works of Alsted, Althusius, Keckermann, Johann Rudolph Lavater, and Anton Matthaëus, as well as Clemens Timpler (1563/4-1624), Alsted's philosophical tutor in Herborn.<sup>16</sup>

Antognazza goes on to show that Leibniz's exposure to Ramism and its notable proponents was no passing phase, but is likely traceable to the early days of access to his father's library.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, it is worth adding the testimony of Leroy E. Loemker, who makes the case that one of the main influences on Leibniz was the Herborn encyclopedists. As Loemker points out, "From its foundation in 1584 the old university at Herborn flourished as a center of Reformed theology and philosophy, in close relationship with schools with like convictions in England (particularly Cambridge) and the Protestant Netherlands."<sup>18</sup> What Loemker noted then, I reiterate now: Leibniz-studies has yet to fully account for such influence. It is this lacuna that I hope to begin filling here.

Before proceeding, some provisos concerning the scope and assumptions of my exposition are needed. First, concerning scope, I grant that diverting a 300-year-old stream of interpretation is a task too large for a single essay. Thus, what I lay bare below represents only modest first steps toward recasting Leibniz in a Protestant scholastic light. Moreover, given the expansive nature of Leibniz's corpus, I will here focus on only a single work from 1686—though I will draw in a supplementary fashion on his other works throughout. The essay on which I will focus is Leibniz's "Vérités nécessaires et contingentes" (henceforth VNC),<sup>19</sup> a piece that has been a focus of contemporary discussion and recognized as a good representation of Leibniz's views on freedom.<sup>20</sup>

Now, concerning the assumptions of this piece, the first concerns determinism. No doubt many readers will take an affinity for Protestant scholasticism to lead Leibniz only deeper into the woods of determinism, and thus, even if I am right, many will think not much has changed by way of implication; only the source of Leibnizian determinism has been altered. Suffice it to say in reply that I am of like mind with the growing number of interpreters who see the Augustinian tradition—ancient, medieval, and Reformed alike—as libertarian in aim and intent.<sup>21</sup> And therefore, if Leibniz's continuity with this

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<sup>16</sup> MARIA ROSA ANTOGNAZZA, *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 41-2.

<sup>17</sup> See ANTOGNAZZA, *Leibniz*, 42-3.

<sup>18</sup> LEROY E LOEMKER, "Leibniz and the Herborn Encyclopedists," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22:3 (1961), 323.

<sup>19</sup> "Vérités nécessaires et contingentes" is found in C., 16-24. The title by which it has come to be known ("Necessary and Contingent Truths") is provided by Couturat.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., the exchange between R. Cranston Paull and Jack Davidson in PAULL, "Leibniz and the Miracle of Freedom" and DAVIDSON, "Imitators of God."

<sup>21</sup> For examples of libertarian readers of Augustine, see EUGENE PORTALIE, *A Guide to the Thought of St. Augustine* (London: Burns & Oates, 1960); EUGENE TESELLE, *Augustine*

tradition can be established, I believe this casts suspicion on Leibniz's supposed determinism. While this assumption will be a tough pill for some (though certainly not all) readers to swallow, due to space restrictions I can only point to appropriate bibliographic considerations in defense of this assumption (see note 21 above).

A second assumption worth noting concerns Leibniz's intellectual evolution. Leibniz scholars disagree over how many intellectual revolutions Leibniz undergoes. All agree to the following:

- (a) Leibniz parts ways with Aristotle at an early age—according to his letters to Burnett and Foucher, respectively, by age fifteen (G., iii, 205; i, 371).
- (b) Following his departure from Aristotle, Leibniz embraces the burgeoning atomism of his day (see G., iv, 56-7).
- (c) Leibniz comes to doubt the adequacy of atomism by 1668 (G., iv, 108-9; vii, 284-8), rejecting it outright between 1668 and 1669.
- (d) By 1671 Leibniz is espousing a new metaphysic.

The disputed aspects of Leibniz's intellectual development include, first, whether there is a transitional philosophy between 1668 and 1671.<sup>22</sup> Since we

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*the Theologian* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); and JOHN M. RIST, "Augustine on Free Will and Predestination," *Journal of Theological Studies* 20, 420-447; for examples of libertarian readers of Aquinas and Scotus, see ELEONORE STUMP, *Aquinas* (Routledge: London, 2003), pp. 304-305; NORMAN KRETZMANN, "Philosophy of Mind" in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, hg.v. Norman Kretzmann / Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1993), p. 147; HANNES MÖHLE, "Scotus's Theory of Natural Law" in *Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, hg.v. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2003), 326; B. M. BONANSEA, *Man and His Approach to God in John Duns Scotus* (University Press of America: Lanham, 1983), 51, 80-81; THOMAS WILLIAMS, "From Metaethics to Action Theory" in *Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, hg.v. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2003), pp. 347-8; and ANTONIE VOS, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 413-30; and for libertarian readers of the Reformed scholastics, see, e.g., ANTOINIE VOS, "Always on Time," in *Understanding the Attributes of God*, hg.v. Gijsbert van den Brink / Marcel Sarot (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); A. J. BECK / A. VOS, "Conceptual Patterns Related to Reformed Scholasticism," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 57:3 (July, 2003), 223-233; *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, hg.v. W.J. van Asselt / E. Dekker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), esp. A. VOS, "Scholasticism and Reformation," 99-119, and A. J. BECK, "Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676): Basic Features of His Doctrine of God," 205-26; MULLER, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*; WILLEM J. VAN ASSELT, "The Theologian's Tool Kit," *Westminster Theological Journal* 68 (2006); and WILLEM J. VAN ASSELT, et al. *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in the History of Early-Modern Reformed Theology* (forthcoming).

<sup>22</sup> MILIČ ČAPEK, in "Leibniz's Thought Prior to the Year 1670: from Atomism to a Geometrical Kinetism," 249-56, sides with Arthur Hannequin in suggesting that Leibniz's movement during this three years is toward a "Cartesianisation of Aristotle" (ČAPEK, 254; cf.

will be looking at post-1671 texts, I will forego this question. The second more relevant question is whether Leibniz's views on free choice and providence change after 1700. Some commentators suggest Leibniz is consistent, while others, such as Robert C. Sleigh, Jr., argue that Leibniz moves from soft determinism (pre-1700) to a hard determinism (post-1700).<sup>23</sup> Space does not allow a detailed reply; thus, for our purposes, suffice it to say that under a Protestant scholastic reading of Leibniz, such as I advocate here, the evidence forwarded by Sleigh carries less weight. Hence, I will presume Leibniz remains consistent, and thus draw freely upon post-1700 texts throughout my exposition of VNC.

One final issue that must be addressed before turning to VNC concerns the relationship between Protestant scholasticism and pre-Reformation Augustinianism. Though some may dispute the accuracy of the Protestant reception of this tradition, there can be no doubt that the Protestant (especially Lutheran and Reformed) self-understanding was that they sit within this tradition, being faithful recipients of Augustine and much of medieval Augustinianism, per Aquinas, Scotus, et al. Hence, we find, especially within the "high-orthodox" Reformed scholastics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, regular appeal to Augustine and employment of medieval scholasticism—both its methods and content.<sup>24</sup> For this reason, in

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A. HANNEQUIN, *Etudes d'histoire des sciences et d'histoire de la philosophie* [Paris, 1908], ii, 46); and goes on to defend both the Cartesian flavor of Leibniz's burgeoning ideas (254-6) and a tension that results, which endures throughout Leibniz's thought (256). Others, such as O. Bradley Bassler, argue that there is transitional position found *Theoria motus abstricti* that, while anticipating, is not yet the fully articulated position of *Specimen demonstrationum de natura rerum corporearum ex phaenomenis* (1671). See O. BRADLEY BASSLER, "Motion and Mind in the Balance: The Transformation of Leibniz's Early Philosophy," *Studia Leibnitiana* 34:2 (2002): 221-31. Bassler sets his position in contrast with that of D. Garber and André Robinet, who do not recognize such nuance in their treatment of *Theoria motus abstricti* (see D. GARBER, "Motion and Metaphysics in the Young Leibniz," in *Leibniz: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, hg.v. M. Hooker [Minneapolis, 1982], 160-84; and A. ROBINET, *Architectonique disjunctive, automates systémiques et idéalité transcendantale dans l'œuvre de G. W. Leibniz. Nombreux texts inédits* [Paris, 1986], 166.) Other commentators, such as Christia Mercer, focus on the more global transition in Leibniz's thought, and, as a result, see commentators such as Bassler (as well as Beeley and Arthur) as too concerned with the minutia of the transition period: see CHRISTIA MERCER, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: Its Origin and Development* (Cambridge, 2001), 261, n. 12; 414, n. 105.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., SLEIGH / CHAPPELL / DELLA ROCCA, "Determinism and Human Freedom," II, pp. 1195-1278, esp. 1265-7. These same arguments also appear in R.C. SLEIGH, JR., "Leibniz on Freedom and Necessity: Critical Notice of Robert Adams, *Lebniz: Determinist, Theist, and Idealist*," *The Philosophical Review* 108:2 (Apr., 1999), 245-277.

<sup>24</sup> By "high orthodox" Reformed thought, I mean that theology developed ca. 1640-1725, in which Reformed thought reaches its most refined scholastic development. In employing such a heading, I am presuming the threefold breakdown of the development of Reformed theology by MULLER in *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, "Introduction."

establishing Leibniz's continuity with Protestant scholasticism, I will not feel bound to trace every insight back to Protestantism, as drawing upon Augustine and medieval resources without reference to Protestant figures is commonplace among the Protestant scholastics. In short, what we should expect to find in Leibniz if he is in fact an extension of Protestant scholasticism is appeal to and use of the pre-Reformation Augustinian tradition generally—ancient and medieval—alongside uniquely Protestant commitments and insights. And, as we will see, this is precisely what we find in VNC.

### Free Choice and Providence in VNC

VNC opens with Leibniz's peculiar contention that all truths are analytic. That is to say, "An affirmative truth is one whose predicate is in the subject"; and this is true, says Leibniz, whether the particular affirmative truth is necessary or contingent (C., 16; see also C., 518-23). Therefore, "if anyone were to understand perfectly each of the two notions [i.e., subject and predicate] just as God understands it, he would . . . perceive that the predicate is in the subject" (C., 17). This feature of Leibniz's philosophy has been one of the main impediments for those who would seek to deliver Leibniz from necessitarianism. But, as we will see, Leibniz's aim is to defend free contingencies, not deny them.

Despite their common analytic character, Leibniz sees a clear difference between necessary and contingent truths. Necessary truths, says Leibniz, are propositions grounded in the laws of identity and contradiction: "An *absolutely necessary* proposition is one which can be resolved into identical propositions, or [*sive*], whose opposite implies contradiction" (C., 17).<sup>25</sup> His preferred examples are numerical. For example, *Every duodenary* (a number divisible by twelve) *is a senary* (a number divisible by six) (C., 17; see also Careil, 183). This type of truth is necessary because,

by the analysis of terms of a proposition, and by substituting for the defined term a definition or part of a definition, one shows a certain equation or coincidence of predicate with subject in a reciprocal proposition, or in other cases at least the inclusion of the predicate in the subject, in such a way that what was latent in the proposition and ...

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Muller's entire *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* is useful in drawing out the Augustinian-scholastic nature of Protestant theology. For primary source examples, a mere survey of the translations of ZANCHI, JUNIUS, GOMARUS, VOETIUS, and DEMOOR in *Reformed Thought on Freedom* will suffice.

<sup>25</sup> Note that *seu*, or *sive*, is the weakest Latin disjunctive participle, as it "gives a choice between two designations of the same object," suggesting that the designation is a matter of indifference. See B. L. GILDERSLEEVE / VONZALEZ LODGE, *A Latin Grammar* (London: MacMillan, 1963), §474-97.