

LEIBNIZ ON CONCURRENCE, SPONTANEITY, AND AUTHORSHIP¹

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Abstract: Leibniz holds that creatures require divine concurrence for all their actions, and that this concurrence is ‘special’, that is, directed at the particular qualities of each action. This gives rise to two potential problems. The first is the problem of explaining why special concurrence does not make God a co-author of creaturely actions. Second, divine concurrence may seem incompatible with the central Leibnizian doctrine that substances must act spontaneously, or independently of other substances. Concurrence, in other words, may appear to jeopardize creaturely substancehood. I argue that Leibniz can solve both of these problems by invoking final and formal causation. The creature is the sole author of its actions because it alone contributes the formal and final cause to these actions. Similarly, because it contributes the formal and final cause, the creature possesses what I call explanatory spontaneity. Leibniz, I contend, considers this type of spontaneity sufficient for substancehood.

1 INTRODUCTION

What role does God play in what we normally take to be the actions of creatures? Traditionally, most Christian thinkers have adopted one of three doctrines in response to this question: mere conservationism, concurrentism, or occasionalism.² Roughly, one can characterize these three doctrines as follows. Mere conservationists hold that creatures are genuinely active, and that God’s role consists merely in keeping these creatures in existence. Concurrentists agree that creatures are genuinely active. Yet, they insist that in addition to requiring divine conservation, creatures require God’s cooperation or concurrence for all their actions. Finally, occasionalists deny that creatures are genuinely active. Instead, they claim, God causes all creaturely actions, and creatures are merely occasions for divine activity.³

The debate among these three camps was extremely heated throughout the medieval and early modern period, with each group frequently calling the rival views incoherent or impious. Concurrentism was widely considered the correct doctrine. Yet, even its most skillful defenders found it challenging to give a consistent account of the mechanics of concurrence that does not collapse into occasionalism or mere conservationism (see Freddoso 1991, 555).

¹ This is the penultimate draft of a paper published in *The Modern Schoolman* 88.3–4 (2011), 267–297.

² This is not to say that each group had a large number of proponents. In fact, it seems that hardly any major medieval theologian favored mere conservationism; Durandus appears to be the only well-known example (see Freddoso 1991, 555). Concurrentism was widely taken to be the correct view both in the early modern and in the medieval period.

³ For a much more detailed discussion of these three views, see Freddoso 1991, 553ff.

The intimate divine involvement in creaturely actions that concurrentism requires also raises some other theological worries. For instance, it makes it more difficult to claim that creatures, rather than God, are responsible for sins, and, relatedly, that creatures are autonomous agents.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz takes a clear stance in this debate: not only does he repeatedly attack occasionalism and mere conservationism, but he also says explicitly in several places that creaturely actions require divine concurrence. The details of his account of concurrence are less clear, unfortunately. In fact, Leibniz's other metaphysical commitments appear to make it more difficult for him than it is for most others to consistently adopt concurrentism. He holds, for instance, that in order for something to be a substance, it must be radically independent of other substances, and that consequently finite substances do not interact with each other at all, in metaphysical strictness. Leibniz calls this independence 'spontaneity' and argues that if creatures lacked spontaneity, God would be the only substance, that is, Spinozistic substance monism would be true. For Leibniz, as for many of his contemporaries, saying that something implies Spinozism was clearly a *reductio ad absurdum*. Hence, while other concurrentists may find it hard to reconcile creaturely activity with divine concurrence, it seems especially difficult for Leibniz, since he requires creatures to be independent in a particularly radical way. How, then, can Leibniz be a concurrentist—does divine concurrence compromise creaturely substancehood in the way in which the interaction with other creatures would, or does he have the resources for reconciling these two? I will call this problem the spontaneity problem.

In the past years, Leibniz's views on divine concurrence have received much attention in the literature.⁴ There have been many insightful suggestions for how Leibniz's scattered remarks about concurrence could be interpreted. Unfortunately, many questions remain unanswered, and interpreters typically pass over two issues that I find very pressing: the first is the spontaneity problem that I just described, and the other one is the related problem of explaining why God is not the author of creaturely actions.⁵ I will call this second problem the authorship problem. I have not seen a fully satisfactory solution to either of these problems in the literature, and it is my aim in this paper to sketch one. Even though Leibniz does not, as far as I know, explicitly formulate the solution that I will describe, it is composed out of

⁴ See e.g. Bobro 2008; Hernandez 2010; Hillman 2008; Jolley 1998; Lee 2001; 2004; 2006; McAlinden 2004; McDonough 2007; Schmaltz (forthcoming); Vailati 2002; Whipple 2010.

⁵ What commentators do discuss more often is a more restricted version of this problem: the problem that divine concurrence may seem to make God the author of sinful creaturely actions.

elements that he does explicitly endorse. I also find the solution independently plausible and think it might be helpful even for contemporary philosophers in understanding agency, as well as the relation between finite and divine activity.⁶

In what follows, I identify four Leibnizian commitments concerning agency that appear to be in tension, and that give rise to what I call the spontaneity problem and the authorship problem. I will explicate these commitments one by one and give evidence that Leibniz was in fact committed to them, before calling attention to the apparent tension between them. I then consider some interpretations of Leibniz's theory of divine concurrence that others have put forward, and argue that none of them can solve our two problems. Finally, I propose a new solution to the problems. I argue, in rough outline, that Leibniz can reconcile divine concurrence with creaturely agency by invoking final and formal causation. After all, I claim, these types of causation provide us with an elegant way to solve the authorship problem: they allow us non-arbitrarily to ascribe an action to one agent, even if there are other concurring efficient causes. Final and formal causation also, I argue, help us solve the spontaneity problem: divine concurrence does not compromise the type of spontaneity that is arguably crucial for substancehood, which is what I will call explanatory spontaneity. Because Leibniz, I think, locates the formal and final cause of creaturely actions in creatures,⁷ these actions are made intelligible by that creature alone; that, I claim, is plausibly the only kind of spontaneity that Leibniz requires for substancehood.

Before I start, a few preliminary remarks are in order. First, I should note that my discussion focuses exclusively on Leibniz's mature philosophy, that is, on texts written after 1695. Doing so will allow me to avoid some unnecessary complications arising from changes in Leibniz's views on agency.⁸ Second, I will limit my discussion to what Leibniz calls the problem of God's *physical* concurrence, which concerns God's causal involvement in creaturely

⁶ Interestingly, the discussion of creaturely spontaneity and authorship and their compatibility with divine concurrence is orthogonal to the debate among libertarians and determinists. I think Leibniz is a soft determinist. Yet, the question how creatures can be spontaneous and authors of their actions is one that faces determinists and libertarians alike, even though the authorship question may be more difficult for determinists. Likewise, at least some elements of the Leibnizian solution can be helpful for libertarian theists.

⁷ By saying that the final cause is located in the creature, or that the creature is contributing the final cause, I mean simply that the final cause of the action is an end that the creature strives for, and that this striving explains the action. Of course the creature can strive for something that is not strictly speaking *inside* the creature; I am merely using that locution as a convenient shortcut.

⁸ There are some changes even within the mature period, but the main doctrines that are important for my purposes appear to be relatively stable throughout that time.

actions, and bracket what he calls the problem of moral concurrence.⁹ The latter is, roughly, the question whether God is morally responsible for evils in the world, due to the fact that he permits them to happen even though he foreknows them and could prevent them (e.g. CD §62).¹⁰ Third, I cannot go into Leibniz's views on freedom or moral responsibility in detail here. My main concern is something more basic, namely creaturely authorship and spontaneity in general. Yet, the solution I suggest will go a long way in answering the question how Leibniz can reconcile human freedom and moral responsibility with divine concurrence. Spontaneity and authorship both seem to be important conditions for free action, after all. Finally, I will also bracket the issue of continuous creation because—perhaps surprisingly—I do not think it is ultimately relevant, and it would unnecessarily complicate matters. Leibniz does endorse continuous creation, that is, the doctrine that creaturely dependence on God is not fundamentally different at creation than at any other point in their existence.¹¹ Yet, the worry that this might entail occasionalism—which is what Malebranche argues—has been shown to be unfounded by several recent commentators.¹² There are consistent ways for

⁹ For a thorough discussion of the difference between physical and moral concurrence, see Schmaltz (forthcoming).

¹⁰ I use the following abbreviations to refer to texts by Leibniz and editions of those texts: A: Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (Leibniz 1923-); AG: Ariew and Garber, *Philosophical Essays* (Leibniz 1989); C: Couturat, *Opuscules et fragments inédits* (Leibniz 1903); CB: 'Commentary on Burnet' (translation from Leibniz 2011); CD: *Causa Dei* (translation from Leibniz 1965); CP: Sleight, Look, Stam, *Confessio Philosophi* (Leibniz 2005); E: Erdmann, *Opera philosophica* (Leibniz 1974); ET: "Excursus on Theodicy §392" (translation from Leibniz 1985); G: Gerhardt, *Die philosophischen Schriften* (Leibniz 1960-61b); GM: Gerhardt, *Leibnizens mathematische Schriften* (Leibniz 1960-61a); Grua: Grua, *Textes inédits* (Leibniz 1948); L: Loemker, *Philosophical Papers and Letters* (Leibniz 1970); M: *Monadology* (translation from AG); ML: Robinet, *Malebranche et Leibniz* (Leibniz 1955); MP: Morris and Parkinson, *Philosophical Writings* (Leibniz 1973); NE: *New Essays* (translation from Leibniz 1996, whose pagination is identical with that of A 6.6); ONI: "On Nature Itself" (translation from AG); PNG: *Principles of Nature and Grace* (translation from AG); PT: Woolhouse and Francks, *Philosophical Texts* (Leibniz 1998); SLT: Strickland, *The Shorter Leibniz Texts* (Leibniz 2006); T: *Theodicy* (translation from Leibniz 1985); Ta: "Summary of the Controversy" (translation from Leibniz 1985); TDH: *Tractatio de Deo et Homine*; WF: Woolhouse and Francks, *Leibniz's 'New System'* (Leibniz 1997).

I use the following abbreviations for texts by other historical authors: *Concordia*: Molina, *Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis... concordia* (Molina 1595; translation from Molina 2012); DM: Suárez, *Metaphysicarum disputationum* (Suárez 1600 and 2002).

¹¹ Caution is necessary in formulating this doctrine, because for Leibniz, time is not composed of instants. As a result, one cannot describe this doctrine in terms of God having to recreate creatures anew at each instant (see Whipple 2010, 869f.; 873). In fact, Leibniz believes that time is not metaphysically fundamental, but instead derivative of change.

¹² See Winkler 2011, 302; McDonough 2007, 49ff.; Bobro 2008, 324. One crucial part of the solution appears to be that Leibniz arguably does not understand continuous creation as *recreation*, but rather as continuous dependence or maintenance (Winkler 2011, 301; McDonough 2007, 52; Whipple 2010, 873). Another important part of the puzzle seems to be T §390, which illustrates that God primarily

Leibniz to hold that continuous creation is a continual dependence of finite substances on God, and that creaturely actions or states are nevertheless produced by the creature in the relevant sense. Thus, I will not discuss continuous creation any further in this paper, and instead focus on the apparent tension between divine concurrence with creaturely actions or states on the one hand, and creaturely spontaneity and authorship on the other hand.

2 FOUR LEIBNIZIAN COMMITMENTS

To get a better handle on the spontaneity problem and the authorship problem, it is helpful to spell out which Leibnizian commitments lead to these problems. I think the most important ones for our purposes are the following four:

1. Every creaturely action requires divine concurrence
2. God's concurrence is special
3. Creatures are spontaneous and active causes of their actions
4. Creatures are the sole authors of their actions

I will discuss each of these four commitments in turn and then explain in what ways they appear to be in tension.

2.1 COMMITMENT ONE: EVERY CREATURELY ACTION REQUIRES DIVINE CONCURRENCE

As mentioned above, there are several passages in which Leibniz explicitly endorses concurrentism. He says in CD §10, for instance, “*In their actions* all things depend upon God, since God concurs in their actions in so far as these actions have some degree of perfection” (his italics).¹³ Similarly, he claims, “God produces substances, but not their actions, with which he only concurs” (AG 281). Without divine concurrence, Leibniz states, creatures would not be able to act at all: “I recognize that the concurrence of God is so necessary that no matter how great a creaturely power one posits, action would not follow if God were to take away his

produces the creature's nature, on which its operations depend: “When God produces the thing... he produces its essence before its accidents, its nature before its operations, following the priority of their nature” (see Winkler 2011, 299; McDonough 2007, 51f.). I am especially sympathetic with McDonough's interpretation of Leibnizian continuous creation. Even though it does not solve the two problems I am discussing in the present paper, McDonough's solution to the continuous creation problem is compatible with my interpretation of Leibnizian concurrence.

¹³ Similarly in TDH: “The dependence of things on God is found... in acting, since God concurs with and guides the actions of things, even the evil ones, because there is some degree of perfection even in evil things” (G 3:29f.; my translation).

concurrence” (G 2:295; my translation).¹⁴ Hence, Leibniz rejects mere conservationism: he thinks that creatures depend on God not only for their existence, but also for their actions.¹⁵ In the *Theodicy*, he is even more explicit about his rejection of mere conservationism: many Scholastic theologians, he points out, have refuted the view “that God creates substances and gives them the force they need; and that thereafter he leaves them to themselves, and does naught but conserve them, without aiding them in their actions” (T §27). Presumably, Leibniz agreed with mainstream theologians that mere conservationism was tantamount—or at least dangerously close—to deism.

It is even more obvious that Leibniz rejects occasionalism, because he attacks it vehemently in a large number of texts. One of his main objections is that if occasionalism were correct, creatures would not be substances but mere modes of God, so that occasionalists are implicitly committed to substance monism. After all, Leibniz argues, something that does not act cannot be a substance. Hence, if God were the only active cause, he would be the only substance (ONI §15; WF 164/G 4:590). This argument against occasionalism is quite important for the purposes of this paper because it sheds light on what it takes, for Leibniz, to be a substance. I will discuss this in more detail below, when describing the third commitment.

2.2 COMMITMENT TWO: GOD’S CONCURRENCE IS SPECIAL

In the previous section I provided evidence that Leibniz is committed to concurrentism; now we need to examine what version of concurrentism Leibniz accepted. There are, after all, different ways of being a concurrentist, as Alfred Freddoso and others have meticulously illustrated (see Freddoso 1991; 1994; McDonough 2007). Unfortunately, Leibniz is not extremely forthcoming in this respect; he often mentions divine concurrence, but rarely goes into detail. He does, however, say in at least two texts that divine concurrence is immediate and special, and even explains what he means by these two terms:

God’s *concurrence*... is *immediate* since... God concurs no less nor more indirectly in producing this effect than in producing its cause. The concurrence is *special* [*Specialis*] because it aims not only at the existence of the thing and its actions, but also at the

¹⁴ Leibniz says something along similar lines in a letter to Lelong in 1712: “By the Force that I bestow on substances, I do not understand anything other than a state from which another state follows, if nothing prevents it. But I admit that one state does not follow another, unless God intervenes there by a continual production of perfections” (ML 421; translation from Sleigh 1990b, 182).

¹⁵ Leibniz also stresses this twofold dependence in CD §9 and in TDH, G 3:29.

mode and qualities of this existence in so far as there is inherent in them some degree of perfection, which always flows from God, the father of light and dispenser of all good. (CD §§11f.; his italics)¹⁶

From this explanation, it seems that with the term ‘immediate,’ Leibniz is simply reasserting his commitment to concurrentism, and his rejection of mere conservationism: God genuinely cooperates in the action itself, instead of merely conserving the agent.¹⁷ In addition to creating and conserving the creature and its powers, God concurs with the creature’s action and is thus an immediate cause of the effect.

The term ‘special’ is more substantive because with it, Leibniz appears to take sides in one of the disputes within concurrentism. When Leibniz says that divine concurrence aims not only at the existence of a thing or an action, but also at their mode of existing, he is most plausibly rejecting the model of concurrence that the Jesuit Luis de Molina, among others, endorses. For Molina, God’s concurrence is general, that is, indifferently directed at various effects, and the creature’s contribution determines it to a particular effect.¹⁸ As an analogy, Molina repeatedly uses the sun’s indifferent concurrence with various biological processes: “God’s general concurrence is channelled [*determinatur*] by the particular concurrence of the secondary causes in a way not unlike that in which the influence of the sun, which is also universal, is channelled by the action of a human being in order to generate a human being and by the action of a horse in order to produce a horse” (Molina, *Concordia*, part 2, disp. 26, §11). Leibniz, on the other hand, is apparently denying that God’s contribution is general in

¹⁶ Again, a very similar passage occurs in TDH: “The concurrence... is *immediate*... because God concurs in producing the effect no less than in producing its cause. The concurrence is also *special* [*Specialis*], because God directs his action not only at the existence, but also at the thing’s and the action’s mode and qualities of existing, insofar as there is some degree of perfection in these”; G 3:30, my translation; his italics.

¹⁷ See Freddoso’s discussion of the distinction between immediate and remote causes of an action (1991, 558f.); cf. Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, disp. 25, §§9f. That this is what Leibniz means by ‘immediate’ is supported by the fact that in the passage from TDH, he explicitly mentions that this goes against the opinion of Durandus, who was the stock example of a mere conservationist. Another interpretation is possible, however: perhaps Leibniz is not reaffirming his rejection of mere conservationism here, but rather taking a stance in a dispute among Molinists and Bañezians. As Freddoso points out, these two groups, while both concurrentists, disagreed about whether God acts directly on the effect, or directly on the secondary agent, by pre-moving them (1988, 18; cf. Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, disp. 26, §5). For present purposes, however, it does not matter which of these points Leibniz was making when calling divine concurrence ‘immediate.’ It is clear from other passages that Leibniz rejects the Bañezian theory of pre-motion, after all (see Murray 1995, 79; Vailati 2002, 222). For a more detailed discussion of what ‘immediate concurrence’ might mean for Leibniz, see Vailati 2002, 220f.

¹⁸ Freddoso describes this type of concurrence in 1988, 17; cf. Hillman 2008, 16f.

this way: divine concurrence for him is special, that is, it aims at the particular qualities of the creaturely action, at least insofar as the action contains perfection.¹⁹

Before I move on, I should mention that there is a passage from a 1707 letter to Michael Gottlieb Hansch that may seem problematic for what I just said. In that letter Leibniz writes, “I do not believe that our mind, even if it continually depends on God in its existence and action like every creature, requires his specific concurrence [*peculiari... concursu*] for its perceptions, over and above the laws of nature. Instead, I believe that it deduces its later thoughts from previous ones by an internal force and in the order prescribed by God” (E 2:446; translation based on L 593). It may be tempting, at least initially, to read this passage as denying that divine concurrence is special, despite the fact that the term used is not ‘special’ (*specialis*) but ‘specific’ (*peculiaris*).²⁰ Yet, I believe that this temptation can—and should—be resisted. If Leibniz had wanted to deny that concurrence is special, this would have been a rather strange way to do that. What, after all, does the issue of special and general concurrence have to do with the laws of nature? For a proponent of general concurrence, like Molina, it is not the case that creatures need only the laws of nature in order to act. In fact, that sounds more like something a mere conservationist would endorse. Yet, Leibniz states explicitly at the beginning of the passage that creaturely actions do depend on God.

What Leibniz is trying to say in this passage, then, is probably something else. My suggestion is the following: instead of invoking the distinction between general and special concurrence, Leibniz could be invoking another distinction, namely that between ordinary and extraordinary concurrence. The issue, in other words, could be whether God has to do something miraculous, above the laws of nature that he has established, when he is concurring with the actions of minds. If that is in fact what Leibniz is talking about, then it is not at all

¹⁹ I will say more about what Leibniz might mean by ‘insofar as it contains perfection’ below.

²⁰ Other authors, for instance Molina, use the Latin term ‘particularis’ to refer to special concurrence, but usually not ‘peculiaris’. Molina sometimes does use ‘peculiaris’ in connection with concurrence, but he does not appear to use it to refer to special concurrence. See the following passage from *Concordia*, pt. 2, disp. 27, §27: “whenever they admit a general concurrence on God’s part with secondary causes for any particular action and effect, they posit a specific general concurrence on God’s part [*peculiarem concursum Dei generalem*], distinct from all the others by which He concurs with the other actions and effects” (translation based on Molina 2012). Here, Molina is clearly not referring to an oxymoronic concurrence that is both special and general, but rather to a particular act of general concurrence, numerically distinct from other acts of general concurrence. Similarly pt. 2, disp. 28, §2: “all these actions require God’s specific and distinct universal concurrences [*peculiares distinctosque concursus Dei universales*]” (my translation). Vailati describes the distinction between what I call specific and special concurrence in terms of numerically different contributions and specifically different contributions to an action (2002, 221).

surprising that he denies that any specific or miraculous concurrence, over and above the laws of nature, is necessary. After all, Leibniz believes that all actions of minds, even free ones, are governed by what he calls the minds' own laws of the series (e.g. PT 239; AG 173; L 533). Thus, creaturely actions are law-governed just as much as the motions of bodies, and in order to concur with them, God does not have to do anything that goes beyond or against the laws he has established. If that is the case, the letter to Hansch may simply be silent on the question of whether divine concurrence is special or general: the fact that God is not doing anything that is not covered by the laws he has established does not mean that he is concurring only in a general and indifferent way.

2.3 COMMITMENT THREE: CREATURES ARE SPONTANEOUS AND ACTIVE CAUSES OF THEIR ACTIONS

As already mentioned, Leibniz believes that if creatures were not active they would not be substances, because substances must be active. He asserts this doctrine repeatedly, for instance in the *New Essays*²¹ and in the *Theodicy*,²² and uses it to argue against occasionalism (cf. WF 164/G 4:590; ONI §15). The reasons that he holds this view need not concern us here; what is important is mainly that he held it, as well as his closely related doctrine that every substance causes all of its states spontaneously. Leibniz expresses the latter doctrine as follows: “anything which occurs in what is strictly a substance must be a case of ‘action’ in the metaphysically rigorous sense of something which occurs in the substance spontaneously, arising out of its own depths” (NE 210).²³ What does it mean for a state to arise out of the depths of a substance? One thing this means is that strictly speaking, no other finite substance is causing those states. In fact, the passage just quoted continues: “...for no created substance can have an influence upon any other, so that everything comes to a substance from itself (though ultimately from God)” (NE 210).²⁴ The only sense in which finite substances can be said to interact on Leibniz's view is “ideally:” to preserve normal ways of speaking, one can

²¹ “[A]ctivity is of the essence of substance in general” (NE 65).

²² “That which does not act does not merit the name of substance” (T §393).

²³ See Leibniz's definition in T §301: “an action is *spontaneous* when its source is in him who acts” (his italics). Cf. PT 203/G 4:518: “it is the nature of a created substance to change continually in accordance with a certain order, which conducts it *spontaneously* (if one may use the word) through all its states, in such a way that someone who saw everything would see in its present state all its past and future states” (his italics).

²⁴ See also T §65: “...to bring to a conclusion this question of *spontaneity*, it must be said that, on a rigorous definition, the soul has within it the principle of all its actions, and even of all its passions, and the same is true for all the simple substances scattered throughout Nature” (his italics).

say that a substance is passive, or acted upon ideally by another substance, when it becomes less perfect, although strictly speaking there is no interaction (e.g. T §66; M §51; NE 210f.).

One reason that Leibniz denies causal interaction among created substances and requires them to act spontaneously appears to be his acceptance of a particular theory of predication according to which in every true proposition, the predicate must be contained in the subject.²⁵ That theory of predication has a metaphysical correlate, which may even be more fundamental: being a substance requires not being dependent on other created things;²⁶ all states of the substance must depend on, and be made intelligible by, that substance alone (see Rutherford 1995, 135). Thus, anything we can correctly predicate of a substance²⁷ must be true just in virtue of that substance; one never needs to invoke another substance in order to explain a substance's properties. As a result, it would at best be superfluous to additionally posit a real influence of one substance or monad on another: "why would a monad give to another monad what it already has?"²⁸ In the *New Essays*, Leibniz makes a similar point based on considerations of what it means for a change to occur naturally in a substance: because every change that does not constitute a miracle must arise from the nature of the subject of change, "[w]henever we find some quality in a subject, we ought to believe that if we understood the nature of both the subject and the quality we would conceive how the quality could arise from it" (NE 66).²⁹

Although this is somewhat controversial, I think that there are also good reasons to believe that when Leibniz ascribes spontaneity and activity to substances, he means that

²⁵ Leibniz expresses this principle in many texts of the middle period (e.g. AG 95), but also in some late texts; see for instance *Metaphysical Consequences of the Principle of Reason* [c. 1702] §1: "The reason for a truth consists in the connexion of the predicate with the subject, that is, that the predicate is in the subject" (MP 172/C 11). In that text, Leibniz even argues from that principle for the spontaneity of souls (*ibid.* §3, MP 173/C 12).

²⁶ See AG 262/G 6:586: "Only incorporeal substances are independent of all other created substances. Thus it seems that, in philosophical rigor, bodies do not deserve the name substances." Cf. WF 25f./G 4:475f.

²⁷ Note, however, that this may exclude the fact that the substance exists, or that it coexists with other substances; for more on this issue, see Adams 1994, 42ff.

²⁸ Letter to Des Bosses, July 20, 1715, G 2:503; my translation. See also WF 26/G 4:476: "everything happens... just as if the one [substance] transmitted something to the other in their encounters—of which there is nevertheless no need, and indeed no possibility."

²⁹ Another reason for Leibniz's denial of causal interaction among creatures is that he finds it unintelligible (M §7; AG 142f./G 4:483; WF 26/G 4:476; WF 63/G 4:498f.). If this were his only motivation for requiring finite substances to be spontaneous, there would be less of a problem with divine concurrence, because Leibniz does not find God's causal interaction with creatures unintelligible. Yet, Leibniz also seems genuinely concerned about spontaneity for the reasons I state above.

substances efficiently cause, or produce,³⁰ their states. There is some textual evidence to support this. Leibniz says in a letter from 1695, for instance, “every substance... produces for itself [*se produiit*], internally, in order, everything that will ever happen to it” (WF 56f./GM 2:295/A 3.6.451). Similarly, he writes to Isac Jaquelot in 1704, “I maintain that God gave the soul the power of producing [*produire*] its own thoughts” (WF 175/G 3:464; cf. AG 144).³¹ Because these and other passages ascribe productive causality to created substances, at least on a straightforward interpretation, it seems rather safe to think that this was Leibniz’s view.

I say that this is slightly controversial mainly because Sukjae Lee has argued in several places that Leibnizian creatures do not exert any productive causality, but merely final and formal causality (2001; 2004; 2006). According to Lee, God is the sole productive cause of creaturely actions or states, and the creatures’ contribution to the production of their states consists merely in what he calls “rational determination”: they determine the content of the new state and demand that God produce it, which makes them the formal and final causes of that state (2004, 222f.; 2006, 447). Lee’s proposal has several advantages, but like most interpreters, I am not ultimately convinced by his arguments.³² I do not think that his proposal sits very well with Leibniz’s repeated claims that finite substances must be active, or possess active force.³³ There are also passages like the ones I list above in which Leibniz explicitly talks of finite substances producing their states. The overall textual evidence may not be entirely conclusive, but it does seem to favor the ascription of genuine productive causality to creatures.³⁴ I also disagree with Lee’s main motivation for claiming that finite substances lack

³⁰ For Leibniz, ‘produce’ and ‘efficiently cause’ appear to be synonymous; see NE 228: “in saying that ‘efficient cause’ is what produces and ‘effect’ is what is produced, you are merely dealing in synonyms.”

³¹ There are several other passages in which Leibniz talks of finite substances producing their states. For instance, he says, “God produces substances, but not their actions, with which he only concurs” (AG 281), which strongly suggests that the substances themselves produce, or at least co-produce, their actions. See also the following passage from a letter to de Volder: “simple substances... cannot act on one another. But they nevertheless produce change in themselves [*in se ipsis produciunt mutationem*]” (June 30, 1704; G 2:271, my translation); similarly, T §298: “It is true that when God causes a volition in us he causes a free action. But... [i]t is always we who produce [*produisons*] it, good or evil, for it is our action.”

³² Some other interpreters who argue against Lee’s interpretation are: Bobro 2008, 325; 335; McAlinden 2004, 192; Schmaltz (forthcoming); McDonough 2007, 32.

³³ In fact, Leibniz appears to closely connect activity with efficient causality. In his Table of Definitions (composed in the early 1700s), for instance, he defines ‘efficient’ as “the active cause [*Efficiens est causa activa*]” (C 472); likewise, in a text from the early 1670s, he defines ‘efficient cause’ as “a cause through action” (A 6.2.490; my translation).

³⁴ There are, admittedly, passages in which Leibniz says that God produces all that is positive in creaturely actions (e.g. T §31), which seems to leave no room for creaturely productive causality. Yet,

productive causal powers, namely his argument that the only way to reconcile creaturely productive causation with divine concurrence is too close to mere conservationism to be acceptable to Leibniz (2004, 216ff.). I think that several commentators have shown that there are coherent ways of being a concurrentist (e.g. McDonough 2007; Freddoso 1994). Yet, while I believe that there are good reasons to reject Lee's claim that God is the only productive cause, I also believe that Lee has some extremely valuable insights that we should not reject hastily. In particular, as I argue below, Lee seems to be correct that formal and final causation are crucial for understanding Leibniz's account of divine concurrence.

Before moving on, there is one more thing I should say about commitment three. I have argued above that for Leibniz, creatures are spontaneous and active causes of their actions, meaning that they produce or efficiently cause their actions in such a way that no other finite substances are productive co-causes of those actions. It will become clear later on, however, that it is useful to distinguish between two aspects of this commitment: (a) creatures are productive causes of their actions, (b) creatures act spontaneously, that is, no other creatures are productive co-causes of their actions. As we will see below, it is the second aspect in particular that will cause potential problems for Leibniz's account. After all, while God's concurrence need not compromise creaturely productive causality, Leibniz's motivations for requiring creaturely spontaneity may seem to rule out God's causal contribution to creaturely actions.

2.4 COMMITMENT FOUR: CREATURES ARE THE SOLE AUTHORS OF THEIR ACTIONS

The final Leibnizian commitment that is important for my purposes is a doctrine which is easy to overlook, albeit very plausible: despite God's direct involvement in creaturely actions, the creatures, and not God, are the authors of these actions; the actions are the creatures' actions, rather than God's.³⁵ Leibniz uses the term 'author' relatively frequently, especially in two contexts: in addition to saying that God is not the author of sin,³⁶ he

given the other evidence in favor of creaturely productive causation, I do not think we should read those passages as denying that creatures are co-producing the action. Instead of saying that only God produces what is positive in the action, Leibniz might simply be pointing out that God produces only what is positive in the action, or that God at least co-produces everything that is positive in the action (cf. Schmaltz, forthcoming). I will say more about this below, in section 4.3.

³⁵ E.g. CD §§64; 68; CB §56(d). For an excellent general discussion of why authorship—in particular authorship of sins—is an important theological issue, see Sleight 1996, 482f.

³⁶ He uses this term, for instance, in CB §39 (b); CD §§64; 68.

repeatedly calls God the author of the created world.³⁷ To the best of my knowledge, he never defines or explicates this term in his later works. There is an explicit definition in an early text, however: in the *Confessio Philosophi*, a work in dialogue form from the early 1670s, Leibniz’s spokesperson, the philosopher, says, “*To be the author [autorem esse] is by one’s will to be the ground of something else.*”³⁸ According to this definition, authorship implies voluntariness, so that creatures without wills cannot be authors at all. It is not entirely clear whether Leibniz always uses ‘author’ in this sense,³⁹ but I do not know of any passages in which he is clearly using it differently, that is, for an action that is not voluntary.

In the context of a theodicy, the question of authorship is of course particularly urgent with respect to sinful creaturely actions. In order to show that the existence of a benevolent God is compatible with the existence of evil, and that God’s justice is compatible with the punishment of sinners, most philosophers consider it necessary to show that evil actions are properly attributed to creatures, and not to God. Yet, a good account of authorship should plausibly also make it possible to ascribe some non-sinful actions to creatures (see T §377), so that creatures are capable of doing more than merely sinning. Presumably, some creaturely actions are neither virtuous nor vicious, and at least before the fall, or in the afterlife, it should be possible for creatures to perform virtuous actions.

In all of these cases—but particularly in the case of sins—it would be problematic to say that the creature and God are co-authors of the action,⁴⁰ or even worse, that God is the only author of the action, and that creatures are merely instruments of divine agency. In other words, God’s role in creaturely actions cannot be analogous to my role when a friend and I are jointly carrying a heavy box, nor can it be analogous to my role when I am driving a car. In the

³⁷ See for instance NE 165, as well as M §§83; 90; CB §39 (b); AG 202/G 2:516.

³⁸ CP 55/A 6.3.127; his italics. Similarly in another text from the early 1670s: “an author is someone who is, through the declaration of his will, the efficient cause of something else” (A 6.2.490; my translation). Building on this, Sleigh gives a more precise definition of authorship: “a free agent S is said to be an author of some sinful action A in case S is morally responsible with respect to sinful action A in virtue of the free exercise or free non-exercise of some causal power of S relative to the occurrence of A” (1996, 483).

³⁹ One indication that he might use it in the same way in late works is the following passage: “The *physical concurrence in sin* is the reason why some authors have considered God as the cause and the author of sin. The evil of guilt would thus also be the object of God’s productive will” (CD §68; his italics).

⁴⁰ For neutral or good actions, it is less problematic to say that the creature and God are co-authors. Yet, even if it does not cause devastating theological problems, there is something odd about saying that brushing my teeth, for instance, is just as much God’s action as it is mine. I do not think that this is how traditional concurrentists would want to describe the situation either.

former example, my friend and I are co-authors of the action, and it would be wrong to ascribe the action to only one of us. In the latter example, both I and the car are contributing to the effect, but in such a way that I am the author while the car is, intuitively, merely an instrument that I employ in order to go somewhere. What we need, then, is an account on which we can non-arbitrarily ascribe authorship to creatures, and not to God, in cases where God and the creature co-produce an action.

Although in the early period Leibniz defines ‘author’ in a way that seems to restrict it to voluntary actions, for the purposes of this paper I wish to use ‘author’ in a broader sense. I will, that is, use it to refer to any agent to whom the action in question is properly attributed, whether the action is performed voluntarily or not.⁴¹ After all, I believe that the problem of the authorship of voluntary creaturely actions has a close analogue in non-voluntary creaturely actions, even if the former is perhaps more urgent.⁴² Suppose, for instance, that a cat is chasing a mouse. According to Leibniz, animals cannot act voluntarily, and do not have wills (see e.g. G 3:622). Yet, he would undoubtedly still want to say that the action of chasing is properly attributed to the cat, and the action of running away is properly attributed to the mouse. It would go against Leibniz’s anti-occasionalist metaphysics to claim that these actions ought to be attributed to God, and not to the animals: as already mentioned, it is very important to Leibniz that creatures are genuinely active, and are not merely acted upon by God. Hence, the question to whom an action involving creatures should be attributed is important also for non-voluntary actions, and I will use the term ‘authorship problem’ to refer to this general question.

One important thing to note is that the author of an action need not be the only efficient cause of that action. There seem to be cases in which an action has several efficient causes, but only one author. Take, for instance, the example of the car that I mentioned

⁴¹ In fact, the main reason that Leibniz defines the term ‘author’ in terms of willing something may be simply that it allows Leibniz to say that God is not the author of things that follow from the divine intellect, rather than from the divine will (see CP 41/A 6.3.121). If that is the case, there is no reason to think that creatures cannot be authors of their non-voluntary actions; after all, Leibniz thinks that lower creatures have something corresponding to will and intellect, namely, their appetitions and perceptions (SLT 66/G 7:330; G 2:270; G 3:622). His point could just be that being an author requires being the source of something by one’s will *or* appetite, rather than merely by one’s intellect *or* perception.

⁴² Of course one cannot presuppose that the solution to one of these problems will also constitute a solution to the other. Yet, if I am correct, this will turn out to be the case, which is another reason to use the term ‘author’ in this broader sense.

above: it seems that both the driver and the car are efficient causes of the car's motion, but only the driver is the author of it. Or, perhaps more interestingly, suppose that a CEO asks her assistant to buy flowers for the CEO's husband. In that case, the CEO is plausibly the author of the action consisting in giving flowers to her husband, even though the assistant is an efficient co-cause of that action.

3 APPARENT TENSION BETWEEN THE FOUR COMMITMENTS

So far, I have argued that Leibniz is committed to the following four doctrines: (1) every creaturely action requires divine concurrence, (2) God's concurrence is special, (3) creatures are spontaneous and active causes of their actions, and (4) creatures are the sole authors of their actions. Yet, there may appear to be some tension between these commitments. The first potential source of tension is the following. On the most straightforward reading, the first two commitments imply that God is an efficient cause of every creaturely action. Moreover, it is one aspect of the third commitment that creatures are also productive causes of their actions. This gives rise to the problem of explaining how exactly this cooperation is supposed work. In developing a concurrentist account of finite agency there are many potential pitfalls, as Freddoso nicely illustrates (1994; cf. Lee 2004, 216ff.): at almost every turn, vicious regress, overdetermination, deism, or occasionalism threaten. Concurrentists appear to face the following dilemma: either the creature makes a causal contribution to the action that does not require divine concurrence, which seems dangerously close to mere conservationism, or the creature does not make such a causal contribution, which seems tantamount to occasionalism. Yet, as already mentioned, much progress has been made in avoiding these pitfalls, and it seems that there are ways to solve these problems.⁴³ I think it has been shown that it is possible for God and a creature to be productive co-causes of an action even though the creature cannot produce anything on its own.⁴⁴ As mentioned above, I will therefore not discuss this issue any further.

Another apparent tension arises, however, when we add Leibniz's further claim that creatures produce their states spontaneously, that is, the second aspect of commitment three. Leibniz, as we have seen, argues that there cannot be any interaction among creatures, and

⁴³ See for instance Freddoso (1994) and, specifically with respect to Leibniz, McDonough (2007, 42ff.)

⁴⁴ Note that for a satisfactory solution it seems necessary that both agents cause a unitary effect, rather than that each of them produces part of the effect; see McDonough 2007, 44; Freddoso 1994, 149f. If each produced part of the effect, it would follow that the creature can do something without God's assistance.

one of the reasons appears to be his belief that otherwise they would lack the spontaneity or independence required for substancehood. Why, then, would God's causal influence on creatures not turn them into mere modes of God as well? It is true that Leibniz, in formulating his doctrine of spontaneity, explicitly exempts divine influence: spontaneity requires only the absence of the causal influences of other created substances. Yet, it may seem that this exemption is *ad hoc* unless Leibniz can explain why God's causal influence does not compromise the substancehood of a creature, while the causal influence of other creatures would compromise it.⁴⁵ This is the spontaneity problem.

A further tension arises when we add in the fourth commitment. If God and the creature are productive co-causes of the action, why is only the creature the author of the action, and not God? What accounts for the asymmetry? In the example of the heavy box that a friend and I are jointly carrying, my friend and I are plausibly co-authors of the action: the action is properly attributed to both of us. If the action is praiseworthy or blameworthy, we should both be held responsible. So how can Leibniz claim, on his picture, that God is not the author of creaturely actions, but that that creatures are? It seems that God should at least be a co-author of the action. This is the authorship problem.

The question on which I wish to focus, then, is not whether given God's special concurrence, creatures can still be active, and thus whether Leibniz can avoid occasionalism. Rather, the main issues that I want to discuss are (a) how, given God's concurrence, creatures can still be independent enough to be substances, and (b) how, given special concurrence, creatures can still be the sole authors of their actions. If Leibniz cannot resolve these two tensions, his system contains an inconsistency, and he is not entitled to at least one of the four commitments that he repeatedly asserts. Yet, I do think Leibniz has the resources for reconciling the four commitments. The solutions to these two problems that I will propose are in fact almost identical: that which explains why God's concurrence does not make him the author of the creature's action also explains why God's concurrence does not compromise creaturely substancehood.

⁴⁵ There is, of course, precedent for exempting divine influence in this way, and some philosophers do not consider it to be *ad hoc*. René Descartes, for instance, famously claims that 'substance' does not apply univocally to creatures and to God, because only God is independent of all other substances (*Principles* I.51 [Descartes 1985]). Yet, Leibniz not only has stricter requirements for substancehood than Descartes, but is also more of a naturalist. For these reasons, I think that Leibniz would not—or at least should not—make an exception for God without a satisfactory explanation of why the two cases are different.

4 RESOLVING THE TENSION

Before proposing my own solution for reconciling divine concurrence with creaturely spontaneity and authorship, it is instructive to consider some of the other solutions that are sometimes mentioned and the problems they face. Understanding these problems will pave the way for my more successful interpretation. Hence, I will briefly discuss what I take to be the three main alternatives to my solution. We can label them the permission model, the simple privation model, and the sophisticated privation model. All of these find some support in Leibniz's writings. After arguing that none of these three models is a satisfactory and complete solution to our two problems, I advance my own solution, which I call the final and formal causation model.

4.1 THE PERMISSION MODEL

The first solution I want to consider here stems from Leibniz's commentary on Gilbert Burnet, completed in 1705, where it appears to be advanced as an answer to the authorship problem. Leibniz there argues as follows:

God is not the author of sin. For in this series of possibles, even seen prior to the decree to existence, the sins were already displayed with their causes. God did not decree this possibility and the series of possible connections, rather he discovered it. But when he chose this possible series of things over the others, since it was most suitable of all, he properly willed the good things in it, while he permitted the intermingled evil because, even after having computed all the evil, this series was judged the best. (CB §39(b))

In this passage, Leibniz invokes his doctrine that possibilities depend not on the divine will, but rather on the divine intellect. As a result, it is not the case that God decrees or wills that some particular possible world contain sin, or that some particular creature commit a sin. Rather, God merely finds in his intellect worlds that contain sin, and creatures who will commit sins if they are created. This allows Leibniz to say that God merely allows sins to occur instead of causing them to occur: after all, God merely actualizes the best possible world, which contains certain sins that are already specified in the realm of possibles.

Yet, this does not in itself help very much with the problems at issue, because it does not tell us how God's intimate involvement in the actions of his creatures is compatible with creaturely spontaneity and authorship. In fact, this solution appears to be more a solution to what Leibniz calls the problem of moral concurrence than to the problem of physical concurrence, with which we are concerned here. Hence, while it might be a promising answer

to the question of why God permits evils to occur even though he could prevent them, it is not a promising answer to the question of why God's involvement in the production of these actions does not make him an author of the action, and why it does not compromise creaturely substancehood. This passage, then, seems to be a response to a slightly different problem than the one in which I am interested here. Parts of the permission model will, however, become relevant when I propose my solution.

4.2 THE SIMPLE PRIVATION MODEL

Leibniz seems to propose the following solution to the authorship problem in several other texts: the cooperation between God and creatures is asymmetrical and creatures are the authors of their sins because God produces only what is positive in the action, while the creature is responsible for the limitations or imperfections (see Sleigh 1990a, 183ff.; 1990b, 184f.). In the *Theodicy*, for instance, Leibniz puts this as follows: after agreeing with Augustine that “evil is a privation of being, whereas the action of God tends to the positive” (T §29), he argues that “God is the cause of perfection in the nature and the actions of the creature, but the limitation of the receptivity of the creature is the cause of the defects there are in its action” (T §30). Hence, in some sense that needs to be spelled out further, the sinfulness of the action is due to the creature, and whatever is good in the action is due to God; only the creature, therefore, is properly the author of sin. Roughly the same account occurs in several other passages (e.g. T §377; CD §§68f.; TDH, G 3:34).

Leibniz's favorite way to illustrate this solution to the authorship problem is the analogy of the boat, which he uses in at least six different texts in the mature period (CD §71; ET 390; CB §56(d); T §30; Ta 384; TDH, G 3:34). This analogy goes roughly as follows: when a heavily laden boat floats down a river, one can say that “the speed comes from the river, but the retardation which restricts this speed comes from the load” (Ta 384), or in other words that “the current... is the cause of the boat's speed without being the cause of the limits to this speed” (T §30). The river's contribution to the boat's motion is supposed to be analogous to God's contribution to the creaturely action, and the boat's contribution is analogous to the creature's: the river—or God—is the source of what is positive, while the boat—or the creature—is the source of the limitation. On what I take to be the most straightforward reading, Leibniz appears to argue that anything that is real in a creaturely action is due to God, while the privation or limitation of that action is due to the creature (see ET 389; Ta 384; CD

§69). As a result, we need not worry that God is the author of human sins: after all, the sinfulness of the action is a mere privation, and due to the creature alone.

There are at least two ways to understand the simple privation model that Leibniz appears to be describing; I will briefly sketch them, and then explain why I think they do not ultimately work. The first is what Robert Sleigh calls the “principle of divided effort”: some aspects of the action are produced by the creature, while other aspects of the action are produced by God (1990a, 184). On this interpretation, which Sleigh endorses, God produces what is real or perfect in the action while the creature produces the limitations of the action (1990a, 185). Let’s call this the divided effort interpretation. The second way to understand the simple privation model is slightly different: rather than saying that God and the creature produce different aspects of the action, this interpretation holds that the creature merely limits the divine action, or channels it in an imperfect way. This interpretation is captured quite well by Thomas Aquinas’s analogy of the limping leg: when an animal limps, he explains, “limping comes from the fact that a leg by reason of its deficiency lacks the capacity to receive the influence of the animal’s locomotive power, not from the fact that the leg is moved by the animal’s locomotive power. And so the animal’s locomotive power does not cause the limping” (*On Evil*, q.3, a.1, ad 4 [Thomas 2003]). Just like the imperfect leg, on this interpretation, a creature receives the divine influx, which is not defective, in a deficient way. Let’s call this the defective reception interpretation.

Can the simple privation model, interpreted in either of these two ways, work for Leibniz? Like other scholars who have written on this, I have several worries about the simple privation model, on either reading.⁴⁶ One problem with the first way to understand privation—that is, the divided effort interpretation—is that it does not explain how we can ascribe good or neutral actions to creatures. In other words, it seems to imply that the only actions of which creatures are capable are sins or defects, because everything that is positive or real has to be attributed to God.⁴⁷ Thus, while the solution may allow us to call creatures the

⁴⁶ See e.g. Lee 2004, 208f. Sleigh is more willing to accept this as a solution than most others; he claims that according to Leibniz, “God produces what there is of perfection in the states of creatures; creatures produce whatever there is of limitation in their own states” (1990a, 185). Yet, even Sleigh says that Leibniz would need to say more to convince him that this is compatible with Leibniz’s metaphysical account of creaturely actions (*ibid.*).

⁴⁷ It may be the case for Leibniz that even the best creaturely actions are limited and imperfect in some way. Yet, even if that is so, we would be able to ascribe only the negative aspect of the action to the creature, and the rest to God, which still seems problematic.

authors of sin, it apparently does not allow us to call them the authors of anything else. Moreover, if there is an aspect of the action—the negative aspect—of which the creature is the sole cause, one of the most fundamental motivations for concurrentism seems to be abandoned, namely that creatures cannot produce anything on their own. Finally, and most importantly, this type of privation model strikes me as extremely implausible because it seems to assume that a privation is a separate part of the action and has a productive cause. Leibniz himself relentlessly pokes fun at this type of argument in several early writings. In a text from the early 1670s, for instance, Leibniz argues, “[t]his is as though someone were a cause of the number three and wanted to deny that he was a cause of its oddness” and that one could argue along the same lines that “a bad musician is only the cause of the violin bowings and drumbeats and not the resulting dissonance” (CP 23/A 6.1.544).⁴⁸ In another text from the same period, he calls this maneuver “a manifest illusion” and “a subterfuge with which a reasonable person will never be satisfied” (CP 111/A 6.3.150f.). The point of these criticisms appears to be the following: producing all the positive aspects of a defective effect just is producing the defective effect. The fact that the producer of the effect has not produced the defect directly does not exculpate her, nor does it make sense to claim that another agent is contributing the deficiency.⁴⁹ In fact, Leibniz points out in one of these early texts that if we were able to exculpate God by pointing out that sin is merely a privation, we would be able to exculpate the creature in the same way, so that in the end nobody would be the author of sin.⁵⁰ If Leibniz in his later writings in fact understands privation along the lines of the divided

⁴⁸ This is very close to Thomas Hobbes’s criticism of a similar scholastic argument; Hobbes likens it to the claim that it is possible for one man to make a long and a short garment, and for another man to make the difference between them (*Of Liberty and Necessity* §12 [Hobbes 1999]; cf. *Leviathan* [Hobbes 1994], ch. 46, §31).

⁴⁹ Take the example of a three-legged dog: the fact that the dog has only three legs is a privation. However, if God creates everything that is real or positive about that dog, he will have created a three-legged dog. It sounds absurd to say that because the absence of the fourth leg is not something real and positive, some other cause can produce this absence, and that therefore God is not responsible for it. The same applies for a defective or evil action.

Francisco Suárez criticizes the divided effort interpretation along similar lines. He argues that “the created will’s free act with respect to *this* object in *these* circumstances cannot exist without having the badness that is concomitant with it” (his italics), and that therefore, if God wills precisely this creaturely action by an absolute volition, “he morally or virtually wills the badness that is necessarily conjoined with the act” and is therefore a cause of that badness (DM, disp. 22.4.19). To avoid this consequence, Suárez argues that God does not will such actions by an absolute volition, but instead by a conditional volition (*ibid.*).

⁵⁰ CP 23/A 6.1.545; CP 113/A 6.3.151. Again, this argument is found in Hobbes as well: *Thomas White’s De mundo Examined* xxxv.16 [Hobbes 1976].

effort interpretation, he is not only committed to a rather implausible view, but also vulnerable to his own earlier criticism.⁵¹

Given these problems with the divided effort interpretation, it may seem tempting to reject it as overly naïve and take refuge in what I above called the defective reception interpretation. After all, it seems that the latter interpretation is immune from most of the criticisms just described, including the scathing remarks from Leibniz's early writings. It may also seem like a more straightforward interpretation of Leibniz's boat analogy, and of his claim that he wants to explain sin through the "limitation of the receptivity of the creature" (T §30; cf. M §47). Yet, the defective reception interpretation also faces serious problems. First of all, the first criticism that I leveled at the divided effort interpretation applies here as well: on the defective reception interpretation it is also difficult to say why virtuous or neutral actions can be ascribed to finite substances rather than to God, if the only thing a substance can do is to limit what God provides. Secondly, it does not fit very well with the Leibnizian doctrine that finite substances possess both active and passive force.⁵² If all that a creature does is to limit divine activity, and if everything that is real in the action comes from God, creatures are purely negative, and it seems that the relation between God and creatures is like that between active and passive force. Yet, as I pointed out in my discussion of commitment three above, the claim that finite substances themselves possess active force is crucial for Leibnizian metaphysics.⁵³ Finally, the defective reception interpretation also seems to be at odds with Leibniz's claim that divine concurrence is special: it seems to turn God's contribution into a general contribution, which is then specified or limited by the creatures. After all, the river analogy, when interpreted like this, suggests that the positive contribution is indifferent to the particular outcome, and thus general: the river concurs in the same way with all things that are floating on it, regardless of their weight.

Jeffrey McDonough, in passing, sketches a solution to the authorship problem that sounds very similar to the defective reception interpretation, but that seems to extend it to non-sinful actions. McDonough claims that Leibniz agrees with late scholastics on the

⁵¹ As some commentators point out (e.g. CP 154n35), Leibniz appears to have realized in the 1680s that there is something to privation if one interprets it in more sophisticated ways (Grua 316/A 6.4.1605).

⁵² See Adams 1994, 96; Lee 2004, 208f.; even Sleigh is worried about this (1990a, 185).

⁵³ In fact, if the perfection of our actions were entirely due to God, it would be difficult to avoid "a *de facto* occasionalism in which God does all the work" (Scott 1998, 84).

authorship issue: the reason that the creature rather than God is the author of its actions is that some aspects of the action are explained only by the creature's causal powers. To illustrate this, McDonough mentions Molina's claim that when God concurs with a fire, the fire's causal powers explain why heat, rather than coldness, is produced (2007, 45).⁵⁴ McDonough also provides a more up-to-date analogy: we can say that electricity concurs with a toaster's toasting, and that the reason that this electricity results in toasting rather than blending is that the electricity is paired up with a toaster, rather than a blender (*ibid.*).

The main problem with this suggestion is that the Molinist solution presupposes general concurrence: according to Molina, God's concurrence with the fire's heating is not qualitatively different from his concurrence with the water's cooling. On that picture, it may indeed make sense to say that the specific nature of the action is due to the creature and not to God.⁵⁵ Yet, it is not at all clear how that solution would work for someone like Leibniz who is committed to special concurrence:⁵⁶ if God's contribution is special, that is, already tailored to that particular effect, there seems to be perfect symmetry between God and the creature as far as efficient causation is concerned.⁵⁷ Hence, if concurrence is special for Leibniz, he will have

⁵⁴ Molina says this in *Concordia*, pt. 2, disp. 26, §12; he explains how this solution exculpates God from human sins in, for instance, disp. 27, §3, disp. 32, §10, and disp. 32, §18.

⁵⁵ Even on that picture, however, solving the authorship problem for non-sinful actions is not trivial. When I plug in the toaster and the coffee maker, for instance, it is indeed because of the toaster's and the coffee maker's contribution that toasting and coffee making result. My contribution may be exactly the same in both cases. Yet, that does not mean that I am not the one who is making breakfast. Likewise, the mere fact that the specific nature of an action is due to the creature rather than to God does not imply that the creature is the author of the action, and that God is not. That fact is completely consistent with instrumental causation, as illustrated by the toaster and coffee maker example. Hence, I think, we must invoke final and formal causation in order to solve the authorship problem for non-sinful actions, even on the Molinist picture. The final and formal causation model, as I contend below, does more than merely point to an asymmetry between the creaturely and the divine contribution; it points to an asymmetry that plausibly assigns authorship in the right way.

⁵⁶ McDonough mentions that divine concurrence is special for Leibniz (2007, 43) and acknowledges this even more explicitly with respect to conservation (2007, 50). Yet, McDonough does not say how, given Leibniz's commitment to special concurrence, something like the Molinist solution to the authorship problem can work for Leibniz.

⁵⁷ Suárez, whom McDonough also mentions in this context, appears to have a completely different solution: for him, concurrence is special (see DM 22.4.4; 22.4.8; 22.4.32), and therefore Molina's solution is not available. Instead, he claims that God's concurrence with unfree (or natural) causes is different from his concurrence with free causes. In the case of natural causes, divine concurrence limits the creature to one specific act, and necessitates that act (DM 22.4.10; 22.4.21). In the case of free secondary causes, on the other hand, divine concurrence includes an implicit condition; it is therefore in the power of the creature to act or refrain from acting, so that the creature possesses liberty of exercise (DM 22.4.14). Moreover, he says that when God concurs with a free cause, he offers concurrence to more than one act, and thus grants the creature liberty of specification (DM 22.4.21).

to come up with a different way to account for the asymmetry between God's contribution and the creaturely contribution.

4.3 THE SOPHISTICATED PRIVATION MODEL

So far, I have argued that there are two potential problems for Leibniz's account of concurrence, namely the authorship problem and the spontaneity problem, and that—on the two most straightforward interpretations—the simple privation model does not seem to solve them in a satisfactory way. It has also become clear that with respect to the authorship problem, the main difficulty is Leibniz's claim that divine concurrence is special: if Leibniz believed in general concurrence, it would be less difficult for him to explain why only the creatures are authors of their actions, because he could then adopt Molina's solution.⁵⁸ Hence, there are in theory two ways for interpreters to go: one can either reject (or radically reinterpret) Leibniz's claim that divine concurrence is special, or find a way to reconcile it with creaturely authorship. The former strategy is not hopeless. After all, there are very few passages in which Leibniz claims that divine concurrence is special; I know of only two texts in which he explicitly says so, and one in which he appears to be implying it.⁵⁹ Among the four commitments discussed above, this is clearly the one with the least textual support, as well as the one that seems least crucial for the rest of the Leibnizian system. Yet, rejecting it is a high price to pay, since it goes against two explicit passages, and should thus only be a last resort.

Luckily, there is another privation model that is compatible with special concurrence and allows us to say that creatures are the sole authors of their sins. This model, which I call sophisticated privation model, is put forward by Tad Schmaltz in a forthcoming paper. Schmaltz argues, for reasons similar to the ones I list above, that it cannot be Leibniz's view that creatures produce only the limitations of their actions. Instead, he claims, creatures must positively contribute to the production of their actions, and be efficient co-causes: they possess primitive active force as well as passive forces. Why then does Leibniz repeatedly say

This solution allows Suárez not only to ascribe freedom of indifference to creatures, but also to say that God is not the author of free creaturely actions. Yet, it is rather implausible that this is Leibniz's solution. After all, Leibniz to the best of my knowledge never indicates that God's concurrence with free causes is different in any way from his concurrence with unfree causes. Moreover, he does not share Suárez's doctrine that freedom requires indifference (e.g. AG 194f./G 3:402; NE 196ff.). What I take to be Leibniz's solution to the concurrence problem is, however, somewhat similar to Suárez's account of divine concurrence with natural, i.e. unfree, causes (see note 67 below).

⁵⁸ Even with general concurrence, however, solving the authorship problem is not trivial; see note 55 above.

⁵⁹ He says it explicitly in CD §§11f. and in TDH, G 3:30, and appears to imply it in T §27.

that the deficiency of a sinful action comes from the creature, while God contributes only the positive aspect? The answer Schmaltz gives to this question is very plausible, and is one of the building blocks of my own solution. It is true, he points out, that the deficiency of evil actions comes only from the creature, and not from God. Yet, the reason for this is not that the creature somehow produces the defective aspect of the action while God produces the perfect aspect; that cannot be how deficient causation works for Leibniz. Instead, Leibniz most plausibly views deficient causes as “non-productive *reasons* that explain the limitations present in evil” (*ibid.*; his italics); in the case of sinful actions, the deficient cause is the lack of adequacy among creaturely perceptions, which present something as good that in fact is not good.⁶⁰ Hence, when Leibniz says that the limitations of the action stem from the creature, he merely means that an imperfection in the creature’s perceptions *explains* why the action is evil; it would be a mistake to think of deficient causes as producing some reality. The reason that Leibniz sometimes seems to call God the producer of all that is positive, according to Schmaltz, may simply be that Leibniz views God as the only principal cause of actions, and creatures as secondary causes that in some sense act only in virtue of the first cause (see T §392). In short, Schmaltz argues that Leibnizian creatures are both efficient and deficient causes of their actions, and that God concurs only with what the creatures efficiently cause, that is, with the positive aspects of the action. As a result, God is not the author of human sins.

The sophisticated privation model provides very plausible answers to the worries about the simple privation model that I raised above. In particular, it shows how a creature and God can be efficient co-causes of an action while the creature alone is responsible for the deficiency of the action: the imperfect perceptions of the creature can be the reason for the privation of the action. This is compatible with special divine concurrence, because the positive aspects of the action that God co-produces fully specify the action: producing all the positive aspects just is producing that particular defective effect, because a defect is merely a privation and as such does not require a productive cause. The deficient cause of a sin, on this interpretation, is not a productive cause, but merely the reason for the deficiency of the effect: the inadequate perceptions of the creature are the reason that the creature is producing an evil

⁶⁰ Excellent support for this interpretation comes from TDH: “privation stems from the limitation of creatures, which brings it about [*favil*] that their knowledge does not extend to all things, and that their will, which was intended to strive for the highest good, i.e. God, stops at inferior ones” (G 3:34; my translation).

action, as well as the reason that God concurs with the creature in this particular way. We can thus say that on this model, the deficient cause is explanatorily prior both to the creature's efficient contribution to the action, and to God's contribution. This is, in fact, a crucial difference between this model and the simple privation model. Hence, the sophisticated privation model can explain why creatures are responsible for evil actions. It therefore goes a long way toward solving the authorship problem.

Yet, this model cannot be the entire solution, because it is not clear how it helps us with the spontaneity problem. Moreover, it is not even a complete solution to the authorship problem, because as mentioned above, a complete solution should explain not only why creatures are responsible for evil, but also why creatures are the authors their non-sinful actions. The sophisticated privation model thus shares the weakness of the other models: it does not straightforwardly apply to cases of non-sinful creaturely actions.

4.4 THE FINAL AND FORMAL CAUSATION MODEL

My own model is structurally similar to the sophisticated privation model. Yet, by invoking formal and final causation rather than just deficient causation, it applies to all creaturely actions—not only to sinful ones. It thus constitutes a complete solution to the authorship problem, and, as we will see, it also opens up a way to solve the spontaneity problem. Moreover, it is not subject to any of the objections to the simple privation model that I listed above.

First of all, recall Lee's claim that creatures are the formal and final causes of their actions, while God is the sole productive cause. Even though I reject the second part of Lee's claim, mainly for textual reasons, the first part is very helpful here.⁶¹ Invoking formal and final causation, after all, appears to give us a way to ascribe even non-evil actions to creatures. Like deficient causes, formal and final causes are non-productive, and can be construed, the way Lee does, as a type of rational determination, or reason-giving. They are also traditionally considered explanatorily prior to the efficient cause, as we will see below. Thus, if we can somehow make a good case for the claim that creatures, rather than God, contribute the

⁶¹ Lee is, of course, not the only commentator who attributes final and formal causation to monads. Yet, he is one of very few commentators who discuss the role of these two types of causation at length, and the only one, as far as I know, who argues that they are central for understanding Leibniz's doctrine of divine concurrence. Bobro does acknowledge that final and formal causes play a role, and that they "put constraints on God's causal activity" (2008, 325; cf. *ibid.* 335). Yet, he does not elaborate on this; the goal of his paper is to argue that, contrary to Lee, creatures must be efficient causes as well.

formal and final causes of the action—similarly to Schmaltz’s case for claiming that creatures alone are the deficient causes of the action—we might have a plausible and non-arbitrary way to assign authorship to the creature, and not to God.

The solution just hinted at clearly needs to be spelled out in much more detail, and I will do so momentarily. Yet, it should be relatively plausible antecedently that final and formal causation can help us explain who the author of an action is. By way of illustration, take the example I briefly mentioned above: when I drive somewhere, for instance to the supermarket, the car and I efficiently co-cause the car’s motion. Yet, we typically want to describe the situation by saying that it is my action, not the car’s, and that I am merely employing the car as an instrument. One rather plausible explanation for why we describe the situation in this way is final and formal causation: because the action aims at my ends rather than at the car’s, and because I am the reason that the car is moving in precisely these ways, I am the author of the action, and the car is merely an instrument.⁶²

There is even some textual evidence that formal causation must be part of Leibniz’s solution to the authorship problem. He writes to Jaquelot, for instance, “[t]he form of sin is a voluntary privation of the relevant perfection, and that voluntary privation comes only from us” (WF 197/G 6:568); similarly, he points out in several texts that God is not the formal cause—or is not responsible for the formal aspect—of sin, but that creatures are, in virtue of their limitations (CD §68; G 3:34; T §30). These passages suggest that Leibniz views deficient causation as a type of formal causation, which in turn makes formal causation an obvious candidate for the attempt to extend the sophisticated privation model to the more general authorship problem.

Can we make a good case, on Leibniz’s behalf, for claiming that creatures contribute the final and formal causes to their actions, while God does not? I believe we can indeed. First of all, there are good reasons to think that final and formal causes play crucial roles in Leibniz’s account of creaturely agency. For instance, Leibniz repeatedly associates the domain of created substances with final causation and the domain of bodies—which for him are not

⁶² The fact that the car is an artifact and might not have ends in the way that living things have ends is not important here. We can easily alter the example; for instance, I could be riding to the supermarket on a horse instead. In fact, I can even employ other human beings as instruments to perform an action; for instance, I can hire somebody by dictating a job offer to my assistant. In that case, even though the assistant is a co-cause of the letter, I am the author.

substances—with efficient causation.⁶³ The reason for this appears to be that all Leibnizian substances produce their states or perceptions through appetitions, that is, through the substance’s “tendencies to go from one perception to another” (PNG §2) or the “action of the internal principle which brings about the change or passage from one perception to another” (M §15). Appetitions thus seem to be teleological: they are strivings for a new state, or “the endeavour of acting tending towards new perception” (SLT 66/G 7:330).⁶⁴ Moreover, its appetitions or strivings derive from its substantial form or primitive active force, of which they are modifications (see AG 253/G 4:396; L 533/G 2:262). It is therefore the finite substance’s essence, or substantial form, that determines what exactly its subsequent state will be, and that hence explains the substance’s striving or appetite for that state. Because Leibnizian substantial forms both specify all of the substance’s actions and somehow produce an appetite for those actions, they provide both the final and the formal cause of such actions.⁶⁵

Yet, saying that the actions of finite substances are explained by their substantial forms and appetitions, and that appetitions are strivings for particular ends, is not sufficient for our purposes. In order to show that the ends of actions that are jointly produced by a creature and God truly belong to the creature, rather than God, we need to be able to claim that God has not imposed these ends and forms on creatures.⁶⁶ This is where part of the permission model, which I discussed above, becomes important: all of a creature’s actions, and hence also its strivings, are already included in the creature’s essence or complete notion that God finds in his intellect. When God creates a substance, he merely actualizes one of the essences from the realm of possibles. He therefore does not impose ends and forms on a creature, but rather actualizes a possible creature, including all of its strivings and dispositions for action.

This account also explains the difference between God’s creating the world, of which he is the author, and co-producing a creature’s action, of which the creature is the author.

⁶³ He does so, for instance, in AG 319/G 7:344; L 588/G 6:542; M §§79; 87; AG 126f./GM 6:243.

⁶⁴ Leibniz also says in M §79 that souls “act according to the laws of final causes, through appetitions, ends, and means.”

⁶⁵ While Leibniz discusses final causation much more frequently than formal causation, it is relatively obvious that the substantial forms he describes are responsible for both of these: they not only determine or specify the state, but also bring about a corresponding striving. See Lee 2006, 447.

⁶⁶ God could presumably force creatures to strive for ends of his own by imposing appetitions on them, turning them into his instruments. If that were the case, the final and formal cause of the action would stem from God after all, rather than from the creature, and God would be the author of the creature’s actions.

When God creates the world, he does so for ends of his own—after all, prior to creation there are no other substances for whose ends he could be acting. In creating the world, however, God brings into existence finite substances that specify and strive for particular actions. When he concurs with these actions, he arguably does so because the creatures specify and strive for them, or because these are the actions that the creatures’ natures demand (cf. Lee 2004, 224). By creating a substance, God as it were commits himself not only to keeping it in existence, but also letting it act according to its own laws, or its own nature. Hence, we can say that the creature’s substantial form, or the creature’s perceptions and appetitions, contribute the formal and final cause to the jointly caused effect. The formal and final cause of these actions does not come from God; instead, God merely contributes to the production of an effect that the creature specifies and strives for, and he does so because the creature specifies and strives for it.⁶⁷

As we have seen, formal and final causation are clearly central parts of the Leibnizian account of agency. Leibniz furthermore appears to hold that the substantial form and the strivings of a creature are the reason that God co-causes the actions that follow from them. Consequently, there is a rather plausible way for Leibniz to solve the authorship problem: when God and a creature jointly produce a particular action, the creature is the author of this action if and only if the creature contributes the final and formal cause.⁶⁸ Because that is usually the case for creaturely actions, creatures are typically the authors of their actions—with the possible exception of miraculous actions that involve finite substances—despite the fact that God concurs specially with what they efficiently cause.

⁶⁷ This solution is in fact somewhat similar to the way Suárez explains divine concurrence with natural causes: “First of all, it is because the secondary cause has power of a certain sort that God has decided to give it a certain species of concurrence. And in this respect... the secondary cause is said to determine God’s concurrence as regards its *specific nature*... Second, ... it is because the sort of cause in question acts naturally that God likewise wills in an absolute and determinate way to concur with it. And in this respect one can say... that the secondary cause determines the First Cause’s concurrence as regards its *exercise*” (DM 22.4.5; his italics).

⁶⁸ Lee hints at a similar solution to the authorship problem in passing when discussing Leibniz’s *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), in which Leibniz explicitly mentions the problem of distinguishing divine from creaturely actions (Lee 2004, 223f.). See also John Carriero who in a different context argues that ascribing internal, natural ends to creatures allows Leibniz to view them as genuine agents, or originators of activity, rather than mere instruments of God (2008, 119; 123).

One additional way to motivate this solution to the authorship problem is to take seriously the scholastic view, which Leibniz may well have shared,⁶⁹ that the final cause is prior to the other kinds of causes in the order of explanation and can be called the cause of the other causes. Thomas Aquinas writes, for instance, “the first of all causes is the final cause... For if the agent were not determinate to some particular effect, it would not do one thing rather than another: consequently in order that it produce a determinate effect, it must, of necessity, be determined to some certain one, which has the nature of an end.”⁷⁰ The final cause, on this view, is the most fundamental reason that one effect, rather than another one, results. For this reason, the final cause is prior to the efficient cause in the order of explanation: the former is a presupposition for the production of anything in particular. Since the creature supplies the final cause of its actions through its appetitions, the priority of the final cause allows us to see that divine cooperation with the efficient cause need not compromise the creature’s authorship. In fact, this fits rather well with one of the ways in which Leibniz argues that God is not the author of sin: “God... produces [a creature’s] essence before its accidents, its nature before its operations, following the priority of their nature, and *in signo anteriore rationis*. Thus one sees how the creature can be the true cause of the sin” (I §390; his italics). What Leibniz seems to suggest here is that since God produces the creature’s nature or essence before its actions, it is possible for the creature’s nature to somehow ground its actions in such a way that the creature, and not God, is their author. The most plausible way to spell this out, I think, is to say that the creature’s nature can supply both the final and formal cause for the action that God and the creature jointly produce.⁷¹ Just as the creature’s nature is prior to its actions in the order of explanation, the final cause is prior to the efficient cause; hence, God can concur with the efficient cause without also concurring with, or co-contributing, the final cause.

This solution to the authorship problem is almost sufficient to solve the spontaneity problem as well. The worry I voiced above about spontaneity was the following: if Leibniz

⁶⁹ The medieval view, and its application to early modern philosophers, is nicely illustrated in Hoffman 2009 and Carriero 2008.

⁷⁰ *Summa Theologica* IaIIae q1 a2 corp. (Thomas 1947-48). See also *Commentary on the Metaphysics* V, lect. 3.782 (Thomas 1961); *De principiis naturae* 4.22 (Thomas 1998).

⁷¹ This strikes me as more plausible, for instance, than Robert Adams’s suggestion, also based on this passage, that God produces “the creature’s nature ‘operating’ and thus *producing* its affections and actions” (1994, 97; his italics). Adams’s suggestion appears to remain at the level of efficient causation, and does not seem like a fully satisfactory solution to the authorship problem, nor to the spontaneity problem.

thinks that interaction among creatures would compromise their substancehood because substances have to be perfectly independent, why would divine concurrence not have similar consequences? It may seem that exempting divine causality is *ad hoc*. Yet, perhaps Leibniz has a reply. Remember that, as I said above, Leibniz's main reason for excluding interaction among finite substances appears to be that substances must be able to make intelligible all of their states or actions. For instance, it cannot be the case that in order to explain why I am currently feeling pain, we must invoke the dog that has just bitten me. Instead, we must in theory be able to understand my pain just in terms of my own previous states; otherwise I would lack spontaneity, and would not be a substance. Of course Leibniz admits that there is a sense in which we can explain my pain in terms of the dog's bite, but that is not the explanation at the metaphysical ground floor, so to speak. God chose to create a person who feels pain at this time because he wanted to create a dog who bites at that time; yet, the pain and the biting are part of my essence and the dog's essence respectively, which exist in the divine understanding even before creation. If created things truly did interact with one another, however, a full explanation of the state of the patient would require invoking the agent. This is relevantly different from the way in which God causally acts on creatures when concurring with their actions: even though divine concurrence is a necessary condition for the production of the action, God is not involved in the final and formal causation of the action, which for Leibniz appears to be explanatorily prior to the productive causation. Hence, God's contribution does not ultimately explain why the action is the way it is.

Consequently, Leibniz can solve the spontaneity problem as follows: while creatures cannot be spontaneous in the sense that they are the sole efficient causes of their actions, they can be spontaneous in the sense that they are sufficient explanations for why this action, rather than another action, takes place. That is, they can be spontaneous in the sense of being the sole providers of the formal and final cause of the action.⁷² We could say that while they lack productive spontaneity, they possess explanatory spontaneity. In virtue of providing the final and formal cause of the action, they can single-handedly explain the character of the action. If I am correct in thinking that Leibniz's main reason for denying interaction among creatures is that such interaction would compromise the creature's explanatory spontaneity

⁷² Jorge Gracia describes the scholastic understanding of the independence of substances in an interestingly similar way: "all [created] substances are in one way or another dependent on other substances for their efficient causation... But for their formal causation they do not depend on anything else, since there is no reference to other substances or beings in their definition" (1982, 268).

and hence its status as a substance, Leibniz's claim that divine concurrence is compatible with creaturely substancehood is not *ad hoc* after all.⁷³

At this point, however, one might start worrying that divine concurrence might compromise divine substancehood, given that explanatory spontaneity seems necessary for substancehood, and given that I have argued that the creature is the reason for the jointly caused action. Does this not mean that in order to explain God's contribution to the action, we have to invoke something other than God, namely the creature? I think this worry is unfounded. God's will explains this creature's existence, after all, and God's intellect is the ground of the creature's essence. Hence, one can in theory explain all of God's actions in terms of the divine intellect and will, including his concurrence with the creature. Yet, that explanation would have to proceed via God's reasons to create a substance that, by its own nature, strives for such-and-such an action.⁷⁴ In other words, we can explain God's concurrence with the creature's action exclusively in terms of God's intellect and will. Even though the final or formal cause for the jointly caused action is located in the creature, rather than in God, God is the ground of the existence and essence of the substance that in turn supplies this final and formal cause.

This works because there are several ways to provide an explanation for an action. One way is the way in which we can explain a creaturely action in terms of the creature, that is, by pointing to the final and formal cause for that action. Another way is the way in which we can explain that same action in terms of God, the ground of the existence and essence of the substance that in turn provides the final and formal cause. It is important to note that final causation is not transitive: the final cause of the production of effect *e* need not be the final cause of the effects of *e*. If *e* is itself an agent, it can bring into play final causes of its own that

⁷³ Would the interaction among creatures—supposing for the sake of argument that it can somehow be rendered intelligible, which Leibniz denies—necessarily compromise their explanatory spontaneity, or could there in theory be cases in which one creature cooperates only with another creature's efficient causation? I think it would necessarily compromise explanatory spontaneity. God, the primary cause, is plausibly the only agent who can cooperate with other substances in this way: because only God can explain the existence of other substances, only he can perform actions whose final and formal cause stems from a creature without losing his own explanatory spontaneity (see my discussion of divine explanatory spontaneity below).

⁷⁴ Relatively good textual evidence for this can be found in AG 254/G 4:398: "...it is empty to resort to the first substance, or God, in explaining the phenomena of his creatures, unless his means or ends are, at the same time, explained in detail, and the proximate efficient or even the pertinent final causes are correctly assigned." This passage says that while we can, in theory, explain creaturely phenomena in terms of God, we can do so only by invoking not only God's reasons, but also the proximate (presumably creaturely) efficient and final causes.

are distinct from the final cause of its production. Precisely this is the case for the relation between God and creatures: God supplies the formal and final cause for the creation of a finite substance—through his intellect and his will, respectively—but once his creatures exist, they supply the final and formal causes of their actions themselves. Explanation, on the other hand, does seem to be transitive for Leibniz: because God contains the complete explanation for the existence of each creature, he also thereby contains an explanation for the actions that the creature explains. In this way, God and a creature can co-produce an action for which the creature alone supplies the final and formal cause, while both God and the creature possess explanatory spontaneity.

5 CONCLUSION

The solution I described is admittedly a mere sketch, and many details have yet to be filled in. Nevertheless, I do think I have shown that Leibniz has the resources for solving both the spontaneity problem and the authorship problem without having to give up any of the four commitments I listed. These resources, I have argued, lie in final and formal causation: these two types of causation allow us to explain how a creature can be the author of its actions, and possess spontaneity, despite God's special concurrence. When focusing exclusively on efficient causation, as most interpreters do, it is entirely unclear how the tension between the four commitments can be resolved. Claiming that creatures are not capable of productive causation, but only of formal and final causation, as Lee does, is problematic as well, because it goes against the textual support for commitment three. A much more plausible picture results when we interpret creaturely agency as consisting in all three types of causation: this allows Leibniz to say that creatures are genuine productive causes and authors of their actions that possess the requisite kind of spontaneity, despite the fact that God cooperates in these actions by a concurrence that is special.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ I thank Michael Della Rocca, Sukjae Lee, Jeffrey McDonough, Tad Schmaltz, Sun-Joo Shin, an anonymous referee, and the members of the Society for Early Modern Philosophy at Yale for extremely valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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