

Newton, Spinoza, Stoics and Others:
A Battle Line in Leibniz's Wars of (Natural) Religion

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Abstract

Starting from Leibniz's complaint that Newton's views seem to make God the soul of the world, this paper examines Leibniz's critical stance more generally towards God as the soul of the world and related theses. A preliminary task is determining what the related theses are. There are more of these than might have been thought. Once the relations are established, it becomes clear how pervasive the various guises of the issue of God as the soul of the world are in Leibniz's thought and how central they are in his debates with contemporaries about the truths of natural religion and even more strictly philosophical issues. Leibniz's arguments against God as the soul of the world are reconstructed and evaluated, and the difficult question of the exact meaning, or meanings, that Leibniz ascribes to the thesis that God is the soul of the world is taken up. The clearest core of meaning discussed in this paper is most directly relevant to Leibniz's criticisms of Spinoza and the Stoics, as well as of Descartes. Less clear, but obviously important, are meanings relevant to Leibniz's debates with the occasionalists and Newtonians.

I begin with two of Leibniz's criticisms of his contemporaries, one criticism fairly well known, the other not well known at all. The more familiar criticism appears in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence of 1715-16. In that correspondence, Leibniz is, among other things, attempting to find a theological Achilles' heel in the Newtonians' world view, just as Clarke is attempting to do the same in connection with Leibniz's. In this context Leibniz claims that Newton's views seem to make of God the soul of the world, the *anima mundi*. Leibniz makes the point, with varying degrees of intensity, several times during the correspondence, and with reference to a diverse aspects of Newtonian theory.¹ Here is one of the examples, drawn from Leibniz's Fourth Paper:

There is hardly any expression less proper upon this subject, than that which makes God to have a sensorium. It seems to make God the soul of the world. And it will be a hard matter to put a justifiable sense upon this word, according to the use Sir Isaac Newton makes of it. (LC 4, sec. 27; G VII 375)

What does it mean to say God is the soul of the world? What are the arguments against this view, and how strong are they? Are there different meanings of this doctrine in different contexts? These are among the points we will consider in what follows.

Perhaps surprisingly, it will help in answering these questions if we look back roughly forty years in Leibniz's life to a much less public criticism he made of another contemporary, Spinoza. Leibniz was near the end of his Paris years, having just invented his version of the calculus. Although Leibniz could not have known it at the time, this very invention would ultimately lead to bitter disputes with the Newtonians late in his life, ending with the same Leibniz and Clarke correspondence quoted from above.

According to the Academy editors of Leibniz's collected works and letters, the likely time frame for the second criticism is between the beginning of winter in 1675 and the fall of 1676. At that time Leibniz reread Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*,² made extracts, and at one point added what G. H. R. Parkinson claims is the only philosophical comment Leibniz made on the work at this time.³ The fairly obscure comment, in fact also a criticism, is this:

Here [Spinoza] sufficiently reveals his judgment, that God is not a mind, but is the nature of things, etc., which I do not accept. (A VI.iii 269-70)⁴

Despite the very different character of these two thinkers, Newton and Spinoza, and despite the apparent diversity of the two criticisms themselves, I will argue that the views being attacked are much more closely related than they might at first seem. Moreover, I will argue that although the issues in question here may seem either not familiar or not central to Leibniz's thought, they are in fact absolutely central to Leibniz's natural theology and also important for his philosophy, at least in the following sense, that they turn up repeatedly at critical junctures in his theological and philosophical battles with leading contemporaries. If these points – particular the latter point -- are even roughly on target, the concepts involved need to be brought out from the shadows and studied more seriously. This paper makes a start in this project.

There are certain limitations of this paper that should be made clear at the outset. One is that the basic focus of the paper is on Leibniz, so that despite the fact that a number of other philosophers will make an appearance in this paper, the focus will almost invariably be on Leibniz's views of these other philosophers rather than the precise views of the other philosophers themselves. This is true whether Leibniz's contemporaries or philosophers of antiquity are being discussed.⁵ The most notable

consequence of this is that the present paper will *not* generally address the question whether such criticisms as the two given above against Newton and Spinoza, are in fact fair criticisms of their targets. The same point applies for criticisms Leibniz raises against the Stoics, Malebranche and Descartes.

Second, the large majority of Leibniz's texts discussed in this paper are ones drawn from polemical contexts (as befits a paper on "wars of (natural) religion"). Since a considerable number of equivalences claimed by Leibniz are drawn from these texts, a question is likely to rise, at least sometimes, whether the equivalences hold up philosophically, or whether the polemical contexts are perhaps leading Leibniz to be a bit less subtle and fine in his distinctions than he is capable of being. In general, the plan of this paper is to follow these equivalences wherever they lead in Leibniz's thought, leaving more detailed investigation of such problems to a later stage of research. To be sure, some of what is brought to light in this paper should aid greatly in any ultimate evaluation of the linkages claimed by Leibniz. But such ultimate evaluation is not a main project of this paper; rather, presenting a (preliminary) map of new territory is our focus.

Third, although the clash with Newton over the question whether God is the soul of the world is perhaps the best known appearance of this concept in Leibniz's philosophy, it is also a complicated one. I use it in this paper to introduce the concept and its relatives and, at some points, it is hoped, also to provide some insight into it. But the firmest points arise from other contexts, leaving the question of Leibniz, Newton and the soul of the world still open for future research. I offer some suggestions in this regard, but not final pronouncements.

Finally, this paper does not try to follow up the complexities of Leibniz's theological views over the whole period of his development. In fact, there are some interesting early views of Leibniz, ones that have been explored elsewhere,⁶ that are directly related to the main topic of this paper but that seem to diverge significantly from the Leibnizian views highlighted in this paper. Again, these are not discussed here.

The sections of this paper are as follows. In section one, starting with the formulation, "God is the nature of things," equivalent formulations in Leibniz's writings are traced up to and including the formulation, "God is the soul of the world." After this a preliminary statement of support for the paper's two theses are given. In section two, a deeper look at the meaning of the equivalent formulas, in particular, "God is the soul of the world," is undertaken. In the third section, Leibniz's arguments against God as the soul of the world are presented and some

are evaluated. In the fourth section, a theory about the unity of the “battle line” discussed in this paper is presented. And in the final section, the paper’s two theses are revisited and some thoughts about possible future research are offered.

1. “God is the nature of things”

In order to gain a better understanding of Leibniz’s criticism of Spinoza -- that the author of the *TTP* makes God the nature of things -- we first consider the appearance of the relevant formula, or the appearance of formulas related to it, in a variety of Leibnizian writings. Our aim in part is to get a better grip on this rather unfamiliar locution by seeing how it is in fact linked in Leibniz’s mind to a number of others, some of them obviously important in his philosophical thinking.

To begin then: in a writing that the Academy editors tentatively date as composed in 1686-87, “De Religione Magnorum Virorum,” Leibniz says of Spinoza that the latter “thought that God was nothing other than the nature or substance of the world” (A VI.iv C 2460). **This is interesting in two ways. First, this quotation,** from the time of the composition of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and the early correspondence with Arnauld, shows that Leibniz has retained his view of Spinoza as holding that God is the nature of things -- or the nature of the world, as he puts it here -- into his maturity.⁷ As we will show below, he in fact retains this view for years after the *Discourse* as well. This is evidence that Leibniz’s comment in Paris on Spinoza’s writings was not a passing thought of his early years, of little lasting significance for his thinking about Spinoza.

Second, the passage provides us with the new idea of God as the substance of the world, here straightforwardly equated with the idea of God as the nature of the world: “naturam seu substantiam Mundi.” Although not all will find this equivalence between ‘natura’ and ‘substantia’ natural, it in fact obtains in Leibniz in some, but clearly not all, senses of these two central terms.⁸ Indeed, as the following text confirming this equivalence shows -- albeit in a quite different context --, the equivalence can extend for Leibniz to the phrase, ‘the essence of a thing’:

When it is said that the primitive force constitutes the substance of bodies, their nature or essence is meant. (From a letter to Pellisson of 1692, A I.vii 248-49)

This second passage, of course, is not a completely general statement about the terms in question. But clearly in this context, where one is talking about “the substance of bodies,” Leibniz is quite explicit that what is meant is the *nature* of

bodies. By analogy, it would not be surprising that Leibniz would equate, by means of 'seu', the phrases 'substance of the world' and 'nature of the world'.

Let us move forward approximately another decade. It is well known that Leibniz launched a significant attack on occasionalism in the paper, *De Ipsa Natura*, published in the *Acta Eruditorum* in 1698. As was often the case in connection with Leibniz's somewhat similar attacks on a different target, Descartes, the strategy invoked in *De Ipsa Natura* was an assimilation to Spinoza -- not exactly a *reductio ad absurdum*, but rather a *reductio ad Spinozanum*, something that, in rhetorical if not necessarily theoretical terms, was often powerfully effective.

What is not so well known is how this attack connects up explicitly with the formulas treated so far. Here is Leibniz's key statement:

. . . the substance of things itself consists in the force of acting and being acted upon; hence it follows that no enduring thing can be produced if no force that long endures can be impressed upon it by the divine power. Then it would follow that no created substance, no identical soul, would be permanent, and hence that nothing would be conserved by God, but everything would reduce to certain evanescent and flowing *modifications* or phantasms, so to speak, *of the one permanent divine substance*. And, what reduces to the same thing [quod eodem redit], *God would be the nature and substance of all things* -- a doctrine of most evil repute, which a writer who was subtle indeed but irreligious [Spinoza], in recent years imposed upon the world. (G IV 508-9; L 502; italics mine)

The first level of the *reductio* is what is well known: remove the force of acting from finite substances --that is, remove from them the property of being a real cause -- , and you remove what makes them substances. In that case, the result is that the only real cause, God, remains the one and only substance, and finite things become nothing but constantly changing modifications of the one substance. In other words, the removal of the force of acting from finite things leads straight to Spinoza's metaphysics of substance monism. But what comes next is something of a surprise: on Leibniz's view, this monism in turn comes to the view that "God would be the nature and substance of all things." And it is the doctrine expressed in *this* formulation, rather than in the more standard formulation of Spinoza's monism, that Leibniz calls "a doctrine of most evil repute, which a writer who was subtle indeed but irreligious [Spinoza], in recent years imposed upon the world, or at least revived."

Let us pause for a moment to note something shown by this passage: from about 1676 to 1698 not a lot has changed with regard to Leibniz's position on Spinoza's endorsing the view that God is the nature of things. Compare these four formulations of the view Leibniz ascribes to Spinoza:

ca. 1676, comment on TTP: "Deum . . . esse naturam rerum." (God is the nature of things)

ca. 1686, "De Religione Magnorum Virorum": "nihil aliud esse . . . Deum quam ipsam naturam seu substantiam Mundi" (God is nothing other than the nature or substance of the world)

1698, "De Ipsa Natura," sec. 8: "ipsam naturam vel substantiam rerum omnium Deum esse." (God is the very nature or substance of all things)

1698, "De Ipsa Natura," sec. 15: "ex Deo factura cum Spinoza videatur ipsam rerum naturam." (it seems rather, like Spinoza, to make out of God the very nature of the world)

So there is real continuity on this point. Only something important has changed – at least from the perspective of a reader of these statements in context. In 1698 – for the first time in the statements we have considered – there is a very important statement about how Leibniz's formulations square up with the explicit doctrines of Spinoza's *Ethics*, most notably, Spinoza's monism.

But, important as this is, let us postpone further discussion of it until later, continuing our current focus on terminological connections stemming from the formula of the original criticism of Spinoza: "God is the nature of things." For the next important link, consider the following text:

Plato himself in the *Timaeus* [asserts that there is] a soul of the world; Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*, [that there is] an active intellect diffused through everything; the Stoics, that *God is the substance of the world*; Averroes, that Aristotle's intellect . . . [there is a gap in the text at this point]. (A vi I 510, ll. 20-22; italics mine)

There are a number of intriguing points contained in this "imperfect" portion of the early work, "De Transsubstantiatione" (1668?).⁹ But space permits the highlighting of only one, namely, what Leibniz says about the Stoics, that for them, "God is the substance of the world." This of course shows that the formulation Leibniz ascribed to Spinoza in 1686-87 (that God is the substance of the world) is one he had also ascribed to the Stoics almost twenty years before. And given the equivalence of the 1686-87 passage between "God as the substance of the world" and "God as the nature of the world," it is reasonably clear that the view that Leibniz

ascribes to Spinoza in the mid-1680s and the late 1690s, and to the Stoics in the late 1660s – that God is the substance of the world --, is just a different formulation of the view that Leibniz ascribed to Spinoza – and criticized– in the marginal note to the *TTP* that figured in the opening of this paper.

It has probably been noted that the passage above begins with a reference to Plato’s “soul of the world” doctrine, thus reintroducing the term involved in the criticism of Newton with which we began. Of course, this formula, ‘soul of the world’, is often ascribed to the Stoics by commentators. Specifically, what is typically ascribed to the Stoics is that the soul of the world is God (the Stoic God, to be sure). However, the formulation that Leibniz ascribes to the Stoics in *De Transsubstantiatione* is not this but rather the formulation that we found in following the trail of Leibniz’s reflections on Spinoza and the question of God as the nature of things. That formulation is, of course, that “God is the substance of the world.”¹⁰

But there are other texts in which Leibniz leaves no doubt that he ascribes the view of God as the soul of the world, the *anima mundi*, to the Stoics also. For instance, in an enclosure to a letter to Des Bosses of 12 August 1709, Leibniz says he could easily believe that

. . . many oriental philosophers, no less than Platonists or Stoics, held God to be the *Anima Mundi*, or a universal nature immanent in things. (G II 383; italics mine)

Here Leibniz not only explicitly ascribes the *anima mundi* view to the Stoics, but he also appears to close the circle and brings us back to our starting point by equating the doctrines of God as the soul of the world and God as the nature of things. Although the exact formulation of the second phrase is a bit different from the variations we have noted so far, at its core seems clearly to be the idea of God as the *nature* of all things, the universal *nature* in things (*natura universalis rebus*, rather than *natura rerum*, but to all appearances the same doctrine). In fact, it is fairly clear that in Stoic philosophy the doctrines of God as the soul of the world and God as the nature of all things are basically equivalent.¹¹ Thus, there is a historical precedent for such an equivalence in the vocabulary of Leibniz. More to the point, there are other passages where Leibniz treats these two formulations as equivalent.¹²

To sum up the last few paragraphs: what we have found is both the apparent equivalence in Leibniz of three formulations,

(1) God is the nature of all things

(2) God is the substance of the world

(3) God is the soul of the world, the *anima mundi*,

and the ascription of 1), 2) and 3) to the Stoics¹³ and of 1) and 2) to Spinoza.¹⁴ That near-parallelism in ascriptions to Spinoza and the Stoics raises the question whether there is a final connection between these two in Leibniz's mind, namely, that, in his view, both the Stoics and Spinoza believed the God is the soul of the world. In fact, this third connection is indeed to be found in the writings of Leibniz, in a passage from "Two Sects of Naturalists," tentatively dated to 1678-80:

The sect of the new Stoics believes . . . that God is the soul of the world, or, if you wish, the primary power of the world In fact, these are Spinoza's views. (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385; italics mine)

In this work Leibniz first ascribes a collection of views to a group of individuals who he says are, "in fact, composed of Stoics," -- which group he also calls "the new Stoics"¹⁵ -- including the view that God is the soul of the world, and he then says that these views are in fact Spinoza's views also (translation from AG 281; A VI.iv B 1384). **So Spinoza, on Leibniz's interpretation, holds that God is soul of the world just as the Stoics do.** With this the three-point parallelism is complete. We see that Leibniz ascribes to both the Stoics and Spinoza the three doctrines listed above, that God is the nature of all things, that God is the substance of the world, and that God is the soul of the world. And this should not be surprising at this point, since we have independently found good reason to think that Leibniz views these three statements as equivalent.

So our finding is that Leibniz ascribes 2) and 3) to Spinoza, as well as the original 1) -- which of course makes perfect sense if all three are equivalent. Leibniz also ascribes 1), 2), and 3) to the Stoics.

Now we know already that Leibniz ascribes the formula in 3) to Newton, or more exactly, says that Newton's ascription of a sensorium to God seems to make God the soul of the world. We can now add that he also ascribes the formula in 1) to Newton, at least on a certain hypothesis, and, in the same passage, states the same equivalence of 1) and 3) that we have found elsewhere:

But if it be done naturally [God's mending the course of nature from time to time], then God will not be *intelligentia supramundana*: he will be comprehended under the nature of things; that is, he will be the soul of the world. (LC 2; G VII 359)

Here, roughly 40 years after Leibniz criticized Spinoza for making God the nature of things, we find the "soul of the world" criticism of Newton recast in exactly those same terms: "God . . . will be comprehended under the nature of things."

(“la nature des choses”)

So, the statements with which we began, ‘God is the soul of the world’ and ‘God is the nature of things’ have been found to be equivalent in contexts dealing with Spinoza and/or the Stoics, and they have been found to be equivalent in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. I think it is fair to say that this means that the formulas in the original criticisms of Newton and Spinoza are much more closely related than they might at first have appeared. This was our first thesis. To be sure, it is still possible that, despite this closeness of the formulas, there is not an identity of meaning in the two contexts. Even when we find the very same formula, ‘God is the soul of the world’, in criticisms of Spinoza and the Stoics in separate works, it is still possible that there is not an identity of meaning.¹⁶ But, as we have just seen, in “Two Sects of Naturalists” Leibniz says Spinoza holds the *same views* that the “new Stoics” do, including explicit mention of the view that God is the soul of the world. In any case, note that if there is a change of meaning in ‘God is the soul of the world’ in the two contexts – the criticisms of Spinoza and the criticisms of Newton –, then we must postulate exactly the same change in the formula, ‘God is the nature of things’, from contexts having to do with Spinoza and/or the Stoics, to the context of the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. For the two formulas are given as equivalent in contexts having to do with Spinoza and/or the Stoics and also in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence. A change in meaning of one term or sentence is not surprising to find in a philosopher. A lock-step change of meaning involving two sentences is a bit more difficult to explain. A more typical situation would be a change in meaning of one of the two, leading to a *failure* of equivalence.

But even if there were not strict identity of meaning, the two criticisms would be much closer than they might at first have appeared. We now know that the formulas used in the two criticisms are, at least in some contexts in Leibniz’s writings, equivalent.

With some headway made in connection with our first thesis, let us pause to attempt the same in connection with our second thesis. That thesis was, it will be recalled, that although the formulas in question in the two criticisms with which we began may not seem particularly familiar or central in Leibniz, they are in fact centrally important in Leibniz’s theories of natural religion, and centrally important for his philosophical system too, at least in the sense that these formulas occur repeatedly at key moments in his confrontations with rival philosophical systems. I think that we can in fact make headway in connection with this second thesis, and that to do so, we need only look a bit more deeply into two texts we have

already considered.

We have seen above, even if we did not put a great deal of emphasis on it at the time, that in *De Ipsa Natura* Leibniz says that Spinoza's monism, his view that there is only one substance, God, of which finite things are nothing but modifications, "comes to the same thing as" the doctrine that God is the nature or substance of all things (AG 160; G VI 508).¹⁷ Since it is clear how important opposition to Spinoza's monism is to the philosophical and theological concerns of the mature Leibniz, this in itself moves our formulas (the AMD formulas, as I will call them¹⁸) towards the center of Leibniz's concerns in connection with natural religion.

In fact, this way of stating things actually underplays the role of the AMD formulas in this context. Instead of monism playing the key role for Leibniz, with the AMD formulas making a cameo appearance, the AMD formulas are actually doing the key polemical work.

. . . everything would reduce to certain evanescent and flowing *modifications* or phantasms, so to speak, *of the one* permanent divine *substance*. And, what reduces to the same thing, *God would be the nature and substance of all things* – a doctrine of most evil repute, which a writer who was subtle indeed but irreligious, in recent years imposed upon the world, or at least revived. (L 502; my emphasis)

Perhaps some Leibniz researchers have always seen this. But while it is a certainty that almost any serious student of Leibniz's metaphysics will know this passage, I suspect that only a small number would remember the presence the phrase, 'God would be the nature and substance of all things', let alone be aware of the equivalences claimed by Leibniz among the various AMD formulas we have considered, and their repeated use in important contexts.

Let us continue in this vein. We have seen that in *De Ipsa Natura* Leibniz argues forcefully that occasionalism reduces to monism, since action is essential to substance, and in occasionalism only one entity, God, truly acts. For Leibniz, monism in turn, as we have just seen, reduces to the view that God is the substance or nature of all things. Now Spinoza's monism and Malebranche's occasionalism were linchpins of two of the major philosophical systems of the day. *De Ipsa Natura* provides the argument that they both reduce to the doctrine that God is the nature or substance of all things. Hence, the criticism of the view that God is the nature or substance of all things is a criticism central to Leibniz's setting his system apart from these two major metaphysical systems of his age.

A different passage from *De Ipsa Natura* than the one we looked at earlier

confirms the centrality of Leibniz's opposition to the view that God is the nature of the world:

. . . the doctrine of occasional causes . . . is fraught with dangerous consequences, even if its learned defenders do not, as is undoubtedly true, intend them. So far is this doctrine from increasing the glory of God by removing the idol of nature that it seems rather, like Spinoza, to make out of God the *nature of the world* . . . , by causing *created things to disappear into mere modifications of the one divine substance*, . . . I am most certainly convinced that Mr. Sturm, a man distinguished in piety and learning, is far removed from such monstrosities. (sec. 15; L 506-7; G IV 515; italics mine)

The final text to consider in greater depth is "Two Sects of Naturalists." It is relevant to our second thesis in three separate ways. The first is that it makes clear that, on Leibniz's view, the doctrine that God is the soul of the world is not only Spinoza's view but also that of the Stoic revival, which Leibniz also sees as a dangerous opponent of his age.

The second is that it reveals the "dangerous" doctrines that Leibniz allies with the AMD formulas. The exact nature of the connections among the "dangerous" doctrines is not spelled out in detail here (we will attempt to supply the links later in the paper), but it is clear from this and other texts that Leibniz associates the views about to be listed closely together. Here is a fuller version of the quotation we looked at earlier.

The sect of the new Stoics believes . . . that *God is the soul of the world*, or, if you wish, the primary power of the world, that he is the cause of matter itself, if you wish, but that a blind necessity determines him to act They further believe . . . that things really act because of [the] power [of this divinity] and not due to a rational choice of this divinity, since, properly speaking, God has neither understanding nor will, which are attributes of men. They believe that all possible things happen . . . , that we must not seek final causes; that we are not sure of the immortality of the soul or of future life; that there is no justice or benevolence with respect to God, that he determines what constitutes benevolence and justice, and that, consequently, he would have done nothing contrary to justice by making the innocent always miserable. This is why these gentlemen admit providence in name only. . . . In fact, these are Spinoza's views. (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385; italics mine)

If there is any passage that deserves to be called a battle cry in a war of natural religion waged by Leibniz, this is probably it. And the idea that God is the soul of

the world is very much in the thick of things.

The final way in which “Two Sects of Naturalists” is relevant to our second thesis is that it implicates Descartes in the same basic line of criticism. To be sure, Leibniz is a bit more careful in connection with Descartes. He does not directly charge Descartes with either the soul of the world doctrine or the imposing list of additional suspect theological views, as he does in the case of Spinoza. However, he comes close. Here is what Leibniz says after giving the list of theologically suspect views, including the view that God is the soul of the world:

In fact, these are Spinoza’s views, and *there are many people to whom Descartes appears to be of the same opinion.* (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385; **italics mine**)

More needs to be said about all this. We will in particular return to the case of Descartes later. But, speaking preliminarily, it suggests that Leibniz’s hostility to the doctrines that God is the nature of all things and God is the soul of the world is central in his opposition to several other major philosophical systems of the day. So his opposition is not only an important part of Leibniz’s natural religion but also central to the establishment of his philosophical system against the systems of his rivals. As we have just seen, Leibniz makes these doctrines central in his attacks on some of the major opponents of his career: Spinoza, the Stoics, Malebranche and other occasionalists, and, in a slightly less direct way, Descartes. Now we have already learned that there may be reason to add Newton to the group, for in Leibniz’s view a number of Newton’s views, including space as God’s sensorium (or “as if” God’s sensorium) “seems to make God the soul of the world” (LC 4, sec. 27). Again, sameness of formulas does not necessarily mean sameness of views. But there is now at least *prima facie* evidence that the same view, or roughly the same view, is playing a central role in Leibniz’s “battles” against all of these contemporary rivals.

2. Clarification of what Leibniz means by God as the soul of the world

The path we have traced, following the trail of equivalences that extend from God as the nature of things to God as the soul of the world, already provides some help in getting clearer on what Leibniz means by the phrase, ‘God is the soul of the world’. But the help is rather indirect. The present section will address the question more directly, albeit with the qualification that one line of thought in Leibniz is being pursued here, not necessarily all lines of thought, or all conceptions of the soul of the world, that exist in his writings (see below).

Unfortunately, I know of no definitions of the phrase ‘*anima mundi*’, or other AMD formulas, provided by Leibniz. Still, there are in Leibniz’s writings definite clues to the meaning of the statement that God is the soul of the world.

For example, consider a quotation looked at briefly above, namely,

. . . many oriental philosophers, no less than Platonists or Stoics, held God to be the *Anima Mundi*, or a universal nature immanent in things. (G II 383; italics mine)

The clue that Leibniz leaves behind here is the final phrase, “immanent in things.” To be sure, ‘immanent’ is itself a vague term. But given the clearly pejorative tone of most of the contexts in which the mature Leibniz uses the term, ‘*anima mundi*’, I propose the hypothesis that, for Leibniz, the word ‘immanent’, as applied to God as *anima mundi*, universal nature, or the substance of things in the passages we are considering, indicates that such a God is *not transcendent*, and as such is not the God of mainstream Christianity.¹⁹

As it turns out, The Leibniz-Clarke correspondence itself sheds light on this question of immanence and transcendence in relation to the soul of the world doctrine. One of the flashpoints of the correspondence was Clarke’s insinuation that Leibniz held, or at least tended towards, a view of God as a “*supra-mundane intelligence*,” thus excluding, or tending to “exclude providence and God’s government in reality out of the world” (LC 1; G VII 354). Leibniz replied forcefully, in section 10 of his Second Paper:

I don’t think I can be rightly blamed, for saying that God is *intelligentia supramundana*. Will they [the Newtonians] say, that he is *intelligentia mundana*; that is, the soul of the world? I hope not. However, they will do well to take care, not to fall into that notion unawares. (LC 2, sec. 10; G VII 358)

To this Clarke counters, in his Second Reply, sec. 10:

God is neither a *mundane intelligence*, nor a *supramundane intelligence*; but an omnipresent intelligence, both in and without the world. He is in all, and through all, as well as above all. (LC 2, sec. 10; G VII 361-2)

Leibniz, still upset, nonetheless reveals in his Third Paper, sec. 15, that there is not a great distance between the two men after all:

The author strives in vain to criticize my expression, that God is *intelligentia supramundana*. To say that God is above the world, is not denying that he is in the world. (LC 3, sec. 15; G VII 366)

The upshot of this exchange is that Clarke and Leibniz in the end agree that God is both in the world and above or “without” the world, however they would further

explain these difficult notions. But in the process they also both reveal that they are taking an “*Intelligentia Mundana*,” that is, a “*mundane intelligence*,” to be an intelligence *in* the world but *not* above or outside the world, and hence, in that sense, *not* transcendent. But *Intelligentia Mundana* is just what Leibniz identifies with “l’Ame du Monde,” the soul of the world (LC 2, sec. 10; G VII 358). This is clear confirmation that Leibniz understands soul of the world God to be immanent and *not* transcendent.

A second clue about the meaning of the statement that “God is the soul of the world,” and the AMD formulas more generally, has to do with the persistent appearance of the concept of power or force in connection with these. There are basically two different ways in which the concept makes its appearance. The one occurs in contexts where Leibniz makes clear what is wrong with the view of God set out in the AMD formulas. The other occurs in contexts where Leibniz seems simply to be paraphrasing one of the formulations, presenting the same basic idea, but in different words.

Let’s begin with an example of the first kind of occurrence from “Two Sects of Naturalists,” where Leibniz says of the Stoics that not only do they believe that “God is the soul of the world,” but also

that there is a mechanical necessity in all things, that things really act because of his power and not due to a rational choice of this divinity, since, properly speaking, God has neither understanding nor will. (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385)

It is clear that Leibniz views this as a negative conception of God. Power is at the heart of this negative conception. The reason for this is not, of course, because the mere imputation of power to God is problematic in itself – Leibniz’s attribution of omnipotence to God is obvious evidence against this – but rather because on this view God is acting *solely* “because of his power,” and *not* because of “a rational choice.” God is not acting out of a rational choice because, on the Stoic view as Leibniz is describing it, “God has neither understanding nor will,” thus undercutting the two essential components of rational choice for Leibniz.

Here is another example of this kind of addition to the contexts where the AMD formulas are being used to describe God. It is taken from “A Specimen of Catholic Demonstrations” of 1685(?), in which Leibniz is describing the views of some freethinkers, saying that for them,²⁰ “God is either nothing or nothing other than that power that produces all possibles in necessary order.” (A VI.iv B 2325)²¹

The key point here for our purposes is that the God in question, in this context

in which the ‘*anima mundi*’ formulation appears, is “*nothing other* than [a certain] power” (italics mine). That is, while this deity may be omnipotent, there is nothing else to it: in particular, is not omniscient or omnibenevolent; that is, it is not a personal God, endowed with intellect and will.

We turn now to an example of the second kind, where Leibniz seems simply to be paraphrasing one of the AMD formulas into a formula having to do with force. The quotation in question is drawn from “Ad Constitutionem Scientiae Generalis” of the spring of 1682(?).

. . . those who . . . pervert metaphysics and morals . . . explain everything mechanically by means of a certain blind force of nature, and sometimes seem to lead men away from the knowledge and worship of divine providence by neglecting final causes and forms and following only efficient and material causes. They take God away from us or they transform God into *a certain brute force* of general nature, robbed of intellect and will, that is to say, [they transform God] into *the soul of the world*. (A VI.iv B 460-1; italics mine)

Whereas the preceding passage seemed to commit Leibniz to viewing the *anima mundi* God as nothing other than a certain power, without intellect or will, the present passage goes further in leaving nothing to doubt: it states explicitly that an *anima mundi* God is both a certain brute force of nature and devoid of intellect and will.

If further evidence is desired of the tight link in Leibniz’s mind between the soul of the world doctrine and the notion of blind power, it is available in one of the texts most central to the criticism of the God of Spinoza and the Stoics, “Two Sects of Naturalists,” from the period of 1678-80(?). The quotation that follows starts with words we have already seen and then goes further:

The sect of the new Stoics believes . . . that God is the soul of the world, or, if you wish, the primary power [*premiere puissance*] of the world, . . . that a blind necessity determines him to act, . . . that things really act because of his power [*pouvoir*] and not due to a rational choice of this divinity, since, properly speaking, God has neither understanding nor will. (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385)²²

Here Leibniz is simply equating the notion of God as the soul of the world with that of God as the primary power of the world. He again makes clear that such a God “has neither understanding nor will,” this time adding that the action of this primary power of the world involves a blind necessity and not at all a rational choice.

Although we have seen that, at least in many contexts, Leibniz views the phrases

‘soul of the world’ and ‘nature or substance of all things’ [‘*naturam seu substantiam rerum omnium*’] as equivalent, it might be asked how we are to fit these new findings about the meaning of the former phrase (having to do with immanence and power) to the latter in some plausible way. I think we can gain insight in this regard from *De Ipsa Natura*, of 1698, the very work from which the latter phrase above is taken. In that work Leibniz says that “the inherent nature [of a creature] is no different from the force of acting and being acted upon . . .” (AG 160; G IV 509).²³ Our two main points about the meaning of the phrase, ‘*anima mundi*’ in Leibniz’s writings, having to do with immanence on the one hand and force or power on the other, are here clearly on display with respect to the nature of a thing as well. A nature is “inherent,” or immanent in the thing of which it is a nature. And a nature simply is a certain force or power.

To be sure, the fit is not perfect. Whereas Leibniz is insistent, as we have seen, that the soul of the world is nothing but a certain brute power, the term ‘nature’ may, but need not, have such a connotation.²⁴ Consider the nature of a person on Leibniz’s view. Leibniz would be the first to deny that the fact that a person has a nature, a nature that is at bottom an active and passive force, means that the person in question acts with blind necessity, or that she has no intellect or will. So we cannot say that there is an exact match in the two cases. But on the basic points of immanence and a clear relation to power, I hope that what has just been said helps explain the equivalence of the phrases ‘soul of the world’ and ‘nature and substance of all things’ in a more natural way than the purely textual links that preceded this section.

A final point: although the present section has tried to provide help in explaining the meaning of the assertion that God is the soul of the world in Leibniz, it would be rash to conclude that there is just one meaning of the assertion in Leibniz’s writings or that the survey here concluded is exhaustive. The sea of Leibniz texts is large, and there are some twists and turns in Leibniz’s use of the AMD formulas that have not yet been presented. Perhaps the most accurate thing to say is that this section has offered evidence with respect to one meaning in Leibniz of the formula that God is the soul of the world. Other possible meanings will be considered later in the paper.

3. Arguments against God as soul of the world

One may have noticed that when Leibniz is using the AMD formulas, he not infrequently makes use of such words as “monstrosities” (L 507; “portentis,” G IV 515), or “doctrine of most evil repute” (AG 160; “pessimae notae doctrinam,” G IV 509), and adds that a man of piety would be “most hostile” to such views. (“virum . . . pietate . . . insipidum, ab his portentis alienissimum” (G IV 515))

If found in the writings of lesser minds, such words might suggest that the author had no argument to oppose the doctrines at issue, and instead resorted to simple name calling.²⁵ To be sure, in many of the contexts we have considered, Leibniz does *not* offer any argument against the AMD, but rather lets such words or phrases as those above suffice. Still, he does have arguments, indeed several arguments, and at least some of them are of a high degree of sophistication. In the present section, without aiming for completeness, I consider four of these arguments, some quite briefly, devoting most of my attention to an argument against God as the soul of the world which, as far as I know, has received almost no attention up to this point.

The first argument against God as the soul of the world appears at least in the correspondence with Des Bosses and in one earlier paper. With regard to the former, Leibniz wrote to Des Bosses in 1706 that “God . . . is self-sufficient and the cause of matter and of all other things; thus he is not the soul of the world but the author” (LR 77; G II 324).²⁶ With regard to the latter, Leibniz said the following in a paper written a bit before the time of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, entitled “God is not the soul of the world”:

There are other arguments [against God as the soul of the world], as for example, that God is the continuous producer of the world, but the soul is not the producer of the body itself. (*Deum non esse mundi animam, Summer 1683–Winter 1685/86(?); A VI.iv 1492*)²⁷

Abstracting from some details,²⁸ and combining elements of both passages, we can reconstruct the core argument involved here as follows:

- 1) A soul of a body is not the producer of that body
- 2) God is the producer of the world
- 3) Therefore, God is not the soul of the world²⁹

A second argument is suggested by the reference to God’s self-sufficiency in a passage recently quoted (LR 77; G II 324) and fleshed out in Leibniz’s correspondence with Clarke. As Leibniz notes, the discussion of it is complicated by the fact that Clarke and Leibniz are working with very different views about

the ways in which a created soul “interacts” with its body. (LC 5, 87; G VII 411) Nonetheless, the main points of the argument are present in sections 82, 85 and 86 of Leibniz’s fifth paper. Here is the relevant part of section 82:

If ‘tis by means of a sensorium that God perceives what passes in the world; it seems that things act upon him; and that therefore he is what we mean by a soul of the world. (LC 5 82; G VII 410)

As Leibniz makes clear in section 85, a related issue here is whether God’s knowledge of the things in the world obtains in virtue of God’s “continual production of them,” or instead in virtue of the things acting upon God.³⁰ If the latter, then God’s knowledge of the world is dependent on the things in the world. And if this is so, then God cannot be said to be “self-sufficient” in his omniscience. But, Leibniz contends, God is self-sufficient in his knowledge of things. This suggests a somewhat more elaborate version of the argument, but to keep things simple, I will close the present discussion with the less elaborate version clearly implied in section 82:

- (1) If God were the soul of the world, then things in the world would act on God³¹
- (2) Things in the world do not act on God³²
- (3) Therefore, God is not the soul of the world

A third argument that Leibniz presents is much more sophisticated. In recent years a considerable amount of research has been devoted to this challenging argument, and our understanding of it has increased significantly. I am thinking specifically of the work done by Laurence Carlin, Gregory Brown and Richard Arthur. I find the most recent article by Brown particularly valuable.³³ Given the literature that is now available, I will content myself here with reproducing a brief statement of the argument and an evaluation of it. The statement is drawn from a work of the mid-1680s recently published in the Academy edition’s philosophical series (VI), volume iv B :

The aggregate of all bodies is called the *world*, which, if it is infinite, is not even one entity, any more than an infinite straight line or the greatest number are. So God cannot be understood as the *World Soul*: not the soul of a finite world because God himself is infinite, and not of an infinite world because an infinite body cannot be understood as one entity [*unum Ens*], but that which is not one in itself [*unum per se*] has no substantial form, and therefore no soul. So Marianus Capella is right to call God an extramundane intelligence. (*De mundo praesenti*, March 1684–Spring 1686; A VI.iv 1509; translation

from Ar 287)

In terms of evaluation of this argument, it is clear that it turns on Leibniz's theory of infinity, most obviously, his thesis that the notion of an infinite number involves a contradiction. Gregory Brown concludes his impressive recent article on this argument with an examination of this particular claim by Leibniz from the point of view of more recent work on the notion of the infinite, showing the problems with Leibniz's argument for the contradictory nature of the notion of an infinite number (Brown 2005).³⁴

In the final portion of this section, I would like to consider an argument from the "Dialogue entre Theophile et Polidore," written during the summer to fall of 1679(?). It is worth noting that this tentative date is shortly after Leibniz's reading of Spinoza's *Ethics* in 1678 and the associated hardening of Leibniz's attitudes against Spinoza, as well as in the same time period as the composition of "Two Sects of Naturalists,"³⁵ in which, as we have seen, Leibniz lumps together and criticizes the Stoics and Spinoza for their allegedly sharing the soul of the world doctrine along with associated theological views.

Here is the relevant quotation from the dialogue, with some editorial inserts on point relevant to the reconstruction of the argument:

PO. I believe that there is a soul of the world, which gives it life and movement.

TH. You will not avoid the difficulty that way. Let us look into this a little: does this soul act by choice or by necessity? [I read this as an exclusive 'or']

PO. Perhaps by necessity.

...

TH. If this nature or soul of the world or in the end this mover of which you speak is capable of reason, I see indeed that it will act in the ways that it judges most simple: but otherwise [if it acts by necessity, as Polidore had postulated, and hence acts not by choice, *a fortiori* not by reason] I do not see how simplicity will win out. For a cause [I read Leibniz as taking "a cause" here in a narrow sense, as an entity acting by necessity; otherwise *any* producer of all would fall prey to the dilemma Leibniz is posing] always acts as much as it can and insofar as it is not impeded. Therefore, [there seems to be something implicit at this juncture, along the lines of, "if the cause is omnipotent"³⁶] it is necessary that all things possible in themselves are produced, which cannot happen, since there are many incompatible things. Or indeed nothing will be produced. (A VI.iv C 2231)³⁷

Below is a reconstruction of the argument that is contained in this passage.

- 1) Suppose: there exists an omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice that produces anything else that exists (from the passage, with some interpretive additions)
- 2) x is a “cause” =df. x acts by necessity and not by choice (the argument does too much if this is not the definition being assumed)
- 3) If there were an omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice, then the omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice would be a “cause” and it would be omnipotent, that is, there would be an omnipotent “cause” (from 2) and the tautology that an omnipotent being is omnipotent)
- 4) If there were an omnipotent “cause,” it would produce all things possible in themselves or it would produce nothing (from the passage, with some interpretive additions)
- 5) If there were an omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice, it would produce all things possible in themselves or it would produce nothing (from 3) and 4))
- 6) An omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice produces all things possible in themselves or it produces nothing (from 1) and 5))
- 7) It is not possible to produce all things possible in themselves, because there are incompatibilities among the things possible in themselves (from the passage)
- 8) An omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice would produce nothing (from 6) and 7))
- 9) Nothing other than an omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice exists (from 1) and 8))
- 10) There exists something other than an omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice (implicit, *a posteriori*)
- 11) 9) and 10) (from the conjunction of 9) and 10) -- a contradiction)
- 12) It is not the case that there exists an omnipotent soul of the world acting by necessity and not by choice that produces anything else that exists

More intuitively and briefly, an omnipotent soul of the world, acting by necessity and not by choice (*a fortiori*, not by reason; hence, without intellect and will), and producing anything else that exists (OSWANNCPA), would have to produce either all things possible in themselves or nothing. Leibniz contends that it is impossible

to create all of them, since some are incompatible with others. Therefore, an OSWANNCPA would create nothing.³⁸ But this is absurd, given that something other than an OSWANNCPA exists. So an OSWANNCPA does not exist.

What can be said about this argument? There are a number of possible objections. First, why must an OSWANNCPA produce all things possible in themselves or none at all? Why couldn't it simply start producing things possible in themselves, in arbitrary order, and stop only when logical incompatibility precluded further production? A possible response is that the being would have to start somewhere, and there would need to be a reason for this beginning point. A counter is that while this might be true of a being with rationality, we are specifically talking about a being without reason. To which the reply might be that the principle of sufficient reason holds not just for states of affairs involving beings with reason but for all states of affairs whatever.

This leads to a second possible criticism. Suppose that an implicit premise of this argument is indeed the principle of reason, invoked in full generality. No doubt with respect to some of Leibniz's accounts of this principle, the appeal might be sustained. But it is worth noting, in part because it is relevant to the main thrust of this paper, that there is at least one famous text in terms of which it is clear that the appeal could not be sustained. Note that we quote a bit more of the famous passage than is usually done. Here is the text:

I begin as a philosopher, but I end as a theologian. One of my great principles is that nothing happens without a reason. This is a principle of philosophy. However, at bottom it is nothing other than the avowal of the divine wisdom, although I do not speak of this at first. (LH 58)

In the latter portion of this passage – the portion which is seldom included in quotations of the passage – Leibniz says that the principle of sufficient reason is nothing other than the avowal of the divine wisdom. But if it is nothing other than an assertion or avowal of the divine wisdom, then obviously it cannot be invoked in contexts in which divine wisdom is definitely excluded from the case under discussion, a case in which God is said to act without reason and choice. But that is exactly the kind of case being considered in the argument above.

But suppose that there are other grounds for the principle of sufficient reason independent of appeals to the divine wisdom, despite what Leibniz says here. For instance, in "Primary Truths," it at least appears that Leibniz deduces the principle of sufficient reason solely from principles of logic.³⁹ To be sure, some would see a paradox in saying that there could be an omnipotent being which would

be logically precluded from producing anything. But if logical incompatibilities among possibles in themselves and a logic-based principle of reason are behind the present argument, then that appears to be exactly what is being said. This is, of course, much stronger than what some already consider paradoxical, namely, that an omnipotent being cannot produce what involves a logical contradiction, even though it can produce anything. Which leads us back to a modified version of the original question: why should Leibniz expect anyone to accept that if an OSWANNCPA produces anything at all, it produces everything possible in itself rather than everything it can possibly produce, given any earlier things it has produced?⁴⁰

A final criticism is this. Leibniz's theory of impossibility has been a challenge to commentators for a long time. A simple interpretation is that two things are impossible just in case it is not logically possible that they exist together. It is highly plausible that this is the account that Leibniz has in mind in talking about incompatible things in the argument above, for otherwise what would stop the OSWANNCPA from producing all things possible in themselves? But objections have been raised against this as an analysis of Leibniz's mature notion of impossibility. In fact, in light of such objections, and other considerations, some hold that not only is it the case that the fully developed notion of impossibility cannot be defined as above, but also that, strictly speaking, there is no *logical* impossibility in the production of all things possible in themselves (even though some might insist that the set of all possibles is not a possible *world*, in Leibniz's special sense of this term). If this second interpretation is right, would the mature Leibniz find this argument problematic? Could this be why the argument just presented is not found, at least not as far as I know, in Leibniz's writings after 1679?⁴¹

4. A theory about the unity of the “battle line”

We noted earlier in the paper that there were some “theologically suspect” views that Leibniz treated as “allied doctrines,” ones that often appear in conjunction with charges by Leibniz that the God of some other philosophers is the soul of the world or the nature of things. The “battle line” of the title of this paper is essentially a contest of doctrines, with at least one version of the soul of the world doctrine and these allied doctrines on one side, and Leibniz with his opposing views of God and the world on the other. The paper, “Two Sects of Naturalists,” from Leibniz's early

Hanover years, presents one of the fullest, most forceful statements of the doctrines confronted across this battle line in association with the soul of the world doctrine. Among the “allied doctrines” are the doctrines of no final causes, necessitarianism, no divine justice, no divine providence, and others.⁴² But up until now we have not really addressed the question whether the doctrine of God as the soul of the world is central or peripheral in this battle line of doctrines. We have suggested that it is central. But it is time to back this up a bit more fully, and in the process answer just why Leibniz thinks that the doctrine of God as the nature of things or the soul of the world is “fraught with dangerous consequences.” (G IV 515)

One might expect at this point that I would turn to the claim of *De Ipsa Natura* that the doctrine of God as the nature of things “comes to the same thing as” monism and for this reason is “fraught with dangerous consequences.” That would certainly be one way to go, and it fits with the context of *De Ipsa Natura*. But I will not follow that road here, since I think there is another way to show the centrality of the doctrine of God as the nature of things with respect to dangerous theological positions, one that aligns more clearly with the work above on one line of thought concerning the meaning of the thesis that God is the soul of the world or the nature of things.

The specific strong claim I would like to make is that that virtually all of the “allied doctrines” listed in “Two Sects of Naturalists” *follow* from the thesis that God is the soul of the world or the nature of things as interpreted in section 2 above. If this were true, then obviously the thesis would be central in at least one “battle line” of Leibniz’s wars of natural religion. Some of the arguments involved here are fairly straightforward, assuming that points earlier in this paper are granted. But at least one of them may be novel for many, depending on a key idea of the unfamiliar argument discussed above, about a bare power producing all things possible (or possible in themselves), if it produces at all.

I put my support for the strong claim in the form of two sorities arguments, both starting from the supposition that God is the soul of the world.

Suppose that God is the soul of the world. If God is the soul of the world, then God is a blind power. If God is a blind power, then God has neither intellect nor will. If God has neither intellect nor will, then there are no final causes.

It is clear that this argument leads straightforwardly to two of the “allied doctrines,” that God has no intellect and will and that there are no final causes. It depends on our result that Leibniz takes it to be an essential part of the meaning of the claim that God is the soul of the world that God is a blind force, and that this

in turn means that God has no intellect or will. It also turns on a non-Aristotelian notion of final cause (to be sure, a widespread one) in which it makes no sense to talk about a final cause without a specific relation to an entity that has cognition.

The second sorites turns on the notion, often present in Leibniz's discussions of the soul of the world, that if one strips the traditional God of intellect and will, then God becomes a blind power, and everything that can be produced by this (presumably omnipotent) power will be actually be produced. Here is the fuller argument.

Suppose that God is the soul of the world and is omnipotent. If God is the soul of the world and omnipotent, then God is a blind omnipotent power. If God is a blind omnipotent power, then everything that can be produced by the blind omnipotent power, God, is actually produced by the blind omnipotent power, God. If everything that can be produced by the blind omnipotent power, God, is actually produced, then everything is produced necessarily and everything possible exists. If everything is produced necessarily and everything possible exists, then there is no divine justice or goodness and there is no divine providence.⁴³

The consequences of the soul of the world doctrine given this argument are clear: necessitarianism, the existence of all possibles, no divine justice or goodness, and no divine providence. Combining these with the consequences from the first sorites argument, a God without intellect and will, and no final causes, there would quite an array of (for Leibniz, objectionable) theological views linked firmly to the doctrine that God is the soul of the world or the nature of things. And, if sustained, such logical centrality would clearly support the claim that the AMD formulas, interpreted as implying a God of blind force, would be central with regard to an important battle line of Leibniz's wars of (natural) religion. Of course, we have only sketched out the arguments by means of which these "allied doctrines" could be said to follow from the doctrine of that God is the soul of the world; we have not thoroughly developed and documented them. So we cannot claim this as something demonstrated that can be added to arguments above about the centrality of the AMD formulas. But it is nonetheless some further evidence in support of the centrality of the AMD formulas – once again, central relative to a specific sense of the AMD formulas and an important set of targets of Leibniz's theological criticisms, the "allied doctrines" of "Two Sects of Naturalists" and related works. The AMD formulas are central targets because, on this interpretation, they bring so much objectionable with them; they entail the "allied doctrines," which are "theologically suspect."⁴⁴

5. Revisiting the two theses

The attack on Spinoza for holding the view that God is the nature of things and the attack on Newton for tending towards, or seeming to hold, the view that God is the soul of the world are much closer than they may at first have seemed. That was our first thesis. And the simplest way to summarize the work of the paper in connection with this thesis is this: we have found textual evidence indicating that these two formulas are equivalent, at least at many points in Leibniz's career. Some of this evidence is complex, involving a number of different formulas, and chains of equivalences linking one formula to the other. But some of it is quite straightforward, the simplest of all being a passage in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence itself in which Leibniz equates the two formulas, saying, "God . . . will be comprehended under the nature of things [la nature des choses]; that is [c'est à dire], he will be the soul of the world" (LC 2, sec. 12). Coming at things from a different direction, in terms of the single formula, "God is the soul of the world," we have found that Leibniz criticizes both Spinoza and Newton for holding, or tending to hold, that God is the soul of the world.

But we should be cautious about drawing the conclusion that since Leibniz often uses our two formulas equivalently, and even uses the same formula, "God is the soul of the world," in his criticisms of Spinoza and Newton, this automatically implies that there is an identity of meaning in the doctrine that Leibniz ascribes to Spinoza and says Newton tends toward. It is possible that, despite the textual evidence here considered, Leibniz meant two different things in his criticisms of Spinoza and Newton. Again, our first thesis was not a thesis of identity of meaning but that the two criticisms with which we began are much closer to one another than it might at first have appeared. The textual evidence certainly supports that, even if it does not conclusively support a claim of identity of meaning.

But one would like to know more: how close are the meanings? In this regard, our investigations into specific elements of the meaning Leibniz ascribed, or certainly seemed to ascribe to the formulas, 'God is soul of the world' and 'God is the nature of things' is helpful.

Let's start with the first element of meaning we assigned to these formulas, immanence. Our investigations have already confirmed that, with respect to the questions of immanence and transcendence, the formulas in the two contexts (writings about Spinoza and writings about Newton) do have the same implication: a God which is the soul of the world is not transcendent but immanent only.

But this leaves open the very important question whether the formulas in the two contexts imply the second point we have emphasized, namely, that in Leibniz's clarifications, direct and indirect, of the formulas, "God is the nature of things," and "God is the soul of the world," we learn that Leibniz means to refer to God as a blind power, with neither intellect nor will. It is clear that, in contexts having to do with Spinoza, the AMD formulas *do* imply this. But whereas Spinoza's text provides ample evidence that this view is indeed part of Spinoza's philosophy, the case of Newton and the Newtonians is very different. God's will is not rejected in the Newtonian view but in fact strongly emphasized. And God's omniscience – and hence his intellect – is also endorsed.⁴⁵ Would Leibniz really be saying the Newtonians were so close to the AMD if he were using the formula, "God is the soul of the world," in a sense that so clearly flies in the face of the language the Newtonians explicitly use?

A parallel case may shed light on the possibilities here. Descartes too uses the language of God's intellect and will. But Leibniz is fully capable of making his own independent evaluation of this language, and indeed coming to the hard conclusion that, in spite of the language, Descartes is committed to a God *without* intellect or will. Here is a sample of this position, also from the period of the late 1670s, approximately when Leibniz was saying that Spinoza endorsed the view of God as the soul of the world, without intellect and will:

I fear that we are deceived by fine words, since Descartes's God, or perfect being, is not a God like the one we imagine or hope for, that is, a God just and wise, doing everything possible for the good of creatures. Rather, Descartes's God is something approaching the God of Spinoza, namely, the principle of things and a certain supreme power or primitive nature that puts everything into motion [*action*] and does everything that can be done. Descartes's God has neither *will* nor *understanding*, since according to Descartes he does not have the *good* as object of the will, nor the *true* as object of the understanding. (Letter to Molanus(?), ca. 1679, AG 242; A II.i 501)

Note the closeness of Leibniz's language here – "supreme power or primitive nature" – to what he ascribes to Spinoza when he says, 1) that "God is the soul of the world, or, if you wish, the *primary power* of the world," (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385; italics mine) and 2) that "God is . . . *nature* of things" (A VI.iii 269-70; italics mine).

But how is this related to the Newtonians? Here one should recall that Clarke insisted that, although "nothing is, without a sufficient reason why it is, . . . this

sufficient reason is oft-times no other, than the mere will of God.” (LC 2, sec. 1: G VII 359). Now God’s acting because of his “mere will,” and not because of the goodness of what he wills, is precisely what Leibniz objected to in Descartes, and precisely what led him to the conclusion that, strictly speaking, Descartes’ God has no will. To be sure, I know of no doctrine of the Newtonians corresponding to Descartes’ doctrine of the creation of eternal truths, the key doctrine leading to Leibniz’s denial that Descartes’ God has an intellect. According to Leibniz, this doctrine means that Descartes’s God does not have the true as the object of his understanding. But since it is choice, more specifically, the willing of the good, that is so important for Leibniz in distinguishing a provident God from one exercising brute power (as we saw in the “Dialogue entre Theophile et Polidore”) this may not be essential. With no true will, there would seem to be no true choice of the good, regardless of the intellectual powers that a being might have.

As I said, the case is not completely clear. But what before seemed to be a major barrier to the sameness of sense in the formula used in criticizing both Spinoza and Newton – the formula, ‘God is the soul of the world’ – now seems to be less so. Still, there is reason to be cautious. For one thing, as we have seen, the term ‘soul of the world’ has been used in many senses in the history of philosophy. And in polemical contexts, care in connection with its use cannot always be guaranteed. It was, after all, a fairly widespread term of abuse.⁴⁶ Speaking more systematically, the Newtonian views that prompt Leibniz to bring out the “soul of the world” charge do not seem to match perfectly with the sorts of things we have identified in connection with Spinoza and the Stoics, and, to a lesser extent, Descartes and Malebranche. To be sure, we have already seen that immanence is a common thread between the soul of the world references in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence and the earlier appearances of the concept. And there appears to be some similarity also (see above) on the matter of a lack of genuine will. But there may be some important differences in connection with the divine will as well. As Gregory Brown has pointed out, it is one thing to say that there are *some* cases in which the reason for God’s action is the “mere will of God;” quite another to say that all cases of God’s actions are ones for which there is no reason other than the “mere will of God,” and in particular, no aiming at goodness. There is reason to think that Clarke and Newton had the more moderate view in mind. So the case remains unclear.

To gain some perspective on the difficulties here, I suggest considering a parallel situation, one in any case relevant to the overall aims of this paper. As it turns out,

Mogens Laerke and I have been discussing issues connected with two fine articles of his on themes closely related to those of the present paper. Although he does not use the term ‘battle lines’, he is basically presenting research on a rich variety of battle lines in Leibniz’s disputes with others. One of these battle lines of dispute concerns the theme of an Averroistic single universal spirit.⁴⁷ Central to the discussions between the two of us has been a question similar to the one we have just been addressing in connection with Leibniz and Newton, about sameness or difference of sense in connection with different uses of *anima mundi* language. The related question concerning Laerke and me is a question about Leibniz’s use of ‘soul of the world’ terminology in two different contexts, first, the one we are familiar with from the discussion above (mostly in relation to Spinoza and the Stoics) involving an immanent God of blind power, without intellect or will, producing everything possible necessarily, and, second, the one that Laerke highlights, set in the context of the Averroistic “single universal spirit.” This doctrine of course involves a controversial interpretation of Aristotle’s agent intellect in which, briefly, there is only one agent intellect for all humans, an agent intellect souls “return to” upon bodily death, thus eliminating any possibility of individual, personal immortality – at least as far as reason rather than faith is concerned. As it happens, there are passages in which Leibniz does seem to call this Averroistic single universal spirit the “soul of the world” (e.g., A II.i 122, to Oldenburg, 22 June 1671). And so the question arises, is the meaning of the phrase exactly the same in Laerke’s favored contexts as it is in the contexts in which the reference is to a God of blind power, without intellect and will? Might there not be two senses of the phrase, ‘soul of the world’, no doubt with commonalities of meaning but differences too?

Because of limitations of space, I have, up to this point, bracketed all questions related to the single universal spirit from the main work of this paper. But I mention the issue here – without trying to decide it – because there appear to be analogies to the case at hand, of deciding whether the concept of God as the soul of the world (or the “nature of all things”) is the same in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence as it is in the contexts in which, say, Leibniz is attacking Spinoza and the Stoics, or Descartes. In closing this section, what I propose for future research is that there is, at a minimum, a family resemblance among the possibly diverse concepts involved here. Conceivably, there is even an identity of senses across most uses of the terms by Leibniz, even if there are clear differences of emphasis in different contexts. But I am only claiming similarity of sense here, perhaps, for instance, in connection with immanence. As a further proposal for future research, I list

some of the possible different points of emphasis involved, points emphasized in different contexts in connection with the AMD formulas:

Emphasis 1: God as an immanent, blind power, without intellect and will, acting necessarily, producing everything possible. This appears primarily in contexts involving Spinoza and the Stoics,⁴⁸ but also, with varying degrees of strength, in contexts involving Descartes. A prime example of this is “Two Sects of Naturalists.” This is the emphasis most in evidence in the present paper, and the one most thoroughly investigated here.

Emphasis 2: God as the single agent intellect, the single universal spirit, to which human souls return on bodily death. There is no individual personal immortality on this conception, at least not judging by reason alone. An example of Leibniz’s discussion of this is “Considerations of a Single Universal Spirit.”

Emphasis 3: God as bearing a relation to the world much like the relation between the human soul and body, for instance, in being intimately present to the world, perhaps literally in the world, governing providentially via his presence as the soul directs the body via its presence to the body, knowing things about the world by being literally present to the various parts of it, perhaps even with the world acting on God to allow for this perception, in (as it were) God’s sensorium, space. This appears, for instance, in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence.⁴⁹

If things are, as we have just seen, not entirely clear in connection with an identity of meaning of the AMD formulas in the criticisms of Newton and Spinoza, what has become increasingly clear, as we have worked through Leibniz’s pronouncements, is that the notion of God as the nature of the things, or God as the soul of the world – in the sense of an immanent, blind force -- is indeed central as a leading target of attack in one of the battle lines in Leibniz’s wars of (natural) religion. As we have seen, the notion appears repeatedly, in one or another of its many verbal guises, in some of the more important theological (and also philosophical) confrontations of his career, and in at least this sense is central in his thought in natural religion and important beyond that. Indeed, if our argument is correct that virtually the entire list of “theologically suspect” views of “Two Sects of Naturalists” follows from the doctrine that God is the soul of the world, with this doctrine understood as implying that such a God is a blind force, then defeating the doctrine in this sense is obviously a high priority for Leibniz in attempting to further his system of natural religion.

Our second thesis included the statement that Leibniz's attack on the AMD is "also important for his philosophy." As we near the end of this paper, I would like to offer some additional points in support of this view, starting with an important philosophical area relatively far removed (one might have thought) from natural theology. Consider the following quotation from the *Principles of Nature and of Grace*:

[I]t is surprising that, by a consideration of *efficient causes* alone . . . , we cannot give the reason for the laws of motion discovered in our time. . . . For I have found that it is necessary to have recourse to *final causes* for this, and that these laws do not depend upon the *principle of necessity*, as do logical, arithmetical, and geometrical truths, but upon the *principle of fitness*, that is, upon the *choice of wisdom*. (PNG sec. 11; AG 211; G VI 603; italics mine in connection with the last three words)

How is this relevant to the "battle line" described in this paper? Perhaps it is already clear. Assume a God who is the soul of the world, in the sense of an immanent, blind power. According to Leibniz, this means that such a divinity will operate with necessity, in accordance with mathematical laws. (A VI.iv 2325) It also means, obviously, that God will act without intellect and will, *a fortiori*, without wisdom, that is, without knowledge of the good (A II.i 299), hence without "the choice of wisdom." Obviously, this matches quite well – and more importantly helps explain – the ideas in the passage from the *Principles of Nature and of Grace*.

Now assume instead the God Leibniz opposes to this. In such a case wisdom and the choice of wisdom are not only present but essential to God, and the rational choice of the good, indeed the best possible, means that there are final causes, and that these are what this world, including the laws of nature of this world, are grounded upon. That is, to return to Leibniz's own words, "these laws do not depend upon the principle of necessity, . . . but upon the principle of fitness, that is, upon the choice of wisdom."⁵⁰ An important philosophical point made by Leibniz about the laws of nature of the actual world is that they are not necessary but contingent. (Remarks on Arnauld's letter of 13 May 1686; G II 40.) Here we see that what they are contingent on is God's wise choice of the best. And this fits well into a more general philosophical point made by Leibniz that,

If God is the author of things, and if he is supremely wise, one could hardly reason about the structure of nature without entering into the designs of his wisdom, any more than one could reason about a building without entering into the intentions of the architect. (G IV 339; translation from Rutherford

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(1995) 240)

We can see in the passages just above how closely important philosophical views are related in Leibniz's mind to his insistence on a good and wise God, and, accordingly, his opposition to a God of brute force, without intellect and will. This then is an indication of the philosophical importance for Leibniz of carrying on the battle against those who hold or seem to hold that God is the soul of the world in the sense of an immanent, blind force.

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Abbreviations

LC *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, H. G. Alexander ed., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956.

LR *The Leibniz-Des Bosses Correspondence*, eds. and trans. Brandon C. Look and Donald Rutherford, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

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Notes

¹ Among the items that suggest the soul of the world doctrine to Leibniz are 1) God's mending the course of nature from time to time (if done naturally – Leibniz's Second Paper, sec. 12 (G VII 358-9)); 2) space as the sensorium of God (Leibniz's Fourth Paper, sec. 27 (G VII 375); Leibniz's Fifth Paper, sec. 82 (G VII 410)); 3) (Clarke's) criticism of God as *intelligentia supramundana*, (Leibniz's Second Paper, sec. 10 (G VII 358), Leibniz's Fourth Paper, sec. 34 (G VII 376)); 4) comparing a finite soul's acting on its body with God's operation on external things (Leibniz's Fourth Paper, sec. 34 (G VII 376)); 5) saying that God perceives what happens in the world because he is present to things (Leibniz's Fifth Paper, secs. 85-6 (G VII 410)); 6) God's governing things in this world by being present to them (Leibniz's Fifth Paper, sec. 88 (G VII 411)); 7) God's possibly being united to things by space (Leibniz's Fourth Paper, sec. 29 (G VII 375)); and 8) the definition of a miracle as what is unusual rather than what surpasses the natures of creatures (Leibniz's Fifth Paper, secs. 107, 110-1 (G VII 416-7)).

² Henceforward, *TTP*.

³ G. H. R. Parkinson (1978), p. 88.

⁴ Cf. G. H. R. Parkinson (1978), p. 88; the key difference between his translation and mine above is that he translates 'animus' as 'soul'. However, another possible translation for the masculine 'animus' (as opposed to 'anima') is 'intellect' or 'mind', which I have chosen for reasons that will become clearer as the article proceeds. Another question of translation concerns the phrase, 'the nature of things'. For discussion whether this is a suitable translation for the Latin phrase, 'naturam rerum', see n. 14 below. Although, for reasons of space, original language quotations are not typically given in this paper, an exception is made in connection with this important Leibnizian comment on the *TTP*: "Satis hic innuit sententiam suam: Deum non esse animum, sed naturam rerum etc. quod non probo" (A VI.iii 269-70). In this paper, translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Although Leibniz is sometimes quite careful in his interpretation of other philosophers (at least relative to the standards of many other great philosophers), for instance, not infrequently giving quotations or exact citations, he can also state rather bluntly that textual accuracy is not what he cares most about. See, for instance, his remark on Arnauld and Augustine in "Conversation with Steno Concerning Freedom" (A VI.iv 1376); also in *G. W. Leibniz, Confessio philosophi, Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil, 1671-1678*, translated, edited, and with an

introduction by Robert C. Sleigh, Jr., (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 114-117, in both Latin and English. Here and elsewhere I am indebted to Jack Davidson for excellent comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

⁶ See, for instance, Kulstad, “Leibniz and Spinoza on God as the Nature or Essence of Things” (forthcoming). For instances of the young Leibniz apparently accepting some version of the doctrine of God as the soul of the world, see Carlin (1997), pp. 1-5.

⁷ Not all agree on the onset of “maturity.” 1678-79 and 1685-86 are two frequently mentioned possibilities. Neither conflicts with what we have said thus far.

⁸ See, for example, the heading of *Discourse on Metaphysics*, sec. 12. Sleigh (1990), p. 97, discusses this usage, and provides an excellent text to illustrate his point: “The word *substance* is taken in two ways – for the subject itself, and for the essence of the subject.” (from a letter to Pellisson of 1692, A I.vii 248)

⁹ See L 120, n. 16.

¹⁰ To be sure, one might take this fragmentary text to suggest a similarity, perhaps even a close similarity among the various doctrines listed. But just because of the fragmentary nature of the text, it seems best to proceed to proceed with caution here.

¹¹ Here I rely on the research of Luis Henrique Lopes Dos Santos. In a paper presented at the IV. Jornadas Internacionales de la Sociedad Española Leibniz, he explained that in Stoicism, “Dieu est le principe immanent du mouvement de la totalité des choses et de chaque chose en particulier – c’est-à-dire qu’il . . . est . . . nature, *physis*, à la fois nature universelle, *anima mundi*, et élément constitutif de la nature individuelle de toute chose particulière” (“Leibniz, entre Aristote et le stoïcisme,” (Granada, Spain, November 1, 2007)). Notice that Lopes Dos Santos uses the same phrase, ‘nature universelle’, that is present in Leibniz’s statement just quoted.

¹² E.g., LC 2; G VII 359.

¹³ 1) and 3) are ascribed to the Stoics in the passage just quoted; 2) is ascribed to the Stoics in *De Transsubstantiatione*.

¹⁴ 1) is ascribed to Spinoza in Leibniz’s comment on the TTP, in “De Religione Magnorum Virorum,” and in *De Ipsa Natura*. 2) is ascribed to Leibniz in “De Religione Magnorum Virorum,” and in *De Ipsa Natura*. In both “De Religione Magnorum Virorum,” and in *De Ipsa Natura* the two formulations, 1) and 2) are presented as equivalent. There are modest variations in the formulations, for

instance, ‘*substantiam Mundi*’ and ‘*substantiam rerum omnium*’; similarly, we find not only ‘*naturam rerum*’, but also ‘*ipsam naturam . . . Mundi*’, and ‘*rerum naturam*’, and ‘*ipsam naturam . . . rerum omnium*’. I do not take these differences to be significant, although some might disagree. In particular, with respect to the ellipses, some might claim that Leibniz intends ‘*naturam*’ to stand alone, rather than being linked to the following phrases, ‘*Mundi*’ and ‘*rerum omnium*’, as ‘*substantiam*’ clearly is in both cases. I take the formula of *De Ipsa Natura* sec. 15, as well as that of the comment on the *TTP*, to count against this, since in both there are no words between ‘*naturam*’ and the modifying phrases. On a similar point, Daniel Garber has asked, quite reasonably, why ‘*naturam rerum*’ in the comment on the *TTP*, and perhaps in other of the quotations we are examining, should not be translated simply as ‘nature’-- as is certainly appropriate some of the time in Leibniz’s usage --, rather than ‘nature of things’. I am not sure how much hangs on this, but I will note two things: 1) in part I am following the path of seasoned translators – Parkinson as the translator of ‘*Deum . . . esse naturam rerum*’ into “God . . . is the nature of things,” (“Leibniz’s Paris Writings,” *op. cit.*, p. 88) from the comment on the *TTP*, and Ariew and Garber as the translators of *De Ipsa Natura*’s ‘*ex Deo factura cum Spinoza videatur ipsam rerum naturam*’ into “it seems with Spinoza to make of God the very *nature of things*,” (AG 165; italics mine – but Garber now thinks this translation is incorrect), and Clarke himself as the translator of ‘*il sera compris sous la nature des choses*’ into “he will be comprehended under the nature of things” (LC 2, sec. 12; G VII 359); and 2) what is a reasonable question in connection with just the comment on the *TTP* (the context of Garber’s initial question) becomes less forceful when put into the context of the variety of passages we have presented involving God as the nature or substance of things, of all things, or of the world. Leibniz does not appear to be insisting on the fixed phrase, ‘*natura rerum*’.

¹⁵ Leibniz would most likely have included among the “new Stoics” Justus Lipsius (1547-1606). See Lagrée (1994) and Saunders (1955).

¹⁶ Of course, when Leibniz *identifies* certain views of the Stoics and Spinoza in one work, explicitly including the view that God is the soul of the world among these, then it is justified to assume an identity of meaning. This, as we have seen, occurs in “Two Sects of Naturalists,” (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385) at least with respect to “the sect of the new Stoics.”

¹⁷ Given, as we have seen, that Leibniz also ascribes to the Stoics the view that God is the substance of all things (of the world, to be exact – see A IV.i 510). Cf.

Miller (forthcoming).

¹⁸ Among the AMD formulas are ‘God is the nature of things’, ‘God is the substance of all things’, ‘God is the substance of the world’, ‘God is the nature of the world’, ‘God is the soul of the world’ and ‘God is the *anima mundi*’. This last explains the acronym: the AMD formulas are formulas used for the (A)nima (M)undi (D)ctrine.

¹⁹ Of course, much if not all of mainstream Christianity holds that God is *both* immanent and transcendent, often adding that this is difficult to understand, even mysterious. In such a statement, ‘immanent’ had better not signal “not transcendent,” on pain of contradiction. But in many other statements, ‘immanent’ is precisely used to contrast with transcendence. And it is my contention that in virtually all of the contexts of the formulations we are here considering, Leibniz is attacking opponents precisely for their unorthodox theological positions. In such contexts, the use of ‘immanent’ to indicate that God is not transcendent would not be surprising.

²⁰ The full title is, “Specimen demonstrationum catholicarum seu apologia fidei ex ratione.”

²¹ He goes on to say, “. . . Our minds are either bodies or they are extinguished with [our] bodies, or at least we forget everything, and, as some find pleasing, we are returned to the *anima mundi*.”

²² The title in the Academy edition is “Sentiment de Socrate opposes aux nouveaux Stoiciens et Epicuréens.”

²³ The original is, “naturam insitam non differre a vi agendi et patiendi.” He says something very similar in the same work that helps us twice over, once with ‘*naturam seu substantiam*’; once with the tight connection between the substance of a thing and force or power: “the substance of things itself consists in the force of acting and being acted upon” (L 502; G IV 508).

²⁴ It is interesting to note that there is a passage in the *Theodicée*, sec. 353, where, as our account would suggest, Leibniz uses the phrase ‘the nature of things’ (“la nature des choses”) in connection with a source of all things that is without intellect and will; but he uses it in such a way that at least suggests he might apply the same phrase to his God. In fact, however, he does not do this, changing the wording to “the author of things” when he turns to talking about his God: “il faut que l’auteur des choses . . . soit bon et sage” (G VI 322). The surprises of this passage continue in that in the ellipses Leibniz places a phrase that, to my knowledge, he rarely if ever uses in other texts in connection with his God, namely, the phrase, ‘natura

naturans'. (To be sure, A VI.iv 1181 has this phrase in material apparently referring to a God that Leibniz would consider his, but the material is excerpted from Erhard Weigel, rather than being written by Leibniz.)

²⁵ Ursula Goldenbaum raised a related point at the 2nd Annual Conference of the Leibniz Society of North America (September 25-27, 2008), at which an earlier version of this paper was read. It is one thing for terms to appear repeatedly in polemical contexts having to do with central theological and philosophical issues; it is another for them to be doing philosophical work in those contexts. This paper makes the case that the AMD formulas are not just terms of abuse, but that they (at least often) have specific meanings that play central roles in the arguments of these polemical contexts.

²⁶ I take the reference to self-sufficiency here to be a separate issue, probably pointing to a separate line of argument to be considered below. It is also worth noting that this passage may shed light on an otherwise confusing portion of "Two Sects of Naturalists." After asserting that the "new Stoics" believe that "God is the soul of the world," he adds that they believe "that he [God] is the cause of matter itself, if you wish." (AG 282; G VII 333) It is conceivable that Leibniz is here quietly alluding to features of the Stoic position that, on his view, cannot be consistently held together, specifically, that God is the soul of the world and that God is the cause of matter. The present argument, as expanded in the passage from "Deum non esse mundi animam" below, explains why.

²⁷ Translation from Gregory Brown, "Leibniz's Mathematical Argument against a Soul of the World," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 13 (2005) p. 450. The other argument considered in the short paper just cited is the mathematical argument considered below, the one involving considerations of infinity.

²⁸ Self-sufficiency has been discussed in a previous note. The other detail abstracted from is Leibniz's mention of *continuous* production, not just production. Very likely this is a reference to conservation as continual recreation, something that appears again in connection with soul of the world issues in the correspondence with Clarke, in Leibniz's fifth paper, section 88. (G VII 411-12) If a soul can't produce its body, it can't continually produce its body either.

²⁹ An assumption here is that the world counts as a body. As will be seen shortly, this assumption is rejected in a different argument against God as the soul of the world. That, of course, could serve Leibniz's purposes as an additional disanalogy. But another way to put things, without needing to settle the issue whether the world is a body or not, would be the following: God is not the soul of the world in the way

that a soul is the soul of a body; for if he were, then he would not be the producer of the world, since a soul that is the soul of a body is not the producer of its body; but God is the producer of the world.

³⁰ In section 85 Leibniz is more faithful to what Clarke and Newton say in talking about God's being present to things (literally present, according to Futch (2008), p. 177) rather than in talking about things acting on God. But Newton's references to space as God's sensorium (or "as if" God's sensorium) continually led Leibniz to the stronger interpretation. For simplicity, I will discuss this argument in terms of God being acted on.

³¹ I draw this from Leibniz's statement that "it seems that things act upon him; and that therefore he is what we mean by a soul of the world." It is worth noting Leibniz's emphasis on meaning, given our efforts above to clarify the meaning of the AMD formulas. One way to interpret this statement is to say that 'God is the soul of the world' just means that the things of the world act on God. This seems far too crude. Still, it is clear that Leibniz is linking a particular kind of causation to the meaning of 'soul of the world'. This could be helpful in further clarification efforts.

³² This premise is implicit, but hardly controversial from Leibniz's point of view.

³³ Consult articles by Carlin (1997), Arthur (1999, 2001), and especially Brown (2005) (see also Brown (1998) and Brown (2000)). In relation to Brown's articles, and also in many other ways, I am indebted to Brown for intellectual insight and stimulation over a long period of time. With respect to the present paper, the comments of Brown and other members of the Houston Circle were invaluable in the development of this paper -- any remaining errors in which, however, are my responsibility alone. Specific mention should be made of five other Houston Circle members, first, Jacob Mills and Shohei Edamura, who not only commented on the paper but also devoted many hours to the project of completing the final editorial changes needed for publication, then Francesca Bruno, who contributed much to a greater understanding on my part of the role of the soul of the world in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence, and finally Helen Hattab and Jack Davidson, both of whose comments on earlier drafts are very much appreciated.

³⁴ See especially the final section of his paper.

³⁵ Again, the Academy editors place this text in "1678 bis 1680(?)" (A VI.iv B 1384).

³⁶ For is it plausible that, say, a feeble cause would necessarily produce all things possible in themselves insofar as it were not impeded? Perhaps, but I shall assume

omnipotence.

³⁷ Also relevant is text that comes a bit before:

PO. Je croy, qu'il y a une ame du monde qui luy donne la vie, et le mouvement.

TH. Vous n'échapperés pas par là. Voyons un peu: cette ame agit elle par choix ou par necessité.

PO. Peut estre par necessité. (A VI.iv C 2230)

³⁸ Note that there is something similar in Spinoza, only without consideration of the incompatibility of some things possible in themselves, and so only with consideration of an omnipotent power, without intellect or will, producing everything possible. (*Ethics* Part I, Proposition 17, Scholium 1, in *Spinoza Opera*, ed. by Carl Gebhardt, 4 vols., Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925, vol. II, pp. 60-1)

³⁹ AG 30-2; C 518-9.

⁴⁰ I would like to thank the students in the early modern graduate seminar at Rice University in the fall semester of 2008, especially Jesse Slavens and Moti Gorin, for their helpful comments and criticisms of this argument.

⁴¹ In light of the difficult questions about different possible senses of the AMD formulas to be raised below, it is worth noting that it is only the fourth argument that is clearly about a God that is a blind force. The other arguments do not turn on this, but rather on the analogy between God as the soul of the world and a soul of a finite body.

⁴² AG 282; G VII 333-34.

⁴³ Daniel Garber raised an interesting objection at this point during the Second Annual LSNA Conference, one that helps clarify an important matter. He argued that if it is true that Leibniz at one stage held that God acts necessarily in choosing the best possible world (the letter to Wedderkopf of May, 1671, is often given as such a moment; A II.i 117-8; L. 146-7), **then would Leibniz so readily say that God's acting necessarily undercuts divine goodness and justice and providence?** Leibniz's own history, on this line of thought, would provide a counterexample to one part of the argument, for such a Leibniz, while accepting that God creates necessarily, would nonetheless insist that divine justice, benevolence and providence are preserved, because what is created necessarily is the best possible world.

I am ready to grant much of this. In particular, I will grant for purposes of argument that God could act necessarily, produce the best possible world (only), and maintain justice and providence. I would claim, however, that this does not strictly tell against the argument as reconstructed above, since that argument does

not start from a God with intellect and will who chooses the best necessarily (as appears to be the case in, say, the letter to Wedderkopf). Rather it starts from a God that is a blind force, without intellect and will, a force that not only acts necessarily, but that produces all things possible (including such things as the eternal damnation of innocents). This, Leibniz thinks, is what undercuts divine justice and providence.

The fourth Leibnizian argument against God as the world soul (see section 3 above) provides a related thought, but with some differences. A blind power would have to produce all things possible *in themselves*, or produce nothing at all. If the former is impossible, as Leibniz then thought it was, the blind power could produce nothing. (Only a God with intellect and will could create a proper subset of all things possible in themselves, and that sort of God would create the best proper subset of all things possible in themselves.) It is true that in the presentation of that argument Leibniz speaks of an omnipotent being producing things “by necessity.” But the context makes clear that the necessity intended is a necessity without choice, not a necessity with choice, a choice based on intellect and a will seeking the good. So here too Leibniz would not be simply stating the opposite of something he had held previously.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that one of the problematic views referenced in the Stoic section of “Two Sects of Naturalists,” the denial of personal immortality, does not appear among the “theologically suspect” doctrines said above to follow from the soul of the world hypothesis. And this for the good reason that it does not seem that Leibniz thinks it follows. What he says is not that those who hold the soul of the world doctrine deny personal immortality, but rather that they leave this uncertain. If he thought the denial of personal immortality followed from other doctrines they held, it seems highly likely that he would have said so. **This is especially true** in that he makes it fairly clear that he is focusing not on what the new Stoics say, but on what they are committed to: “Je scay que leur phrases sont bien differentes de quelques unes de celles que je viens de représenter; mais quand on aura pénétré dans le fonds de leur sentimens on demeurera d’accord de ce que je viens de dire” (AG 282; A VI.iv B 1385).

⁴⁵ See Dobbs (1991), pp. 87-8.

⁴⁶ See Steven Shapin (1981): “Anima mundi beliefs, like atheism, are perhaps best understood as a tendency and as an accusation: freethinkers were accused of conceiving God to be ‘the soul of the world’; some of them actually did so.” (199, n. 44)

⁴⁷ See Leibniz's "Considerations sur la doctrine d'un Esprit Universel Unique" (1702, G VI 531) for a good introduction to this concept.

⁴⁸ And Strato. See *Theodicée*, sec. 350; G VI 322-3.

⁴⁹ I have limited the senses in the text to the three most recently under discussion. But a similar potentially different emphasis, even though from a context in which Spinoza's presence is strongly felt, is the context of occasionalism in *De Ipsa Natura*. Here the emphasis is on the real causal power of God and the total powerlessness of finite things.

⁵⁰ A very similar idea is expressed in the *Theodicée*, secs. 350-1, ending with this:

Nothing more appropriate could have been chosen to show the difference there is between the moral necessity that accounts for the choice of wisdom and the brute necessity of Strato and the adherents of Spinoza, who deny to God understanding and will, than a consideration of the difference existing between the reason for the laws of motion and the reason for the ternary number of the dimensions: for the first lies in the choice of the best and the second in a geometrical and blind necessity. (T 336; G VI 323)