

Can I Do Otherwise? An Examination of the Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence and its Impact on the Free Will Debate

Leibniz's Conception of Free Will

At the heart of the human condition is the ability for rational decision making. Humans have cherished the ability to deliberate between competing options in a given time and have maintained the possibility that an individual could have chosen a different option with just as much freedom. Only a very few times, however, do we have *complete freedom* over our choices. Often our decisions are governed by social rules (we cannot freely harm another without consequences) physical limitations (we cannot eat 20 pounds of food in one meal) or laws of nature (gravity prevents us from flying). Instead, humans operate with degrees of freedom wherein our choices are restricted by a number of different factors. Although different philosophers have posited different conceptions and degrees of human freedom (the list is certainly long) none is more interesting than Gottfried Leibniz's free will framework presented in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*. First, he claims that individual substances contain "once and for all everything that will ever happen to [them]" but at the same time these certain truths are "nevertheless contingent, being based on the free will of God or of his creatures."¹ As for choices, he claims the following:

"God determines our will to choose what seems better, without, however, necessitating it...the will is in a state of indifference...and it has the power to do otherwise or even suspend its action completely" (Metaphysics, 242).

Consider Julius Caesar, the roman dictator: From Leibniz's definitions of the individual and choice two things are clear. First, the decisions Caesar makes such as crossing the Rubicon, appearing before the Senate on the Ides of March, etc. are *certain* to occur, that is, there is no doubt that they will happen. Second, Caesar is still responsible for his actions because it is possible for him to do otherwise, or not

cross the Rubicon or remain at home on the Ides of March. Yet, these two conclusions sound intuitively contradictory; if Caesar's actions are certain where does the possibility of doing otherwise exist? This paper attempts to examine how an individual has the freedom to do otherwise by first presenting Leibniz's argument for such freedom through the construction of complete individual concepts, which are the fundamental components of an individual substance, Leibniz's possible world theory, which posits that the ability to do otherwise is grounded in the choices of an infinite number of individuals who *do* choose otherwise in worlds other than Caesar's, and the difference between hypothetical and absolute necessity, which is a distinction Leibniz uses to account for God's freedom with respect to Caesar's choices. Next the paper will present Antoine Arnauld's arguments against Leibniz. Arnauld, a contemporary of Leibniz, believed that Leibniz's framework greatly limited the freedom of God and was therefore heretical and dangerous for the religious community.² The debate between Leibniz and Arnauld was recorded in a series of letters the two exchanged, now known as the letters of correspondence.³ In his book *Leibniz and Arnauld*, (perhaps the best analysis of the Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence) author R.C. Sleigh Jr. coherently reconstructs both Leibniz and Arnauld's many arguments into a formal presentation of each side. The third part of this paper will utilize Sleigh's book, Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics*, and the letters of correspondence to answer the question "Can I do otherwise?" Ultimately, I believe that Leibniz's theory of possible worlds is eventually gives him the upper hand in the debate with Arnauld, however this explanation will not suffice without a detailed explanation of Leibniz's theory, Arnauld's response, and Leibniz's rebuttal to the response.

Individual Substances

As stated previously, the explanation of Leibniz's framework for free will demands a discussion of individual substances, possible worlds, and the difference between hypothetical and necessary connection. As each of these components is explained, Leibniz's conception of free will becomes easier to support. What are individual substances according to Leibniz? In the introduction individual

substances were briefly described as everything that has happened and that will ever happen to an individual. This is the first characteristic of a substance for Leibniz, namely, actions and from this characteristic one can easily see that substances for Leibniz are cognitive beings such as humans. The second characteristic of a substance is all of the primary properties which can be attributed to the substance (*Metaphysics*, 230). Leibniz called the combination of these two characteristics a “complete individual concept.” Caesar, for example, has an individual concept which contains all of his past, present, and future actions and his immediately perceivable characteristics. The claim here is that one recognizes an individual called “Caesar” by certain actions he performed and by his characteristics, such as his rule over the Roman empire. The difference between decisions and characteristics is tough to distinguish at this point and will be more fully developed in the section on possible worlds.⁴ However, of complete individual concepts of individual substances, Leibniz draws two conclusions: First, that God has immediate and complete knowledge of an individual’s concept and second, that without the individual concept, there ceases to be an individual. In the very first section of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz sets up the innocent argument that God has perfect knowledge because he is the perfect being, and thus “there are several entirely different perfections in nature, that God possesses all of them together, and that each of them belongs to him in the highest degree” (*Metaphysics*, 224). From this premise the natural conclusion, which Arnauld did not contest, was that a complete knowledge of individual concepts is possible for God because the perfection of knowledge belongs to him alone and in the highest degree.⁵ Arnauld’s point of contention, which will be discussed later in his own argument, rests on what things are originally contained in an individual’s concept.⁶ The second conclusion about individual concepts, that without a complete individual concept there would not be an individual, is a critical part of Leibniz’s conception of freedom. In section 30 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz addresses the question of why Judas must necessarily commit the betrayal of Christ: “Otherwise, it would not be this man” (*Metaphysics*, 242). By this Leibniz means that if one were to change anything

about Judas' actions or primitive qualities, it would go against God's knowledge of the individual called Judas, and thus be impossible. This is why Leibniz calls a substance a *complete* individual concept; if any action or decision that an individual makes is altered, the individual is slightly different. The conclusions about the nature of substance should raise some questions about Leibniz's claim that an individual has the possibility of doing otherwise. If there is only one Caesar or one Adam in the universe who are certain to act in one way, how can each individual access the possibility to do otherwise? Leibniz's framework relies on the existence of possible worlds in which a different but similar substance to Caesar or Adam *does* do otherwise.

Possible Worlds

Texts such as the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and the correspondence letters show that Leibniz already had possible world theory in mind when he constructed his free will framework.⁷ As such, Arnauld attacked Leibniz's conceptions of a possible world viciously. Both Leibniz's proposal for the existence of possible worlds and Arnauld and other philosophers' attacks will now be presented.

Arnauld's first argument against Leibniz's possible world theory is the ambiguity behind the theory, or that it is impossible to conceive of what a possible substance or a possible world would look like. In a draft he wrote "I confess in good faith that I have no conception of these purely possible substances, that is to say, the ones that God will never create" (Gerhardt, 31-32).⁸ Leibniz responds by defining two parameters which allow for the discussion of a possible world: compossibility and superessentialism. Compossibility, according to Leibniz, means that two or more individual concepts in a possible world "must be jointly satisfied" (Sleigh, 50). Caesar in possible world *x*, for example, cannot exist in a world where he perceives himself crossing the Rubicon river while Pompey in the same possible world *x* perceives that Caesar has crossed the Rubicon mountains. Compossibility is necessary for Leibniz because his context of possible worlds involves multiple individual concepts existing together at the same time. More importantly, a possible world without compossibility would imply a

contradiction and thus never exist because the perceptions of the substances would conflict with one another. Therefore the first necessary condition for talking about a possible world is that it must make sense to all the individuals existing in it, i.e. the perceptions of each substance must line up with all the others in just the right way. Leibniz's second parameter, superessentialism, simply means that all properties of the individual are essential to the individual in all possible worlds. Referencing Caesar again, Leibniz contends that Caesar's individual concept and all of his primitive properties that differentiate Caesar from other individuals stay constant among different possible worlds. Yet, up until this point it has been unclear what the "primitive properties" of individuals are and how those properties are dischargeable. In his book *The Nature of Necessity*, Alvin Plantinga tried to define "broadly logical necessity," or properties that were essential to the individual. Plantinga-type questions such as "could Adam the dinosaur have brought sin into the world?" and "could Adam have eaten the forbidden meatball?" highlight the importance of superessentialism in possible worlds. The intuitive and necessary answer for these two scenarios is that in both situations Adam has lost the properties which make him Adam. In the first situation Adam has lost a *specific essential property*, namely his humanity of which Leibniz states "that thing which is called 'a man' cannot cease to be a man except by annihilation" (Parkinson, 47). In the second scenario, Adam has lost an *individuating essential property* which singles him out from the rest of the possible quasi-Adams.⁹ This property falls back to the original statement by Leibniz that is Judas had not betrayed Christ, he would cease to be Judas, because betraying Christ is an *individuating essential property* of Judas. These two types of properties compose the entirety of primitive properties, which God has complete knowledge of, for Leibniz. Thus, of Judas one could list his primitive properties as: being a man, (and by that quality) being rational, speaking Aramaic, betraying Christ, committing suicide, and any decisions he makes. Leibniz's superessentialism has an important consequence: that in a possible world there can only be one Adam, one Judas, one individual concept which corresponds to the possible world. In short, there is not a Judas in a possible world who did not

betray Christ because Judas would lose a primitive property. This conclusion however, should be damning for Leibniz. The obvious objection, as Arnauld points out, is thus: How can Adam ever do otherwise if there is never a different Adam? Leibniz responded that the components of a possible world open the possibility for other individuals like Adam who actually *do* otherwise. Although the parameters of a possible world have been defined, the actual components of the world have not and explaining these components is necessary for illustrating Leibniz's argument that other possible individuals in other possible worlds can do otherwise.

In *Leibniz & Arnauld* Sleight lists four components of Leibniz's possible world which can be thought of as the blue print for a possible world within the parameters of compossibility and superessentialism.¹⁰ First, there is a goal or plan that would "uniquely bring to fruition" were it actualized. Leibniz does not mandate a specific type of teleology to each possible world because it is impossible to know God's plans for a world. Second, there is a law or laws of general order that the world uniquely satisfies. Leibniz likens these laws to mathematical equations because they cannot be violated. Laws of nature, which are below laws of general order, are different in that they can be broken. In section 7 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz justifies the occurrence of miracles as "conforming to the general order" because God "wills or permits" the temporary suspension of the laws of nature (*Metaphysics*, 227). Third, there is an over-arching concept of the world which is determined by the laws of general order, and finally, there are the unique concepts of individuals which are specific to the over-arching concept of the world and the laws of general order (Sleight, 52). Returning to the earlier question of how Judas or any individual can do otherwise if his individual concept is specifically tethered to the components of the individual world, Leibniz responds that while the individual concept of the individuals such as Adam do not change, God can change the components of the possible world. The main difference in possible worlds, therefore, is the goal or the laws of general order which guide those worlds. From the goals and laws of general order the individuals within the different worlds will be

radically different in their actions. Once again considering the Adam of the actual world who committed sin, Leibniz says in a different possible world where the goal of the world was different than the actualized one, a person like Adam could have chosen by his individual nature *not to sin*. Likewise, in a different possible world with a different goal a person like Judas could have chosen *not to betray* Christ. Thus, Leibniz arrives at the conclusion that in a possible world with a different goal, Adam could have done otherwise.

The objection at this point now becomes thus: how did God choose this world to be actualized out of the infinite amount of possible worlds. In sections 3, 13, 14, and 30 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and in the correspondence with Arnauld, Leibniz responds that God chose this world because it best accomplished his divine plan (*Metaphysics*, 227). Also, when given the premise outlined in sections 1 and 2 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* it seems impossible for Arnauld or anyone else for that matter to argue that God had made the wrong choice or did not make a completely perfect choice in actualizing this world. In the *Theodicy* Leibniz argues that the actual world is the best world possible “else would God have determined not to create any” (Huggard, 372). How can Leibniz plausibly claim that a possible world will allow Adam to do otherwise if Adam is certain to do everything according to his complete individual concept in the actual world? Leibniz constrains plausibility into very technical definitions of truth which he calls contingent and necessary truth. The existence of possible worlds allows for the proposition *Adam will bring sin into the world* to be contingently, but not necessarily true.

Contingent and Necessary Truth

The definitions of and differences between contingent and necessary truth must first be explained. Contingently true propositions are true when its contrary does not imply a contradiction, according to Leibniz. Consider the proposition: Caesar will wear a purple toga tomorrow. This proposition is contingently true because if Caesar decides to wear a black toga instead, he will still be Caesar.¹¹ On the other hand, if purple togas are the only color that exists and we consider the same

proposition, its antithesis implies a contradiction such that Caesar could not possibly wear any other color toga. Framing it back to Leibniz's claims about free will, the fact that Adam sins in the actual world is contingently true for Leibniz because in a different possible world an individual very much like Adam does not sin. Leibniz points this out in section 13 where he states "these truths, however certain, are nevertheless contingent" (*Metaphysics*, 230). Thus, even though it is certain that Judas will betray Christ in *this* world, in a different possible world the contrary is just as certain. Meanwhile, the necessary truth of a proposition depends upon the proposition's truth in *all* possible worlds. Again referencing Caesar, in order for Caesar to *necessarily* cross the Rubicon River all individuals like Caesar must also do so in all other possible worlds. However, because "crossing the river" is a individuating essential property of Caesar's complete individual concept, this could never happen in another possible world according to Leibniz because then a quasi-Caesar would exist. Using another example, Judas' betrayal of Christ is not necessarily true because in a world that is different than the actualized one it is not true that Judas betrayed Christ.

Leibniz's framework for the possibility of doing otherwise is constructed very carefully. If one accepts the plausibility of possible world theory then he seems to have achieved the basis for claiming the contingency of any action taken in the actual world. Arnauld's objection focuses on two main points: First, that God has already actualized this world and second that the choices stemming from the complete individual concept of an individual in the actualized world is necessary to happen per the first claim. As a result, God is not free to decide if the individual can or cannot do otherwise in the actual world once it is in fact actualized.

Arnauld's Argument

In *Leibniz & Arnauld*, author R.J. Sleigh constructs Arnauld's arguments found in the correspondence letters and organizes them into a set of propositions aimed at showing how Leibniz's conception of free will is heretical because it impinges on God's freedom. The short form of Arnauld's

argument is explained in the first three propositions henceforth called the *main argument*. (1) *Necessarily, if Adam exists, then Adam has posterity*¹². Again, Arnauld's argument relies on conceding that Adam has a complete individual concept, or buying into Leibniz's definition of a substance. However, Arnauld is also treating Adam as an individual in the world which God has already actualized, forgoing Leibniz's schematic of possible worlds. Proposition (1) implies the next proposition (2) *Necessarily, if God decides to create Adam, then Adam has posterity* which in turn implies (3) *If God decides to create Adam, then God is not free with respect to whether Adam has posterity*. (Sleigh, 59) By this, Arnauld means that the complete individual concept of Adam in this world, once actualized by God, will necessary produce the consequence of posterity. Arnauld claims that the necessity of Adam's posterity is an infringement upon God's power because once God actualizes the world Adam cannot help but have posterity (Gerhardt, 27). However, claiming (1) is not a simple task; it first requires an analysis of what properties are contained in complete individual concepts. While Arnauld will argue that posterity is a primary property of Adam in the real world, Leibniz will argue the opposite. Sleigh makes the following observation about how Leibniz would have understood Arnauld's view of complete individual concepts:

"Concepts exist and include their components independent of the free decrees of God...But what is independent of God's free decrees is either necessary or impossible. Therefore any concept C and property f included in V, it is necessary that f is included in C" (Sleigh, 59).

From this, proposition (4) *Necessarily, C of Adam includes the property of having posterity* is logically constructed because posterity is a property, *f*, which is independent of God's free decrees. To this one can add Arnauld's earlier implication that "the same Adam considered now as possible and now as created" is the Adam of the actualized world and the result is proposition (5) *C of Adam is the individual concept of Adam*. However, Sleigh claims that (5) is "too weak for Arnauld's purposes" which demands proposition (6) *For any individual x and concept C, if C is the individual concept of x, then, necessarily, C is*

the individual concept of x (Sleigh, 60). When combined, (5) and (6) produce (7) *Necessarily, C of Adam is the individual concept of Adam*. Notice that the difference between (5) and (7) is the claim of necessity that Arnauld needs to prove that Adam could not do otherwise. When propositions (7) and (4) are combined, they yield (1), which in turn leads to (3). Arnauld's argument is straight forward: by considering the complete individual concept of Adam, posterity should be an essential primary property that separates Adam from all other possible individuals. God can decide to create Adam but in doing so, Adam's posterity is absolutely necessary. Given Arnauld's conclusions consider the proposition (8) *Adam has posterity* which Arnauld claims is absolutely necessary; Leibniz must restore freedom to God by claiming that (8) is contingently, not necessary true. In *Leibniz & Arnauld*, Sleigh presents several possible responses from Leibniz to Arnauld's objection with the contingency of (8) in mind. Each of these responses grants God a greater degree of freedom based on what is *hypothetically* necessary versus what is *absolutely* necessary. A proposition is hypothetically necessary relative to the truth of a prior proposition, whereas a proposition is absolutely necessary if its opposite implies a contradiction. Consider Sleigh's statement about Leibniz's claims of hypothetical necessity:

"In many contexts where Leibniz claimed that a proposition p is hypothetically necessary, he did not clearly specify the proposition q to which p is hypothetically necessary...it is important to carefully investigate just what proposition [(8)] is relative to which Leibniz was claiming hypothetical necessity" (Sleigh, 61).

Leibniz's First Possible Response

Leibniz's first possible response is that (8) is contingent because "it entails that Adam exists, and existence is a property not included in the complete individual concept of any creature" (Sleigh, 60). If Leibniz would have used this argument he could have claimed that God has the freedom to decide whether he will or will not actualize the complete individual concept of Adam. Therefore, Adam's posterity is only necessary so long as a prior proposition like "God decides to bring Adam into existence"

is true, which is a hypothetical necessity insofar as God has the freedom to do the opposite without contradiction. This degree of hypothetical necessity, however, is the easiest for Arnauld to rebut. He would have argued that (8) is absolutely necessary relative to the proposition (L1) *Adam exists* or (L2) *God decides to create Adam* because under (5) Arnauld assumed “the same Adam considered now” is the Adam in the actual world. In other words, once God *decided* to create Adam in the actual world, he *must* have posterity because claiming that Adam in the actual world does not have posterity at the same time implies a contradiction to (L1) or (L2). Sleight, however, does not consider the weakness of this argument damning for Leibniz because although “Proponents of [this argument] insist...that Leibniz’s views on hypothetical necessity leave no room for attributing more freedom to God” Sleight believes that Leibniz did wish to attribute more freedom to God. The expansion of God’s freedom begins in Leibniz’s second possible response.

Leibniz’s Second Possible Response

Leibniz’s second possible response to Arnauld, denying that (8) was true relative to (L1) and (L2), is supported by his arguments in section 13 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and in the letters of correspondence. Consider the following statement Leibniz made in a letter on the 12th of April:

“It has pleased God to choose precisely this particular order of the universe; and all that follows from his decision is necessary only by a hypothetical necessity” (Gerhardt, 20).

Leibniz is obviously trying to wiggle out of the “necessarily” condition in Arnauld’s (1) and (2). Although he cannot do so by concluding that God must separately decide the details of Adam’s complete individual concept, Leibniz can give God the freedom to decide on the creation of the world as an entire unit. Consider (L3) *God decides to create the world*. This has a different relation than (L1) and (L2) in regards to (1) and (2) in that (L3) does not have the element of necessity. For Leibniz, claiming (L3) “does

not entail what decision God has made about Adam's posterity" (Sleigh, 61). Consider Leibniz's statement in the following passage:

"I respond that it is certainly essential to God that he foresee any truth whatsoever, that is, that he can resolve every question; but is not essential in itself that he resolve it affirmative or negatively" (Grua, 309).

By this, Leibniz is demonstrating that the proposition (8) is not absolutely true relative to (L3) because God has the freedom to decide when he creates the world if Adam shall or shall not have posterity. However, Arnauld would not be satisfied with this response and would most likely claim that Leibniz was only pushing the problem further back. Arnauld could claim that God, having completely perfect knowledge, would *already* have made a decision a positive or negative decision regarding Adam's posterity. The creation of the world already includes the complete individual concept of Adam and, with it, a decision about Adam's posterity. At some point however, Leibniz realized that claiming the contingency of (8) while asserting that (1) and (2) were true through hypothetical necessity would not satisfy Arnauld. Instead he tries to introduce the possibility of God's free decrees which, as stated earlier, are a result of God's will, as the cause of Adam's posterity. Why does Leibniz make this move? Sleigh claims that all things "independent of God's free decrees [are] either necessary or impossible." Leibniz, realizing that the complete individual concept of Adam alone could not give Leibniz the satisfactory amount of hypothetical necessity he needed to guarantee God's freedom.

Leibniz's Third Response

Because question of Adam's posterity reflecting his complete individual concept alone posed too many problems for Leibniz, he abandoned the arguments about it along the way in favor of an argument about Adam's complete individual concept *and* God's free decrees. Consider this passage which Leibniz drafted but did not include in one of his letters to Arnauld:

“There are degrees among consequences of a metaphysical necessity, such as the one of which M. Arnauld gives an example; there are others of them, where the connection itself is founded a free decree of God” (Bodemann, 59).

Leibniz is acknowledging that some properties of Adam can be attributed to him by metaphysical necessity of his existence or of God creating him, but other things, such as his posterity, are the result of a free decree of God. The main difference between the free decrees of God and the metaphysical necessities stemming from God’s actualization of the world is that God’s free decrees are certain, but not necessary occurrences. At this point Leibniz has conceded to some degree that Adam’s individual concept entails a necessary connection to God’s decision to create him, however, Leibniz believes that when joined with free decrees, Adam’s posterity is still hypothetically necessary.¹³ In a letter to Arnauld on July 14th Leibniz stated:

“Thus, all human events could not fail to occur as in fact they did occur once the choice of Adam is assumed, but not so much because of the individual concept of Adam...but because of God’s plans, which also enter into the individual concept of Adam (Gerhardt, 51).

From this it is easy to see that Leibniz understood that Adam’s posterity was necessarily certain, but not because of his individual concept that God created, but rather because God freely decreed that Adam would have posterity. Leibniz’s move is a clear expansion of God’s freedom because now Leibniz is claiming that God’s free decrees, though contained in the notion of the individual concept, are options God has about how an individual shall be in the world. To support this claim, Leibniz argues that “some components of a complete individual concept are included it in necessarily, some contingently” based on the free decrees of God (Sleigh, 64). Consider Leibniz’s claim in the following passage when discussing his choice to journey to Paris:

"I agree...that I am free to take this journey or not, for although it is included in my concept I shall take it, it is also included in my concept that I shall take it freely. And there is nothing in me of all that can be conceived in general terms – i.e., in terms of essence, or a species concept, or an incomplete concept – from which one can infer that I shall take it, whereas from the fact that I am a man, one can conclude that I am capable of thought" (Gerhardt, 52).

Thus, when God actualizes the world, some properties are metaphysically necessary, such as rational thought, but other things such as choices are hypothetically necessary relative to the free decrees God makes about Leibniz's complete individual concept. Applying this to Adam, though certain things will be metaphysically true about Adam once God decides to create him, from perception alone there is no certainty that Adam will make a choice until God makes a free decree about the possibilities Adam has open to him.

However, one might object that Leibniz has not really thwarted Arnauld's argument, but has rather added an extra step to the equation. Letting R be the state of affairs in which the free decrees of God are enacted in the world, consider proposition (9) *If Adam exists, then R* . If one of God's free decrees was that "this world shall be so" we can assume that " R is included in the concept of Adam" and thus (10) *Necessarily, if Adam exists, then R* (Sleigh, 63). Finally, since Leibniz was ultimately trying to find a solution to Adam's posterity in the letters of correspondence one can assume he would have accepted the proposition (11) *Necessarily, if Adam exists and R , then Adam has posterity*. Now, one must ask what is the real difference between (1) and (11)? The free decrees of God seem to be just an extra step in the equation. and thus Arnauld still has the advantage of claiming that Adam's posterity is absolutely necessary. This makes sense because were God's free decrees not actualized his original will of "this world shall be" is never actualized and thus Adam would never have existed in the real world.

Therefore, as Leibniz knew all along, free decrees are included in an individual concept considering Leibniz wrote that “although [the individual concept] includes them” (Gerhardt, 51).

Leibniz’s Fourth Possible Argument:

Leibniz so far has been denied the contingency of (8) based on the fact that Adam already exists in the actual world. His attempts to expand God’s freedom have been countered thus far by one argument from Arnauld; God *did* choose and thus things are absolutely necessary from his choice. Leibniz is therefore forced to grant God the most radical degree of freedom, namely, that God can have possible free decrees that he does not actualize. Leibniz posits this claim in the long letter to Arnauld on the 14th of July:

“As for the objection, that the possibles are independent of the free decrees of God, I grant it of actual decrees, but I maintain that possible individual concepts include some possible free decrees” (Gerhardt, 41).

Leibniz is claiming that other possible individuals different that Adam can also contain possible free decrees that are contingently actualized based on the decision God makes about whether or not the world should be actualized. Leibniz is moving out of Arnauld’s claim that God *did* create the world and thus, free decrees or not, Adam’s posterity is necessary from the actualization of the world. Leibniz could say to Arnauld, “Suppose at the last minute God had decided not to create any possible world.” Adam in the real world is now just Adam in a possible world. Leibniz’s claim is that God could have multiple possible free decrees that correspond to a possible world and that Adam’s posterity is contingently true based on which decrees God decides shall be actualized once he makes the decision to actualize a possible world. Arnauld, unfortunately, does not have a suitable response because his basic premise of (4) has been attacked by assuming that posterity is a *possible* but not necessary free decree of God. However, some might claim that at this point Leibniz has taken God’s metaphysical freedom too

far in order to get around the problem of absolute necessity. The merits of Leibniz's response will be discussed in the third part of the paper along with the implications of the correspondence for metaphysical and actual freedom.

Freedom: Metaphysical and Actual

When discussing the problem of freedom it is important to recognize that "freedom" is a loaded term. One can talk about freedom in two ways; metaphysical and actual freedom. The former type refers to Arnauld's original argument about God's freedom with respect to the absolute necessity of Adam's posterity, while the latter refers to an individual's degree of freedom in the choices he makes. I conclude that God *is* metaphysically free with regard to Adam's posterity because Leibniz has shown how possible free decrees have given God contingency with respect to (8) but not absolute necessity. Then, after discussing an individual's degrees of freedom I conclude that even though an individual cannot do otherwise in the actual world, it is not only because the complete individual concept implies the certainty of a decision, but also because there is no reason for an individual to *want* to do otherwise.

Metaphysical Freedom

Consider Arnauld's main objection to Leibniz once again:

"That the individual concept of each person includes once and for all everything that will happen to him' etc. If that is so, God was free to create or not create Adam; but supposing he wished to create him, everything that has happened since and will ever happen to the human race was and is obliged to happen through a more than fatal necessity" (Gerhardt, 15).

The first line of Arnauld's response, taken as a quote from section 13 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, indicates that Arnauld believes that posterity is included within the complete individual concept of an individual. The second part of the argument indicates that though God was free to create or not create Adam, now that Adam has been created God is not free to determine whether or not Adam will have

posterity. Leibniz's unique response to restore God's metaphysical freedom is to claim that posterity is not a specific part of Adam's individual concept, but is rather a free decree of God. Then, to assure God's freedom, Leibniz claims that there are many possible free decrees for one individual concept which God chooses to actualize depending upon the best possible world he has in mind. Has Leibniz given a proper restoration to God's freedom? I believe his answer does have a degree of intuition. Suppose that God is creating the world but, knowing that Cain will kill Abel, decides by free decree that Adam shall not have posterity. Adam will still eat the forbidden fruit, name the animals in the garden, and carry all of the other properties that make him Adam, but posterity will not be reflected in his complete individual concept. Or, God could make a free decree that Adam in the actual world will have posterity, and all things will follow as they have now, but, when tracing the argument back, God was still free with respect to the choices of his free decrees. At this point the only argument left for Arnauld is that without posterity *reflected* in Adam's complete individual concept, Adam no longer is Adam because he is not the same. Though this is a strong argument, it does not get to the heart of Leibniz's claim that God was free to decree whether or not posterity should be reflected in Adam's complete individual concept.

Real Freedom

What does not sound as intuitive is the claim that Adam or Caesar, or anyone else in the actual world could have done otherwise. Granted, in the actual world it is impossible for an individual to do otherwise because it is *certain* that they will choose what comports to their complete individual concepts respectively, however given God's metaphysical freedom, their choices are not absolutely necessary because it is *possible* to do otherwise. I believe that Leibniz is making a more familiar claim with respect to real freedom, however, with his notion of complete individual concepts. Individuals do not know what actions and choices are contained in their complete individual concepts; even I do not know if I shall write the conclusion of this paper or not. Without that knowledge, a certain degree of freedom opens up for humans to *decide* what shall happen. Imagine that an evil doctor, the evil Dr.

Horrible, has planted a chip in Caesar's brain which gives him complete control to reverse Caesar's actions at any time they conflict with the Dr.'s evil plans. Yet, throughout the course of Caesar's life, Dr. Horrible never has to reverse Caesar's decisions because they fit complete with Dr. Horrible's intentions. Now, removing Dr. Horrible from the equation, if Caesar does exactly what he wants, how is he not free? I believe this is Leibniz's point with real freedom. Even if Caesar or Adam has a complete individual concept which contains within it all that he will do, Adam still does things because he *wants* to do them, not because he *knows* that he must do them in accordance with his complete individual concept. If Caesar knew about Dr. Horrible's plan we might say his actions did have a different degree of coercion. However, since this is not the case, Leibniz at the end of the day seems to have won out the free will debate. What counter could one provide? What type of freedom is there when the individual can freely choose something he or she does not want because he or she must have the power to decide against the things contained in the complete individual concept. To Leibniz, having to make a choice that an individual does not want is not a type of freedom at all.

Judas betrayed Christ; but Judas also wanted to betray Christ. At that point, his complete individual concept is more of an excuse for opponents of Leibniz to let Judas off the hook. However, all Leibniz must do is show that it is possible for God to do otherwise and then Judas himself has the *possibility* of doing otherwise. Then at that point the question for Judas no longer becomes "Can I do otherwise?" but rather, "Why would I do otherwise?" For God, Judas' betrayal of Christ is a part of the most perfect world possible, but not necessary and for Judas, betraying Christ is perfectly in accord with what he wants to do. Given those considerations, Leibniz's conception of free will seems to withstand the fires of Arnauld's scrutiny, and this paper's as well.

¹ Sections 13 and 14 of the *Discourse* are the focal point of Leibniz's conception of free will. Section 13 begins with the following sentence:

"Since the individual notion of each person includes once and for all everything that will ever happen to him, one sees in it the a priori proofs of the truth of each event, or, why one happened rather than another, but these truths, however certain, are nevertheless contingent, being based on the free will of God" (Leibniz, 230).

According to Leibniz, all of our choices are contained in an individual notion which is created by the free will of God. One immediately sees the indications of hard determinism, which is a framework of free will which claims that all events and choices are connected together by necessity from a preceding event or action. Leibniz however will argue later that his type of determinism is *certain* but not necessary.

² Arnauld's response to Leibniz's summary of Section 13 in the *Discourse* is thus:

"If that is so, God was free to create [or not create Adam; but supposing he wished to create him] everything that has happened since and will ever happen to the human race is obliged to happen through a more than fatal necessity" (Sleigh Jr., 59).

Arnauld is claiming that once God actualized this world, he is not free to decide what will happen to the world. Adam, the first man, will do certain things that are not within God's control because Adam cannot do otherwise.

³ The discussion between the two philosophers has been dubbed the "Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence" and, some believe, was an important debate for the different types of philosophies advocated at the time. Alan Nelson wrote in the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* that had Arnauld bested Leibniz in the debate his Cartesian view of metaphysics and free will "might have won the day in the eyes of later philosophers."

⁴ Leibniz will later discuss what types of primitive characteristics distinguish Caesar from other possible beings that could be called Caesar. According to Leibniz, the primitive properties of an individual cannot be altered or the individual is no longer himself. So if Caesar's name were changed to Christopher, he would no longer be himself.

⁵ One might object that God could not know contradictory things about an individual's complete concept in abstraction. For example it is impossible to know that an individual will live and an individual will die. Leibniz uses an argument of temporality to say that God's knowledge of the individual concept is grounded in linear time. So, God knows that Caesar will be born at x time and die at y time.

⁶ Arnauld will argue that Adam's posterity, or his act of committing original sin was a part of his individual concept that uniquely makes him Adam. Thus the argument, God was not free to decide whether or not Adam would sin.

⁷ In section 31 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz states the following:

"I believe then, that the most exact and surest things to say, according to our principles, as I have already noted, is that among the possible beings there must be the person of Peter or John...and that it pleased God to choose him for actual existence from among an infinity of equally possible persons" (Leibniz, 243).

This thought does not make sense without the adjoining idea of possible worlds in which equally possible versions of James and John could exist. Leibniz believed that the idea of possible worlds would be the thing which united the Church once more and heavily depended on the argument for his notions of free will.

⁸ Baruch Spinoza thought likewise that the conception of possible worlds that will never be actualized is a foolish idea. In his *Ethics*, he argues that there are no unactualized possibilities. For Spinoza, possible worlds relate to knowledge claims, i.e. that we do not have access to the knowledge of possible worlds, but if we did we could arrive at some contradiction in time that would prove the possible world illogical. Leibniz's response, I believe would rest in the fact that God has perfect knowledge and would foresee any possible contradiction even if the human mind cannot do so.

⁹ Leibniz's system cannot have quasi-Adams because then the notion of complete individual concepts becomes problematic for Leibniz. If each individual substance must be unique then there cannot be substances which share some commonalities. The only commonalities that can exist are properties such as existence, species, rationality, etc. which fall under essential properties of an individual.

¹⁰ Leibniz does say that there are possible worlds which can never be actualized because they lack the parameters of compossibility and super essentialism. He states in his *Philosophical Essays* that "One must certainly hold that not all possibilities attain existence...Indeed it does not seem possible for all possible things to exist, since they get in one another's way" (Ariew and Garber, 29).

¹¹ In order to avoid confusion, for the purposes of that example we are assuming that the only world which exists is the actual world which Caesar is a member of.

¹² The definition of posterity is: the offspring of one progenitor to the furthest generation. So, Adam's complete individual concept includes the notion that he will decide to procreate which in turn begets the notion that his children will procreate and so forth. Adam's posterity in turn, becomes necessarily true because once God actualizes Adam he cannot prevent it from occurring.

¹³ As evidence consider the actual letter Leibniz wrote to Arnauld:

"For perhaps it would not be so absurd to say that from the single supposition that God decided to create Adam, all the rest follows necessarily...nevertheless, I call this consequence certain rather than necessary, unless one supposes furthermore the free decrees on which it is founded, then hypothetical necessity is achieved" (Bodemann, 59).

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