

“Eminence and other dubious attempts to avoid Spinozism”  
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**(NB to Chicago crew: This was written as a talk, so please forgive those infelicities which work well only when spoken aloud.)**

Like the seven deadly sins, the vice of Spinozism takes on a variety of forms. One especially vexing strand for many early moderns asserts that God's nature is more expansive, more bloated – Spinoza might say “richer” – than traditionally conceived in the major monotheistic traditions. For example, although 17<sup>th</sup> century Christian confessions contain surprisingly wide-ranging lists of divine properties (I say “surprising” in part since the lists typically also include “simple” and “incomprehensible”), there was a consensus that some ways of being are not ways that God is. God is not, for example, spatially extended, in a liquid state, green-tinted, steamy and tasty, though these are features of the tea in my mug.

Spinoza denies this point of consensus and claims instead that God exemplifies every possible fundamental way of being and every possible derivative way of being (EI<sub>p</sub>16). If being extended is a fundamental way of being, then God is extended (EI<sub>p</sub>2). If being in a liquid state is a derivative way of being an extended thing, then God is in a liquid state (EI<sub>p</sub>15). Of course, as Spinoza knew well, it isn't immediately obvious that this yields a coherent account of God, but in this essay, I won't be especially concerned with whether Spinoza can successfully defend his conception of God against charges of incoherence.

Rather, I want to discuss some early modern metaphysical principles that push one in the direction of an expansive conception of God's nature: one from causation in Descartes (section 2), one from mental representation, also in Descartes and sometimes in Leibniz (section 3), and

one from modality in the early Kant (section 4). Although they have been discussed at length independently, these seemingly disparate principles share a structure and motivation, and they tend towards Spinozism in similar ways – or so I will argue here. I will also claim that there are three main ways of responding to this pressure: *expand* the range of divine properties, *reject* the principles or *reduce* the non-divine features in question to divine-friendly properties.

All three options come with associated costs, as we'll see. However, the early modern advocates of these principles claimed that there is a fourth option, one that preserves the goods of the original principles and incurs none of the costs of the other responses. This alternative, captured in notions like “eminent containment,” appeals to what I'll call a *divine proxy*. In the final section of the talk, I'll state why I find appeals to divine proxies unsatisfying, a judgment I share with Spinoza himself.

I hope this kind of bird's-eye, synoptic discussion will throw into greater relief some of the metaphysical pressures towards Spinozism and shed fresh light on the structure and prospects of one common early modern defense. But since I'm not a Spinozist myself, I'm also hopeful the audience will come to my aid in discussion. I hope you all will disagree less with my mapping of conceptual space than with my negative judgment about this traditional escape route from Spinozism, and that you can help me see better what can be said in its favor.

## **1. A Schematic Overview**

Because I will be moving quickly from texts to principles to shared structures of principles, it may be helpful to begin with a quick schematic overview. Suppose that God and at least one non-divine thing, *Rocky* the rock, exist, and now consider the following mutually

inconsistent triad of propositions, where ‘F’ names a property or nature<sup>1</sup>:

1. It is not the case that God is F.
2. Rocky is F.
3. If Rocky is F, then God is F.

A clear example of such a property or nature in the early modern context is *being extended*: God is not extended, whereas some non-divine things like Rocky are extended. But why would the existence of extended things entail that God is extended, per (3)?<sup>2</sup>

Several metaphysical principles that were attractive to various early moderns seem to support (3). For a toy example, suppose that causes and effects must share all of their qualitative properties. Then if God is the cause of Rocky and Rocky is extended, it would follow that God is extended as well. More generally and schematically, the route to (3) typically involves the following two additional steps in which ‘R’ names an asymmetric relation and *x* and *y* are two distinct things:

4.  $xRy \rightarrow (y(F) \rightarrow x(F))$
5. *GodRRocky*

The three metaphysical principles I will discuss in this paper appeal to three such asymmetrical relations: *causes*, *mentally represents*, and *grounds the possibility of*. Applied to (4) and (5): if God causes, mentally represents, or grounds the possibility of Rocky and Rocky is extended, then God is extended too.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the early moderns themselves (who use a bewildering array of terminology for this), I am going to remain as non-committal as possible about the ontology of properties and the relation between properties, property-bearers, and predication. I will usually speak of the property-thing relation in terms of exemplification, and I will sometimes refer to properties as *ways of being* a thing or as *attributes*, *qualities*, or *features* of a thing, depending on context. Two more substantive commitments I am presupposing is that God has features or properties and that God having some feature or property F entails that God is F (i.e., property exemplification by God entails true predications of the property to God).

<sup>2</sup> The entailment expressed by (3) should not be understood as indicating a kind of metaphysical or explanatory priority. It reflects our reasoning *ab effectu*, but it is consistent with the priority of God’s ways of being over creaturely ways of being.

In what follows, (2) and (5) will be accepted by all parties for some relevant F and R. There are then two obvious ways of avoiding inconsistency and one more complicated one. First, one might accept (2) – (5), deny (1) and thereby embrace the expansion of divine properties, à la Spinozism. I will call this option *Expand*. Second, one might accept (1) but reject the metaphysical principles that yield (4), thereby allowing the denial of (3). Call this option *Reject*.

There is also a slightly more complicated response available. One might respond that (1) – (4) is ambiguous between a *fundamental* and a *non-fundamental* reading. For ease, let's stipulate that *fundamental* properties are ways of being a thing that cannot be reduced to or wholly accounted for in terms of other properties and that *non-fundamental properties* are properties that can be reduced to or wholly account for in terms of other properties.<sup>3</sup> For example, the property of *being a fist* (arguably) counts as non-fundamental since being a fist can be reduced to or wholly accounted for in terms of *being a curled up hand*. By contrast, *being extended* (arguably) counts as a fundamental property, at least according to many in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

One could then distinguish between two versions of (1)-(4), depending on whether F names a fundamental or non-fundamental property. Call these two versions *Fund* and *Non-fund*, respectively. The slightly more complicated reply to the trilemma accepts (2) and (3) and rejects (1) of *Fund*, while rejecting (3) of *Non-fund*. One could motivate this by arguing that the

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<sup>3</sup> The metaphors are intentionally hand-wavy, as there is an enormous literature in contemporary metaphysics on fundamentality that I'm putting aside here, even though some of it involves distinguishing fundamentality from non-reducibility. Not much I say here will turn on any of this, as I'm mostly interested in presenting one possible family of responses that I will then set aside for most the paper. Accounts of fundamentality that do not entail reducibility of the less fundamental to the non-fundamental will still fall under the broad camp I describe here as *Reduce* (I think!).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Descartes marks out fundamental properties by naming them "principal attributes," and he claims there are two: thinking and being extended (Descartes, CSM I/210-11, AT VIIIa.25).

principles behind (4) only work in the cases of fundamental properties. Of course, this reply succeeds in avoiding Spinozism only if every property traditionally thought to be exemplified by creatures but not God is non-fundamental. That is, this reply succeeds only to the extent to which every creaturely property not exemplified by God can be reduced to or wholly account for by one of God's properties. For example, if Rocky's *being extended* could be reduced to something else, such as bearing certain mental relations (as in idealism), then on this reply, something's being extended wouldn't entail that God is extended, only that God is whatever extension is reducible to. Call this more complicated reply *Reduce*.

These are, I believe, the three main replies available to the original trilemma, given the shared assumptions: *Expand*, *Reject* or *Reduce*. According to many early moderns, each reply incurs a cost. The principles themselves will be motivated largely on grounds of intelligibility or explicability, so that violations of (4) would be unintelligible. Hence *Reject* incurs the cost of accepting unintelligibility. Alternatively, *Expand* was thought not only to violate religious orthodoxy, but also to yield a less than maximally perfect God, since, for example, being extended implies being divisible and hence dependent on one's parts and imperfect.<sup>5</sup> *Reduce* is acceptable only to the extent to which the proposed reductions are acceptable, but few were willing to accept that the sparse properties in the traditional concept of God exhaust the fundamental ways things are or might be.<sup>6</sup>

There might be good reasons to pay some of these costs, of course. But several prominent

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<sup>5</sup> Unsurprisingly, Spinoza denies that being extended entails being divisible into parts that are independent of and prior to their whole (EIp15).

<sup>6</sup> Another potential cost of *Reduce* is that it seems to require the rejection of compossibility, at least under the assumption that facts about compossibility among the non-reduced properties supervene on facts about compossibility among the reduced properties. (Thanks to Robert Garcia for pressing this point.) Leibniz faces this worry with his early work on the ontological argument.

early moderns thought there was a fourth option, distinct from *Expand*, *Reject*, and *Reduce* and free from their costs. As the title of this talk suggests: I'm dubious about this alternative. But in order to unpack it with some actual texts and historical figures, let's begin with three metaphysical principles that seem to generate (4) in the first place.

## 2. From causation

Early modern theories of causation imposed constraints on the nature of causes. For example, Spinoza thinks that causes and effects must satisfy a *commonality* condition: a cause and its effect must have something in common between them, and “if things have nothing in common with one another, one of them cannot be the cause of the other” (EIp3). Malebranche thinks causation imposes *modal* conditions on causes: *a* causes *b* only if *b* necessarily follows *a*.<sup>7</sup> Descartes endorses a *reality* condition on causes: causes must have at least as much reality as their effects.<sup>8</sup>

Many of these constraints arise from underlying theories of causation. For example, Spinoza thinks of causal relations as relations of conceptual connection, and he claims that things that have nothing in common cannot be conceived through each other (EIp3dem, EIdax5). More controversially, perhaps it is because Malebranche thinks there is a similarly tight connection between conceptual and causal relations that he endorses his modal condition. Like Suarez and many others before him, Descartes thinks of causation as a kind of *giving* of reality, and he reasons that a thing cannot give something to another unless it has it to begin with: “For where, I ask, could the effect get its reality from, if not from the cause? And how could the cause give it

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<sup>7</sup> LO 450; Spinoza also endorses this condition (EIdax3).

<sup>8</sup> CSM II/28; AT VII/40

to the effect unless it possessed it?" (CSM II/28; AT VII/40).<sup>9</sup>

Early moderns also argue from these causal constraints to reach robust conclusions about the metaphysical structure of the world. Spinoza, for instance, argues that because attributes are conceptually isolated, they are therefore also causally isolated (EIIp6), rendering Cartesian interactive dualism a nonstarter. Malebranche appeals to his modal condition to argue against the existence of true finite causes. And in the third meditation, Descartes uses his reality condition to argue from the content of the meditator's ideas to the existence of an *ens realissimum*.<sup>10</sup>

An important point of agreement among these 17<sup>th</sup> century rationalists is that these causal conditions also apply to God. So if Spinoza's commonality constraint is correct, then God and God's effects must share at least one property. Likewise, if Malebranche's modal condition is correct, and if God is the cause of the world's existence, then the world's existence necessarily follows from God's volition to create the world. And by Descartes' reality condition, if God is the total and efficient cause of some finite substance, then God must have at least as much reality as had by the finite substance.

Nothing so far raises the specter of heterodoxy. Indeed, it was an attractive feature of these conditions that God readily satisfies them, whereas some finite things do not. However, as others have worried (in different ways<sup>11</sup>), Descartes' reasoning about causation suggests a principle that yields (4), thereby pressuring him towards one of our three main options: *Expand*, *Reject*, or *Reduce*.

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<sup>9</sup> See also CSM II/97, AT VII/135; Suarez reasons in very similar ways (e.g., DM XVIII.ix.8 and DM XXVI.1.2)

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Descartes reasons from the violation of containment to the lack of causation (CSM II/29, AT VII/42).

<sup>11</sup> The literature on this is likewise fairly voluminous. For some especially helpful discussions, see Radner (1985), O'Neill (1987), Gorham (2003), and Schmaltz (2008).

Although Descartes sometimes states what I will call his “reality condition” as simply the requirement that a thing’s total and efficient cause<sup>12</sup> must have at least as much reality as the thing itself has, his condition is more fine-grained and demanding than this.<sup>13</sup> Consider the following reasoning from Meditation Three:

A stone, for example, which previously did not exist, cannot begin to exist unless it is produced by something which contains, either formally or eminently, everything to be found in the stone <FR: i.e. it will contain in itself the same things as are in the stone or other more excellent things>; similarly, heat cannot be produced in an object which was not previously hot, except by something of at least the same order <Fr: degree or kind> of perfection as heat, and so on (CSM II/28, AT VII/41).

(For now, put aside Descartes’ “formal or eminent” qualification, as it qualifies the *ways* causes contain the reality of their effects, not *what* they must contain.)

In the case of the stone, Descartes appears to think that causes must contain not only at least as much reality as is contained in their effects, but that causes must also contain *all the same* (qualitative) *properties* as their effects. Descartes provides a similar gloss in the Fifth Replies: “there is nothing in the effect which did not previously exist in the cause, either formally or eminently” (CSM II/253, AT VII/367).<sup>14</sup> This very strong version of the reality condition readily yields a straightforward causal version of (4):  $x \text{ causes } y \rightarrow (y(F) \rightarrow x(F))$ , and it invites one of our three main responses outlined above.

However, it might be that Descartes is speaking a bit loosely in these passages. He is working up to the claim that the reality condition applies to the causes of the *objective reality* of

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<sup>12</sup> For ease, I’ll drop the “complete and total” cause, since Descartes himself often does and it won’t be relevant for the present purpose (for discussion, see Schmaltz (2008), 56-58).

<sup>13</sup> For the coarser version, see also CSM II/34, AT VII/49 and CSM II/116, AT VII/165. He also uses the coarser version later in the Third Meditation when he argues that he satisfies the reality condition for extended things, whether substances or modes, since he is a thinking substance and so he contains as much reality as any extended substance and since any substance always contains more reality than any mode or collection of modes (CSM II/30-31; AT 45).

<sup>14</sup> See also CSM II/55, AT VII/79 and CSM II/76, AT VII/105.



ideas and not merely to the formal reality of ideas.<sup>15</sup> He argues that the reality condition applies to the objective reality of ideas because the reality condition itself has a *universal scope*, as he claims in the stone example: *everything* in the stone must be contained in its cause. But the reality condition might have a universal scope without requiring the exact sameness of every (qualitative) property between causes and effects.

The second example of heat suggests a slightly more tempered version of the reality condition: causes must contain at least the same *order, degree or kind* of reality as had by each property of their effects.<sup>16</sup> The notion of a hierarchically ordered scale of perfection or reality has undoubtedly proven a stumbling block to many of Descartes' 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century readers. For now, we can focus on a minimal upshot of the heat example: the reality condition isn't a purely quantitative condition. It isn't enough for causes to contain at least as much reality as their effects; causes must contain a sufficient amount of the right *kind* of reality.<sup>17</sup> More schematically: *for every attribute A exemplified by a substance S, the total and efficient cause of S must contain a sufficient amount of the right kind of reality as contained in A.*

Descartes relies on this more fine-grained version in an inference he makes a few pages later:

[F]or as I have said before, it is quite clear that there must be at least as much <Fr: reality> in the cause as in the effect. And therefore, whatever kind of cause is eventually proposed, since I am a thinking thing and have within me some idea of God, it must be admitted that what caused me is itself a thinking thing and possesses the idea of all the perfections which I attribute to God" (CSM II/34, AT VII/49-50, emphases mine).

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<sup>15</sup> CSM II/28-29; AT VII/41-42

<sup>16</sup> Like many other early moderns, Descartes uses "reality" and "perfection" interchangeably in this context.

<sup>17</sup> Alternatively, we could say that one way of satisfying the quantitative requirement is to satisfy the qualitative requirement. Causes can contain at least as much reality as their effects if they contain at least some reality of the right kind.

Here Descartes uses the reality condition to infer that his cause must be a thinking thing because he is a thinking thing. It seems that Descartes would accept the following argument:

6. I am a thinking thing, therefore my [total and efficient] cause is a thinking thing [by reality condition].
7. God is my [total and efficient] cause.
8. Hence, God is a thinking thing.

He appears to accept (6) in part because being a thinking thing suffices for having the right *kind* of reality to cause other thinking things to exist.

It is tempting to regard Descartes' demand for the right *kind* of reality as resting on a more general resemblance condition on causation: effects must *resemble* their causes, where sharing an attribute suffices for resemblance. Descartes hints at something like this near the end of the Third Meditation (and elsewhere): “But the mere fact that God created me is a very strong basis for believing that I am somehow made in his image and likeness” (II/35, AT VII/51, emphasis mine).<sup>18</sup>

On grounds of charity, we should probably resist this reading of the reality condition. On the one hand, if sharing an attribute is sufficient but not necessary for resemblance, and if causation requires resemblance, then Descartes' inferences from his having thought to God's having thought would be invalid.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, if sharing an attribute *is* necessary for

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<sup>18</sup> See also CSM II/118, AT VII/168 and CSMK III/340, AT 5/156.

<sup>19</sup> One way to make it valid would be to add that thinking things contain the greatest possible type of reality, but I don't know anywhere that Descartes makes this claim, much less argues for it. His focus is almost always on the comparatively greater reality of thought over extension, and his general skepticism that we can penetrate very far into God's nature (e.g., CSM II/32, AT VII/46) implies he cannot rule out that God has a kind of perfection greater even than thinking in virtue of which God can cause thinking things to exist.

resemblance, and if causation requires resemblance, then it is unclear how bodies can ever have non-extended causes, as Descartes' interactive dualism demands.<sup>20</sup>

Rather than stemming from a more general causal principle about resemblance, Descartes' reality condition is motivated by an appeal to intelligibility. As noted at the start of this section, Descartes (and others before him) think of causation as a kind of *giving* of reality, and he reasons that causes cannot give what they do not already have. We might try to question this: why not? Why can't a thing give  $x$  if it doesn't already have  $x$ ? Descartes' answer, I take it, is that it would be *unintelligible* for a thing to give something it didn't already have (in his language, this is "manifest by the natural light" (CSM II/28; AT VII/40)). Built into the very concept of giving, we might now say, is the concept of possessing, and our questioning points to a failure to grasp the concepts involved in the same way it would if we asked, "But why can't bachelors sometimes be married?" This point will become important later, so I want to emphasize it here. Given Descartes' account of causation, the reality condition helps render causation intelligible. Were it not for the satisfaction of the reality condition, appeals to causation would be unintelligible and, for Descartes himself, objectionable. Even more bluntly: for Descartes, the intelligibility of causation requires the reality condition.

Let us return to our extended substance, *Rocky*, a rock created by God. By the reality condition, for every perfection/property/attribute had by Rocky, God must contain a sufficient amount of the right kind of reality as it contains. In the case of a thinking thing, it was clear how this would be satisfied: God has the right kind of reality to cause thinking things because God *is*

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<sup>20</sup> As Robert Garcia pointed out to me, given Descartes' nominalism, it seems that causation understood as a giving of properties will, in fact, require recourse to resemblance, since what is transferred cannot literally be numerically identical to the properties of the cause. That's a fair point, but my claim here is more minimal: resemblance doesn't *motivate* the reality condition, though it may well be entailed by it.

a thinking thing. Yet if the only way a cause can contain the right kind of reality of some perfection is to actually exemplify that perfection, then we would have another quick argument to the extended nature of God from God's causation of extended substances.<sup>21</sup> To block this, Descartes needs to provide an account of how God can cause extended things without actually being extended and without violating the reality condition.

Put differently, we might wonder how Descartes would respond to the following argument, which is parallel to the one he accepted above in the case of thinking things:

- 6'. Rocky is an extended thing, therefore Rocky's [total and efficient] cause is an extended thing [by reality condition].
- 7'. God is the total and efficient cause of Rocky.
- 8'. Hence, God is an extended thing.

Descartes clearly rejects 8', claiming in a letter to Henry More that although "God is extended in virtue of his power" by being able to cause bodily changes, nonetheless "I deny that [God's essence] is there in the manner of extended being, that is, in the way in which I just described an extended thing" (CSMK III/381, AT VII/403). This rules out *Expand*. *Reject* is also clearly out for Descartes. Descartes does not think that God causes extended things without containing a sufficient amount of the right kind of reality as is contained in extension. That, as we saw, would render divine causation unintelligible, and Descartes is unwilling to accept unintelligibility here. Lastly, I'm aware of no text in which Descartes attempts to reduce being extended to something like being a thinking thing, so I'm tempted to conclude that he would reject *Reduce* as well. And yet, something has to give.

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<sup>21</sup> Others have tried to argue in the other direction, from the non-extended nature of mental substances plus the reality condition to the denial of any mental-physical causation (see especially Radner (1985)).

Undoubtedly many in the room are ready to scream at me that I've ignored the key qualification in Descartes' reality condition, captured in the formal vs. eminent containment distinction. That is, there's supposed to be another way to contain the right kind of the reality of an attribute without formally exemplifying it, namely by containing it *eminently*. Hence, Descartes' fuller reality condition is actually disjunctive: *for every attribute A exemplified by a substance S, the total and efficient cause of S must contain a sufficient amount of the right kind of reality as contained in A either by exemplifying A [formal] or by containing A in some other way [eminently]*. This emendation certainly blocks 6' and hence 8', though notice it also renders 6 false as well. All Descartes can conclude from his own thinking is that his cause *contains* thought, not that it is thinking.

Before exploring this second form of containment, one that doesn't require exemplification of the problematic property, I will turn to two other metaphysical principles that *prima facie* yield similar pairs of inferences, one acceptable and one problematic, and which also elicited appeals to another form of containment.

### **3. From mental representation**

In the previous section, I pointed to an argument for expanding the divine nature to include extension from Descartes' reality condition on causation and the fact that God is a cause of extended things. In this section, we will see similar expansionist pressures from a principle about representation found in Descartes and Leibniz.

The bulk of Descartes' Third Meditation focuses on what we can infer about the extra-mental world from the contents of our ideas. In the background of this project lurks Descartes' rejection of both brute mental content and an infinite regress of mental content. In other words,

Descartes thinks mental representations must bottom out ultimately in something extra-representational:

And although one idea may perhaps originate from another, there cannot be an infinite regress here; eventually one must reach a primary idea, the cause of which will be like an archetype which contains formally all the reality which is present only objectively in the idea (CSM II/29; AT VII/42, emphasis mine).

Descartes reasons that although the content of some ideas might be accounted for in terms of the content of other ideas, there is at least one “primary” or *basic* idea whose content is accounted for in terms of something extra-representational, namely the way a thing actually is.<sup>22</sup> As with causation, Descartes’ motivation here seems to be based on an appeal to intelligibility or explicability: it would be unintelligible if the content of every idea was explained by the contents of other ideas *ad infinitum* or if some ideas lacked an explanatorily-satisfying source altogether.<sup>23</sup> Eventually the explanation of representational content must appeal to something that is not itself simply more representational content.

Descartes likens the source of basic mental content to an archetype, something that formally contains the reality that “primary” ideas represent. The traditional metaphor is wonderfully loose, inviting the reader to fill in the details of how exactly the non-representational grounding of primary ideas is supposed to go. Is mere causal relatedness sufficient, or must the source of primary ideas also *resemble* the content itself, as many early moderns believed and Descartes’ appeal to formal containment in this passage suggests? Just as in the causal case, Descartes sometimes states his demand on the source of basic content very

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<sup>22</sup> Presumably, Descartes’ reasoning applies to God’s ideas as well as our own, in which case it will follow that at least some of God’s ideas must bottom out in ways God actually is, a conclusion Leibniz also reaches, as we will see.

<sup>23</sup> One thing that would make the source satisfying is, of course, that it satisfies the reality condition on causation with respect to the representational content of the primary idea.

strongly: “Whatever exists in the objects of our ideas in a way which *exactly corresponds* to our perception of it is said to exist formally in those objects” (CSM II/114; AT VII/161). But the more one demands resemblance between the source and the content of basic ideas – much less exact resemblance – the stronger the case for a nearby version of (4) from representation becomes:  $x$  is *the source of the representational content* of primary idea  $y \rightarrow (y$  represents  $F \rightarrow x(F))$ .

However, we could also make due with a more tempered version here as well: some representational content must be accounted for in terms of the way something actually is. Descartes applies this point later in the Third Meditation and claims we can infer quite a bit about how God actually is from the contents of our ideas, including from ideas that are about things other than God: “The idea [of God] is, moreover, utterly clear and distinct; for whatever I clearly and distinctly perceive as being real and true, and implying any perfection, is wholly contained in it” (CSM 32/AT VII/46, emphasis mine). By this reasoning, if I clearly and distinctly perceive some attribute  $A$  that contains any perfection or reality whatsoever, then  $A$  is also “wholly contained” in my idea of God.<sup>24</sup> This still moves *intra ideas*; however, Descartes adds that we can also infer features of God’s nature, and not merely our ideas of it, from clear and distinct ideas of reality-implying attributes: “I judge that all the attributes which I clearly perceive and know to imply some perfection – and perhaps countless others of which I am ignorant – are present in God either formally or eminently” (CSM II/32, AT VII/46, emphasis

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<sup>24</sup> By “attributes” here, Descartes means qualities or properties that can be attributed or predicated of a thing (see Principles I.52, CSM I/210, AT VIIIa/25). So if  $A$  is an attribute of God, it is the case that God is  $A$ . (Descartes later distinguishes attributes from qualities in the case of God (Principles I.56, CSM I/211-212, AT VIIIa/26), but for reasons that don’t alter the present point:  $A$  being an attribute of God entails that  $A$  can be truly predicated of God.) Descartes also glosses “perfections” in terms of the “attributes” or properties of a substance (CSM II/118, AT VII/168).

mine).<sup>25</sup> Descartes concludes this in part because he thinks the sources of at least some of our basic ideas (and presumably all of God's) are God's formally exemplified, non-representational properties.

This *prima facie* suggests the following representational principle: *For any basic attribute A, if anyone clearly and distinctly represents A, then God is A.*<sup>26</sup> Now consider the following pair of inferences in which 'A' names a basic attribute with at least some reality or perfection:

9. If anyone clearly and distinctly represents A, then God is A [principle of representation].
10. Descartes clearly and distinctly represents thought [CSM I/211, AT VIIIA/25-26]
11. Therefore, God is thinking.

9. If anyone clearly and distinctly represents A, then God is A [principle of representation].
- 10'. Descartes clearly and distinctly represents extension [CSM I/211, AT VIIIA/25-26].
- 11'. Therefore, God is extended.

Parallel again to the causal case, Descartes accepts 10' and rejects 11', and his preferred way of doing so involves another appeal to eminent containment, as we see at the end of the last passage. For some basic attributes, such as thought, clear and distinct perceptions of A entails that God *formally* contains A – from which it follows that God *is* A, as in (9). That's how God functions as the archetype, the source, of the representational content of ideas of basic attributes like thought.

But for other basic attributes, particularly those typically not thought to be divine attributes such as extension, clearly and distinctly representing A entails only that God *eminently* contains A, which is to say that God contains A in some other way without exemplifying or

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<sup>25</sup> See also CSM II/35, AT VII/52

<sup>26</sup> As before, this formulation makes *Reduce* an obvious line of response: perhaps the idea of extension can be reduced to ideas of traditional divine attributes, and hence the representational principle wouldn't apply to it, since it isn't a basic attribute. But this is not a line explored by Descartes.



being A. So once again, the representational principle becomes disjunctive: *if anyone clearly and distinctly represents A, then either God is A or else God contains A in some other way.*

As usual, matters are more complicated in the case of Leibniz. Leibniz sometimes embraces a similar principle on representation and reasons that the basic content of divine ideas are reflected in God's non-mental attributes.<sup>27</sup> In early texts, Leibniz even toys with embracing *Expand* as a consequence: "There are infinitely many simple forms [in God] because our perceptions are infinitely many, and are not explicable in terms of each other" (DSR 81). Notice Leibniz's reasoning from the fact that (infinitely) many of our ideas cannot be explained in terms of each other to the fact that God, as "the subject of all absolutely simple forms", has infinitely many attributes or perfections. On other isolated occasions, Leibniz invokes the formal/eminent distinction to avoid *Expand*.<sup>28</sup>

More often, however, Leibniz opts for *Reduce* or *Reject*. Notice that Descartes' representational principle applies to ideas of attributes involving *any* degree of perfection whatsoever. Leibniz limits the representational principle to ideas of what he calls "absolute" perfections, which are ideas of perfections whose content cannot be generated by combining together ideas of other perfections. (This is akin to what Descartes means when he claims that God's perfections are "actually infinite" (CSM II/32; AT VII/47).) Leibniz sometimes claims that the ideas of all non-absolute perfections can be constructed out of or reduced to ideas of

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<sup>27</sup> For a reading of Leibniz which emphasizes this line, see Nachtomy (2007)

<sup>28</sup> For especially clear examples, see Ak 6.4.2308-9, Ak 6.4.2313, and Ak 6.4.2316.

God's absolute perfections plus logical operators like negation and conjunction, a la *Reduce*.<sup>29</sup>

Here is an early and a late text on this theme:

Ideas exist in God insofar as the most perfect being arises out of the conjunction in the same subject of all possible absolute forms or perfections; but from the conjunction of simple possible forms there result modifications, that is, ideas, as properties result from an essence (DSR 81).

The idea of the absolute is internal [i.e., innate] to us, as is that of being: these absolutes are nothing but the attributes of God and they may be said to be as much the source of ideas as God himself is the principle of beings (NE 158).

According to this line of thought, for any idea, either that idea represents a divine attribute or else the contents of that idea can be wholly accounted for in terms of representations of divine attributes plus logical operations like conjunction and negation.

This way of accepting the representational principle and avoiding *Expand* requires a fairly stouthearted form of reductionism. Take, for example, the idea of a sensible quality, such as the color blue or pain. By Leibniz's reasoning, either the contents of that idea can be reduced to or explained in terms of other ideas, or else God exemplifies blueness (presumably by being phenomenally conscious of blueness, not by being blue!).<sup>30</sup> Like many other early moderns, Leibniz thought that sensations were reducible to other ideas, such as representations of non-sensory states (though he isn't as unwavering on this as one might expect<sup>31</sup>). I must admit that I find that thesis so independently implausible that I have a hard time seeing its attractiveness except insofar as it accords well with other theoretically loaded commitments. But it certainly illustrates one way to avoid postulating sensory states in God: *reduce* them to something more

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<sup>29</sup> For Leibniz-friendly reasons and texts to resist this reductionist line, see Newlands, "Leibniz on Privations, Limitations, and the Metaphysics of Evil," *Journal for the History of Philosophy* (forthcoming), sec. 5.1.

<sup>30</sup> Here and elsewhere I am indebted to the rich discussion in Adams (2000)

<sup>31</sup> See, for instance, Leibniz's admission of the state of pleasure in God (DSR 83) and his difficulty in denying that God experiences pain (L 177).

divine-friendly. (Even if one expands God’s mental life to include states of phenomenal consciousness, other troubling examples are easy to generate: consider our sensations of indecisiveness, inadequacy, depravity, and so forth.)

Although Leibniz has strong reductionist tendencies (think: monads), he sometimes opts for *Reject* instead. For example, Leibniz thinks that ideas in God’s intellect are the grounds of possibilities.<sup>32</sup> Applying the representation principle to God’s own ideas, it would follow that God’s extra-representational attributes are the ultimate ground of each possibility. Leibniz sometimes appears to accept this consequence.<sup>33</sup> However, Leibniz sometimes *does*, and almost certainly *should*, avoid appealing solely to God’s extra-representational attributes to account for the grounds of possibility.<sup>34</sup> Instead, he sometimes takes those divine ideas that cannot be accounted for in terms of other divine ideas to have their content primitively and not in virtue of anything further about God. If so, then God’s ideas alone might suffice for providing the grounds of every possibility. Hence, applied to God’s possibility-grounding ideas, the representational principle is false: some of the content of God’s basic ideas is not reflected elsewhere in the divine nature, which is a form of *Reject*.

The cost of such a rejection depends on the virtues of the principle being rejected. I suggested that Descartes takes the cost to be the same in the representation case as it is in the causal case: inexplicability or unintelligibility. Leibniz hints at the same cost in a passage quoted

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<sup>32</sup> See Newlands, “Leibniz and the Ground of Possibility,” *The Philosophical Review* (forthcoming).

<sup>33</sup> Though it could be read in different ways, this is one way the following passage is often read by Leibniz interpreters: “I won’t venture now to determine whether people can ever produce a perfect analysis of their notions or whether they can ever reduce their thoughts to primitive possibilities or to irresolvable notions or (what comes to the same thing) to the absolute attributes of God, indeed to the first causes and the ultimate reason for things” (AG 26, emphasis mine).

<sup>34</sup> For the *does*, see CP 43, Ak 6.4.1389, and 6.4.2317; for the *should*, see Newlands, “Leibniz and the Ground of Possibility”, sec. 3.2.

earlier: some ideas “are not explicable in terms of each other” (DSR 81). Rather than admit inexplicability, Leibniz concludes in these passages that there must be a non-representational source to explain the content of such ideas, and that source is God’s actual, non-representational properties. The cost of *Reject*, for Leibniz, is the cost of accepting a primitively rich divine intellect.<sup>35</sup>

Notice the emerging pattern. We have undisputed facts (in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) about causation and representation: God causes thinking things and extended things, we have clear and distinct ideas of extension and power. These facts are thought to be intelligible, and in order to make them intelligible, Descartes and Leibniz appealed to ways God actually is. Unmodified, the price of such intelligibility is *Expand*: given the causal or representational relations, it seems as though God will need to have more attributes than is traditionally allowed. *Reduce* stands as a tempting, but difficult alternative way to save intelligibility. At the same time, we have seen a rising hope: perhaps there is another way to avoid *Expand* without *Reject* or *Reduce*, a way for God to cause extended things and represent extension without actually being extended. I turn now to a third appeal to such hope in, fittingly enough, Kant.

#### **4. From Possibility**

In this section, I will sketch a third way of backing into Spinozism. This route begins with the widespread view among early moderns that God is, in some sense, the ground of possibility. There were, of course, deep disagreements over (a) on what in God modal truths and modal truth-makers depend and (b) the manner of dependence by which modal truths and truth-

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<sup>35</sup> As I have argued elsewhere (Newlands, “Leibniz and the Ground of Possibility,” sec. 3.2), this is a cost Leibniz should be happy to pay given the gain of avoiding *Expand*. Furthermore, he could push back that the cost here isn’t any higher than others have to pay. After all, a primitively rich divine intellect seems little worse off in the explanatory game than the expansionist alternative – why does *God thinks p* cry out more loudly for explanation than *God is conscious of p* or *God is p*?

makers depend on God.<sup>36</sup> Descartes, for example, famously held that (a) modal truths depend on God's will and (b) this form of dependence involves efficient causation. Leibniz, by contrast, believed that modal truths (a) depend on God's intellect (b) through a non-volitional form of ontological dependence. In this section, I want to briefly consider an account of the ground of possibility offered by Kant in his pre-critical writings and show how it generates the same pressures towards Spinozism that we've seen in the other two cases.<sup>37</sup>

Leibniz and the early Kant agree that possibility is grounded in actuality: "For if there is reality in essences or possibles, or indeed, in eternal truths, this reality must be grounded in something existent and actual" (Leibniz, AG 218); "All possibility presupposes something actual in and through which all that can be thought is given" (Kant, OPB 127). Both also argue that only a single, necessarily existing being can ground possibilities and *possibilia*, in effect arguing for the existence of God "based simply on the fact that something is possible" (Kant, OPB 135; cf. Leibniz, PE 218). In both cases, the motivation for finding divine grounds for possibility lies in an appeal to explicability: possibilities ungrounded in *actualia* would be mysterious, inexplicable. More expansively: possibilities are explained only through their grounds, hence ungrounded possibilities would be unexplained. Unexplained possibilities should be rejected, but only features of a necessarily existing being can provide sufficient explanatory and ontological grounds for possibilities.

Kant differs from Leibniz on exactly what in God serves as the grounds of possibility. As I suggested briefly in the previous section, for Leibniz, God's occurrent ideas are the ground of

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<sup>36</sup> This way of framing the disputes is from Newlands, "Leibniz and the Ground of Possibility"; much of what I gesture at in this section is discussed much more fully there.

<sup>37</sup> Although I disagree with his objections to Leibniz on behalf of Kant, Andrew Chignell has cogently presented a version of the concern I am raising here about the path from Kant's early theory of modality to Spinozism (Chignell (2012)).

possibilities: God actually thinking  $p$  makes it the case that it is possible that  $p$ . We saw that there may be some pressure on Leibniz to go further than this, if, as the representationalist principle suggests, God's representing certain basic ideas presupposes that God actually exemplifies the content of those ideas. This concession would yield a quick argument for the divine exemplification of every basic possibility, as in Spinozism. However, that relies on a substantive principle about representation, and I claimed that Leibniz did not always accept it.

Kant's early account of the divine ground of possibilities threatens to collapse into Spinozism more directly. For according to Kant, possibilities are not grounded in God by being thought about by God (Leibniz) or by being willed by God (Descartes). Rather, "the possibilities of things themselves...are given through the divine nature" (OPB 135). In particular, Kant argues that what he calls the "data", "the material element" or, equivalently, the "real element" of possibility (OPB 123) must be found in God's actual, extra-ideational nature.<sup>38</sup>

The inference from possibility to actual exemplification in God is based on what I'll call Kant's *possibility principle*: *if it is really possible that  $\phi$ , then God is actually  $\phi$* . This principle also readily yields a version of (4):  $x$  makes  $y$  really possible  $\rightarrow (y(F) \rightarrow x(F)$ .

And once again, this principle suggests the following pair of inferences should both be valid:

- 12. If it is really possible that something thinks, then God thinks [possibility principle].
- 13. It is really possible that something thinks [ $@p \rightarrow \diamond p$ ]
- 14. Therefore, God thinks.
  
- 12'. If it is really possible that something is extended, then God is extended [possibility principle]
- 13'. It is really possible that something is extended [ $@p \rightarrow \diamond p$ ]
- 14'. Therefore, God is extended.

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<sup>38</sup> Kant's reasons for favoring actual exemplification over mere thinking are more complex than I can get into here; for discussion, see Adams, Chignell, and Newlands.

As with the previous examples, parallel reasoning using the possibility principle puts pressure on Kant to expand God's nature to include more properties than orthodoxy accepts.<sup>39</sup> Once again, Kant faces a similar range of options: he could accept that God is, after all, extended; he could claim that the real possibility of extension can be constructed out of other real possibilities, as in some forms of idealism; or he could reject the possibility principle altogether and allow that the real element in some possibilities is not grounded in God's nature.

And yet, Kant explicitly rejects all three options. Against *Expand*, Kant claims that this would render God's nature inconsistent: "The impenetrability of bodies, extension and such like cannot be attributes of that which has understanding and will" (OPB 130). Against *Reduce*, the pre-critical Kant warns, "Nor it does not help if one seeks to evade the issue by maintaining that the quality of motion in question is not regarded as true reality. The thrust of a body or the force of cohesion are, without doubt, something truly positive" (OPB 130). And against *Reject*, Kant continues to insist, "insofar as body possesses extension, force, and so on, the possibility of body is grounded in the Supreme Being" (OPB 131).

But if all three alternatives are rejected, how is it that the real possibility of extension is grounded in God's nature? Kant suggests an alternative that should now seem hauntingly familiar:

The data of all possibility must be found in the necessary being either as determinations of it, or as consequences [*Folge*] which are given through the necessary being as the ultimate ground. It is thus apparent that all reality is, in one way or another, embraced by the ultimate real ground (OPB 129-30, emphases mine).

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<sup>39</sup> This is a simplification of the Spinozistic pressures facing Kant's modal theory; the more sophisticated version turns on details I've had to ignore here. For more, see Chignell and Newlands.

In other words, there turn out to be two different ways in which possibilities are grounded in God, according to Kant. Either their real elements are directly exemplified by God, “as a determination [that] inheres in” God (OPB 132) or they are *consequences* of what God directly exemplifies. The former way happens in the case of thinking (OPB 131) and the latter in the case of extension (OPB 130). Hence, Kant would reject 12' in the way Descartes rejects 6' and 9': there's another way of containment or grounding that does not require exemplification. This implies that Kant's possibility principle is disjunctive as well: *if it is really possible that  $\phi$ , then either God is actually  $\phi$  or the real possibility of  $\phi$  is a consequence of some other way,  $\psi$ , that God actually is.*

Kant was keenly aware of the Spinozistic threat on the horizon, and he introduces the second disjunct precisely to avoid *Expand*: “...for all other beings are only possible through [God] alone. But this is not to be understood to mean that all possible reality is included among its determinations” (OPB 130). Kant's motives are well and good, but as with Descartes' proposed escape, we might wonder exactly what this alternative way amounts to. According to Kant, the real possibility of being extended rests not on God's idea of extension, nor on God's volition to create extension, nor on God actually being extended. Then what actually exemplified attribute of God *is* it grounded in, and in what sense is the real possibility of extension a “consequence” of this other attribute?

Kant does not attempt an answer to the first question, so let's focus on the second. Kant certainly cannot mean any sort of *logical* consequence, since he motivates his possibility principle by arguing that logical relations are insufficient to ground real possibility. Nor does Kant mean *causal* consequence, since the grounding of possibility by God is supposed to be



logically prior to any volitional or creative activity.<sup>40</sup> Disappointingly, most often Kant explicates “consequence” in these early texts by simply restating the mystery: consequence “as through a ground” (OPB 133, 129). That is, the real possibility of being extended is a consequence of God’s actual attributes by being, well, grounded in God’s attributes but not exemplified by God, the very relation we were seeking to clarify. Let’s turn explicitly, at last, to this other way.

## 5. Divine proxies

We have encountered three metaphysical principles – from causation, from representation, and from modality – that initially pressure their early modern advocates to expand the range of divine attributes beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. The initial versions of the principles function in very similar ways, underwriting inferences in (4)-(5) from the fact that God bears a particular relation to an attribute to the conclusion that God exemplifies that attribute. We also saw that in some cases (6-12), the inferences seemed unproblematic. If God causes a thinking thing, then God is a thinking thing. If we (or God) have a basic representation of an omnipotent thing, then God is an omnipotent thing. If God grounds the real possibility of a having a will, then God has a will. But we also saw that these same principles, left standing, would apply to non-traditional divine attributes too (6'-12'), such as extension or qualitative ideas involving imperfections.

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<sup>40</sup> Walford’s translation misleadingly adds the words “produced by” at one crucial point in Kant’s explication of this second way: “...or whether they are to be regarded merely as consequences *produced by it* in other things” (OPB 133, emphasis mine), which might sound like some sort of power or capacity in God to produce extension grounds the real possibility of extension. However, the German text simply does not include the “produced by” phrase that Walford adds: “...*oder blos durch dasselbe an anderen Dingen als Folgen anzusehen wären.*” This is not a trivial point, since at least one interpreter (Stang, 2010) has argued that possibilities for Kant are grounded in God’s productive capacities. For disagreement, see Newlands, “Leibniz and the Ground of Possibility”, sect. 3.1.

In each case, we noticed three general ways of responding: *reject* the principle, *reduce* the attribute or quality in question to something else, or *expand* the range of divine attributes. Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant seemed (at least sometimes) reluctant to accept any of these options. Instead, a fourth option was floated: find *another way* in which God can cause, source of ideas of, or ground the possibility of some attributes without directly exemplifying them. This made the metaphysical principles disjunctive, so as to avoid (4): either God directly exemplifies the attribute in question *or* God exemplifies a different attribute from which it follows that God can cause, provide representational content for, or ground the possibility of the non-exemplified attribute. In other words, what is needed is a *divine proxy*, a more traditional attribute exemplified by God that can play the same role as the problematic attributes would have played, had God exemplified them.

Of course, not just any ole' proxy will work: God's actual attributes will need to have certain features that allow them to play the proxy role. Most importantly, we will need an explanation for why God's being F and not G enables God to cause/represent/ground the possibility of a thing's being G. Without an explanation of the proxy role, appeals to divine proxies will seem like an *ad hoc* way of avoiding the expansionist consequences of the original principles.

As we have seen, Descartes appeals to the notion of *eminent containment* to account for this proxy relation. In the context of the representational principle, Descartes defines *eminent containment* partly in terms of sameness of functional roles: "Something is said to exist eminently in an object when, although it does not exactly correspond to our perception of it, its greatness [L: *tanta*; Fr: *grandes*] is such that it can fill the role [supplere] of that which does so

correspond” (CSM II/114; AT VII/161). For example, God can cause extended things without being extended in virtue of possessing a distinct attribute,  $\psi$ , that can play the same role as God’s thinking plays when God causes thinking things.<sup>41</sup> God’s being  $\psi$  can, as Kant puts it, act as an “adequate substitute” for extension. As Spinoza describes the move,  $\psi$  can “take the place of” extension (C 304). As I have put it, God’s being  $\psi$  serves as a causal proxy for God’s being extended.

However, as I noted above, simply claiming that God’s attributes stand as proxies for non-traditional attributes does not explain *how* they do so, and unless that mystery can be cleared up, the appeal to proxies will sound like just another name of the problem. Descartes sees this, and he claims in the above passage that it is the “greatness” of God’s attributes that allow them to stand as causal and representational proxies for attributes like extension (see also II/29; AT VII/42). Elsewhere, he invokes similar metaphors: “more noble” (CSM II/55; AT VII/79), “more excellent” (CSM II/28; AT IX/32), and in “higher form” (CSM II/97, AT VII/135).<sup>42</sup> In other words, the reason why one of God’s attributes<sup>43</sup> can function as a causal proxy for extension is because it is greater than, more noble than, more perfect than extension.

To say that this explanation has left some folks unsatisfied would be an understatement. As Jorge Secada puts it, “the notion of having a property or perfection eminently, though easy to apprehend in its general meaning, is difficult to the point of intractability when examined

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<sup>41</sup> See also CSMK 381, AT V/403. Descartes cites number and length as examples of extended properties that are eminently contained in God (CSM II/99, AT VII/137), though it is hard to square his nominalism about numbers (CSM I/212, AT VIIIa/27) with part of that example.

<sup>42</sup> This is not novel to Descartes; see, for example, Suarez DM XVIII.ii.8; XVIII.ii.35; XVIII.ix.25; and XXX.i.10.

<sup>43</sup> In our case, Descartes argues that it is thinking that eminently contains extension; presumably the same could be true for God too.

closely”<sup>44</sup> (Secada, 81). Wherein lies the puzzle? Secada thinks it is “the mysterious idea of degrees of reality” (Secada 81). I don’t think that’s quite right, in part because I don’t find degrees of *perfection*, at least, to be an utterly impenetrable notion.<sup>45</sup> Another source of concern has been the tendency of interpreters to analyze eminent containment in a way that includes a clause to the effect that *S eminently contains  $\phi$  only if S can bring about  $\phi$* .<sup>46</sup> But causal capacity can hardly be included in the very analysis of eminent containment. Causal capacity is supposed to *follow* from and be explained by eminent containment; it is an empty achievement to accomplish this by building causal capacity into the very notion.<sup>47</sup>

However, I don’t think these concerns penetrate to the heart of the problem facing appeals to eminent containment and the like. To illustrate my worry: suppose I said to my department chair, “I’ll be in Chicago for the next department meeting, but don’t worry, my wife will be my proxy.” Suppose he then asks about the appropriateness of this, given that my wife isn’t a department member, and I reply, “Oh, it’s ok – she’s an even bigger Bruce Springsteen fan than I am.” Among the oddities of that exchange would be this: the degree of Springsteen fandom has really nothing to do with being able to fill in for my department vote.<sup>48</sup>

I fear something similar is going on in these divine proxy cases. Pointing out how God’s exemplified attributes compare to other real or possible attributes does not explain why the

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<sup>44</sup> Secada (2000), 81; see also Schmaltz, 67 and many other notes of skepticism in the voluminous literature on this topic.

<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, others seem to share Secada’s concern and have tried to analyze eminent containment in ways that do not appeal to degrees of reality at all, relying instead of *independence* (see especially O’Neill and Schmaltz). My objection still stands even if “more independent than” is the correct analysis of “more perfect than.”

<sup>46</sup> See Gorham.

<sup>47</sup> Suarez was well aware of this point and urged caution against assimilating power into eminence (DM XXX.i.10). Surprisingly, O’Neill highlights this very warning from Suarez (O’Neill, 239), as does Schmaltz (Schmaltz, 69n56), but both retain the notion of “power to bring about” as part of their analyses.

<sup>48</sup> Of course, one might try to concoct a scenario in which my appeal to Springsteen *does* explain the appropriateness of my wife’s serving as my proxy. But that’s just the point: *we need to be given such a scenario*; appealing to a proxy absent an intelligible context does not by itself make it an intelligible appeal!

former can serve as proxies for the latter. Suppose God's attributes *are* nobler, more excellent, more perfect, higher, better, greater, neater, shinier...than extension. We still need an explanation of why *those* comparative characteristics are relevant for God's causal, representational, or possibility-grounding capacities. Simply asserting that they are does not make them so.

Even worse, recall that the motivation for accepting the principles in the first place was based on an appeal to intelligibility. We were told we shouldn't opt for *Reject* because otherwise causation, representation, and grounding real possibility would involve something unattractively primitive, unintelligible, or inexplicable. My main worry about the divine proxy appeal is that, as it stands, it sacrifices the very gains in intelligibility earned by the principles solely for price of avoiding Expand or Reduce.

To see this, recall that according to Descartes, causation is intelligible only if the cause contains the right kind of reality in the right amounts. We can understand why a thinking thing with more reality satisfies the reality condition with respect to other thinking things. But why possessing thought, a "more noble" but wholly heterogeneous way of being than being extended, entails possessing the right *kind* of reality in the right amount to cause extended things remains unexplained. The source of some basic representations, Descartes and Leibniz think, are to be found only in God. If such representations reflect ways God actually is, it is clear how the representational principle is satisfied (sorry, Berkeley!). But why possessing thought or power suffices for providing the contents of ideas of extension or impenetrability remains wholly unexplained. God actually thinking explains how it is possible that something thinks. But how God actually thinking explains the possibility that something is in motion is left utterly

mysterious. In sum: if at bottom, appeals to divine proxies are appeals to a primitive form of containment or an impenetrable mystery, we will have failed to secure the main good of the principles after all. Hence we should we have stuck with one of our original options to begin with: *Reject*, *Reduce*, or *Expand*. The promised fourth option is really not an option at all.

My bafflement here is, alas, unoriginal. Spinoza himself pointed out that notions like eminent containment promise more than they deliver, replacing the need to expand God's properties with appeals to ignorance. In the *Ethics*, just before concluding that "extended substance is one of God's attributes," Spinoza charges,

Meanwhile, by other arguments...they clearly show that they entirely remove corporeality or extended substance itself from the divine nature. And they maintain that it has been created by God. But by what divine power could it be created? They are completely ignorant of that. And this shows clearly that they do not understand what they themselves say" (EI<sub>p</sub>15s, G II/57).<sup>49</sup>

I suspect Spinoza would say the same to the pre-critical Kant, whose possibility premise is, after all, one endorsed by Spinoza (EII<sub>p</sub>8) – just without the mysterious "consequence" disjunct. Spinoza's response to Descartes and Leibniz on representational content is more complicated, since Spinoza rejects the principle that the content of ideas cannot be accounted for by the content of other ideas *ad infinitum* (EII<sub>p</sub>7s and I<sub>p</sub>9).<sup>50</sup> But he certainly accepts the expansion of God's mental states to include every finite mental state (EII<sub>p</sub>11c), and I suspect he would find attempts to block this expansion via eminent containment or other proxies as mysterious and unappealing as he finds it in the causal and modal cases.

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<sup>49</sup> See the earlier note of dissatisfaction in his commentary on Descartes' appeal to ignorance: "So we were constrained to allow [*fateri cogebamur*] that there is some attribute in God which contains all the perfections of matter in a more excellent way and can take the place of [*supplere*] matter" (CM I/ii; G I/237-8).

<sup>50</sup> See EII<sub>p</sub>7s and EII<sub>p</sub>9

Admittedly, Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant all thought they had good reasons for rejecting Spinozistic expansion: extension implies divisibility; consciousness of limitations implies being limited; being extended and being mental are mutually exclusive ways of being; not every real possibility is compossible with every other, and so forth. Of course, Spinoza tries to address those concerns. But Spinoza *also* rejects the appeal to divine proxies as an unsatisfying way of trying to avoid expansion. And on this last point, I tend to agree with Spinoza, and I would urge those sympathetic with these early modern principles to pursue one of our original, albeit tougher, options: *Reject*, *Reduce*, or, God forbid, *Expand*.

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