



Week 6:  
Cavendish and  
Malebranche

odat@tcd.ie

Weekly Quiz

Experimental  
Philosophy

Panpsychism and  
Occasionalism

Cavendish on  
Occasional  
Causation

Argument about the  
Cause of Perception

Cavendish's  
*Arguable*  
Panpsychism

Arguments for  
Panpsychism

Malebranche on  
Occasionalism

Arguments about  
Bodily Motion

Assignments

## Week 6: Cavendish and Malebranche

Takaharu Oda, PhD (odat@tcd.ie)

Southern University of Science and Technology

SS149 (社会科学中心), Spring 2024

**Early Modern Western Philosophy (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

近代西方哲学（十七-十八世纪）



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# A Quiz from the Last Week

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Quiz 5:  $(P1) \alpha \vee \beta \vee \omega$ ;  $(P2) \neg\alpha$ ;  $(P3) \neg\beta$ ; therefore,  $\omega$ . What is this rule of inference called?

- 1 Disjunctive Syllogism
- 2 Conjunctive Syllogism
- 3 Universal Instantiation
- 4 Modus Tollens

This is not related to your final grade, but intended to observe your understanding of the last class.



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Quiz 5: (P1)  $\alpha \vee \beta \vee \omega$ ; (P2)  $\neg\alpha$ ; (P3)  $\neg\beta$ ; therefore,  $\omega$ . What is this rule of inference called?

- 1 Disjunctive Syllogism aka (*modus tollendo ponens* ['mode that affirms by denying']: check Cavendish's argument for the Origination of Motion)
- 2 Conjunctive Syllogism (aka *modus ponendo tollens* ['mode that denies by affirming']: (P1)  $\neg(\alpha \wedge \omega)$ ; (P2)  $\alpha$ ; therefore,  $\neg\omega$ )
- 3 Universal Instantiation
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[I]n our time God saw fit to allow the human mind to make a marvelous invention, which renders our vision more perfect by increasing its power by four, six, ten, twenty, thirty, and forty times; as a result, countless objects that were invisible to us because of their distance or extremely small size are now rendered highly visible by means of the **telescope**.

– Galileo, *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* (1632),  
tr. Finocchiaro, Day III

[M]icroscopes, lately invented [...] reveal the hidden, invisible small parts of bodies, and their latent structures and motions. By their means the exact shape and features of the body in the flea, the fly and worms are viewed, as well as colours and motions not previously visible, to our great amazement [...] Galileo's great achievement, [the] telescope [...] establishes that the galaxy is a knot or heap of small stars, which are plainly separate and distinct.

– Francis Bacon, *The New Organon* (1620), tr. Jardine and  
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# Observations upon Experimental Philosophy (1666)

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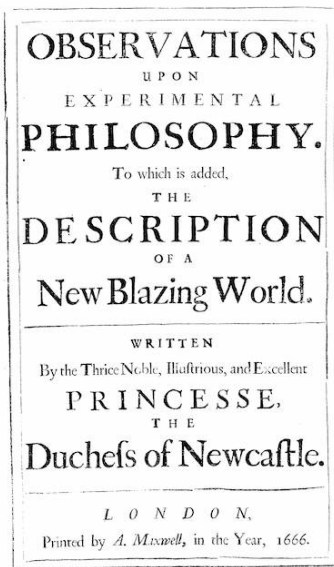
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Margaret Daughter  
to the Laurens Earl of  
Essex: 2<sup>nd</sup> wife to W<sup>m</sup>  
Duke of Newcastle

Cavendish: speculative phil...  
(Peter Anstey, Otago, 2014)





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'Tis true, there are some Objects which are not at all perceptible by any of our exterior Senses. [...] But although they be not subject to our exterior sensitive perception, yet they are subject to our Rational perception, which is much purer and subtiler then the Sensitive; nay so pure and subtil a Knowledg that many believe it to be immaterial, as if it were some God, when as it is only a pure fine and subtil figurative Motion or Perception. [... W]hatsoever the sensitive Perception is either defective in, or ignorant of, the rational Perception supplies. But mistake me not: by Rational Perception and Knowledg, I mean Regular Reason, not Irregular; where I do also exclude **Art**, which is apt to delude Sense, and cannot inform so well as Reason doth; for Reason reforms and instructs Sense in all its actions.

– Observations, ch. 1.1 (O'Neill ed. p. 47)



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– *Observations*, ch. 1.2 (pp. 48–49)



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## Questions

- What is the relationship between 'art' and reason?
- Is there any legitimate use for 'art'?





# Cavendish on 'Art' and 'Nature'

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## Key points

- The observer and the scientific instruments are themselves **(finite) parts** of the natural world they are trying to study.
- **The Theory-Ladenness of Experiment**: Experimental design necessarily includes assumptions, i.e. **speculations**, about the workings of the apparatus and its environment.

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# Definitions

## Two metaphysical views in contrast

### Panpsychism

The view that all natural objects (rocks, trees, atoms, stars, etc.) have mental/psychological properties.

Thomas Nagel, 'Panpsychism', in *Mortal Questions* (1979)

Mislabelled? Cavendish's account of matter is not a panpsychist one (Peterman, "Actions of a body sentient": Cavendish..., forthcoming)

### Occasionalism or Occasional Causation

The view about a circumstance that provides the *occasion* for something else to act, without itself exerting any causal influence.  
n.b. occasional cause—'occasion' for short

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# Reading Questions

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- According to Cavendish, what happens when a cold object is placed near a fire and becomes hot?
- How is Cavendish's view similar to, and different from, Malebranche's?
- What is the role of 'imitation' in Cavendish's account? How does this relate to her view that every material thing has knowledge?



# Cavendish on Occasional Causation

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- 3 Introduction to Panpsychism and Occasionalism
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- 5 Cavendish's *Arguable* Panpsychism
  - Arguments for Panpsychism
- 6 Malebranche on Occasionalism (Occasional Causation)
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# Reading Questions

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- Why does Cavendish think that everything in nature has **sense and reason**?
- How is this related to her claim that the human mind is **material**?
- Are Cavendish's arguments sound and convincing?



# Cavendish on Matter and Motion

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## Question as opposed to Descartes

If the *same* motion cannot be transferred from one body to another, what accounts for changes in bodies' states of motion?



# Cavendish on Matter and Motion

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## Question as opposed to Descartes

If the *same* motion cannot be transferred from one body to another, what accounts for changes in bodies' states of motion?

[F]or example, A Watch-maker doth not give the watch its motion, but he is **only the occasion**, that the watch moves after that manner, for the motion of the watch is the watches own motion, inherent in those parts ever since that matter was [...] Wherefore **one body may occasion another body to move so or so**, but not give it any motion, but every body (though occasioned by another, to move in such a way) moves by its own natural motion; for self-motion is the very nature of animate matter.

[...]

Wherefore every creature being composed of this commixture of animate and inanimate matter, has also self-motion, that is life and knowledge, sense and reason, so that **no part hath need to give or receive motion from another part; although it may be an occasion** of such a manner of motion to another part, and cause it to move thus or thus.

– *Philosophical Letters*, letter 1.30



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Assignments

## Question as opposed to Descartes

If the *same* motion cannot be transferred from one body to another, what accounts for changes in bodies' states of motion?

## Argument for the origination of motion

- 1 The motion of a body must originate [i.e. be **caused or occasioned**] from somewhere, either *outside* or *inside* that body.
- 2 The motion of a body cannot originate from outside that body.
- C Therefore, the motion of a body originates from inside that body.



# Cavendish on Occasional Causation

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I will not say, that cold or heat may not enter and intermix with the parts of some bodies, as fire doth intermix with fuel, or enters into its parts; but my meaning is, that the animal perception of heat and cold, is not made this way [...] even in such a commixture, where the parts of the object enter into the body of the sentient, as fire doth into fuel, that perception of the motions of fire in the fuel, and the fuel's consumption or burning, is not made by the fire, but by the fuel's own perceptive motions, imitating the motions of the fire; so that fire doth not turn the fuel into ashes, but the fuel doth change by its own corporeal figurative motions, and the fire is onely an occasion of it.

– Observations, ch. 1.25 (O'Neill ed. pp. 96–97); see also  
chs. 1.1–3



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# Cavendish on Occasional Causation

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Assignments

Neither doth Heat or Cold change those Bodies by an intermixture of their own particles with the parts of the Bodies: but the parts of the Bodies change themselves by way of imitation, as Men put themselves into a Mode-fashion; although oftentimes the Senses will have fashions of their own, without imitating any other objects. For, not all sorts of perceptions are made by Imitation or patterning, but some are made voluntarily, or by rote. As for example when some do hear and see such or such things, without any outward objects.

– *Observations*, ch. 1.25 (p. 97)

Thence Sir W. Pen and I in his coach, Tiburne way, into the Park, where a horrid dust, and number of coaches, without pleasure or order. That which we, and almost all went for, was to see my **Lady Newcastle**; which we could not, she being followed and crowded upon by coaches all the way she went, that **nobody could come near her**.

– Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 1 May 1667



# Cavendish on Occasional Causation

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# Argument about the Cause of Perception

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Assignments

Wherefore, it is not certain steams, or agitated particles in the Air, nor the vapours and effluviiums of exterior objects, insinuating themselves into the pores of the Sentient, that are the cause of the perception of Heat and Cold, as some do imagine; for there cannot probably be such differences in the pores of Animal Creatures of one sort, (as for example, of Men) which should cause such a different perception as is found in them: For, although exterior Heat or Cold be the same, yet several Animals of the same sort, will have several different perceptions.

– *Observations*, ch. 1.25 (pp. 97–98)

## Argument

- ① If perception of heat and cold *were* caused by the entrance of hot and cold particles into the sensory apparatus, then differences in perception of heat and cold *would* be fully explainable by differences of the hot and cold particles and differences of the sensory apparatus. [ $\varphi \supset \psi$ ]
- ② However, differences in perception of heat and cold are greater than can be explained by these factors. [ $\neg\psi$ ]
- ③ Therefore, perception of heat and cold *cannot* be caused by the entrance of hot and cold particles into the sensory apparatus. [MT:  $\neg\varphi$ ]



# Argument about the Cause of Perception

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– *Observations*, ch. 1.25 (pp. 97–98)

Then, what is Cavendish's alternative view?

- 1 If perception of heat and cold *were* caused by the entrance of hot and cold particles into the sensory apparatus, then differences in perception of heat and cold *would* be fully explainable by differences of the hot and cold particles and differences of the sensory apparatus. [ $\varphi \supset \psi$ ]
- 2 However, differences in perception of heat and cold are greater than can be explained by these factors. [ $\neg\psi$ ]
- 3 Therefore, perception of heat and cold *cannot* be caused by the entrance of hot and cold particles into the sensory apparatus. [MT:  $\neg\varphi$ ]



# Cavendish's *Arguable* Panpsychism

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# Panpsychism

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*First*, it is to be observed, That [i] Matter, [ii] Self-motion, and [iii] Self-knowledg, are inseparable from each other, and **make Nature, one [i] Material, [ii] self-moving, and [iii] self-knowing Body.** [...]

6. Nature is purely corporeal or material, and there is nothing that belongs to, or is part of Nature, which is not corporeal [...]

7. As Infinite Matter is divided into Infinite parts; so Infinite knowledg is divided into infinite particular Knowledges, and Infinite self-motion into Infinite particular self-actions. [...]

9. As Infinite Nature has an infinite self-motion and self-knowledg; so every part and particle has a particular and finite self-motion and self-knowledg, by which it knows it self, and its own actions, and perceives also other parts and actions.

– Observations, ch. 1.35 (pp. 137–38)

## Claim 1

All of nature is animate, be it infinite or finite. [in relation to i, ii]

## Claim 2

All of nature has knowledge (sense and reason). [iii]



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6. **Nature is purely corporeal or material, and there is nothing that belongs to, or is part of Nature, which is not corporeal [...]**

7. As Infinite Matter is divided into Infinite parts; so Infinite knowledg is divided into infinite particular Knowledges, and **Infinite self-motion into Infinite particular self-actions.** [...]

9. As Infinite Nature has an infinite self-motion and self-knowledg; so every part and particle has a particular and finite self-motion and self-knowledg, by which it knows it self, and its own actions, and perceives also other parts and actions.

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# Cavendish's Argument for Panpsychism

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[T]hat every part has not only sensitive, but also rational matter, is evident, not only by the bare motion in every part of nature, which cannot be without sense, for wheresoever is motion, there's sense; but also by the regular, harmonious, and well-ordered actions of Nature, which clearly demonstrates, that there must need be **reason as well as sense**, in every part and particle of Nature; for there can be no order, method or harmony, especially such as appears in the actions of Nature, without there be reason to cause that order and harmony.

– *Observations*, ch. 2.6 (p. 207)

## Argument

- ① Everything that engages in orderly motion has reason.
- ② Every part of nature engages in orderly motion.
- C Therefore, every part of nature has reason. [UI]



# Cavendish's Argument for Panpsychism

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Cavendish and  
Malebranche

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[T]hat **every part has not only sensitive, but also rational matter**, is evident, not only by the bare motion in every part of nature, which cannot be without sense, for wheresoever is motion, there's sense; but also by the regular, harmonious, and well-ordered actions of Nature, which clearly demonstrates, that there must need be **reason as well as sense**, in every part and particle of Nature; for there can be no order, method or harmony, especially such as appears in the actions of Nature, without there be reason to cause that order and harmony.

– *Observations*, ch. 2.6 (p. 207)

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# Another Argument for Panpsychism

[H]ow absurd it is to make senseless Corpuscles, the cause of Sense and Reason, and consequently of perception, is obvious to every one's apprehension, and needs no demonstration.

– *Observations*, ch. 1.35 (p. 147)

But I perceive Man has a great spleen against self-moving corporeal Nature, although himself is part of her, and the reason is his Ambition; for he would fain be supreme, and above all other Creatures, as more towards a divine nature; he would be a God, if arguments could make him such, at least God-like, as is evident by his fall, which came merely from an ambitious mind of being like God.

– *Observations*, ch. 2.7 (p. 209)

## Argument

- 1 Humans have sense and reason.
- 2 Sense and reason cannot arise from what is senseless and irrational.
- 3 But humans arise from the ordinary parts of nature.
- C Therefore, the ordinary parts of nature are not senseless and irrational.

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Which premisses are vulnerable to attack for objectors?

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Which premisses are vulnerable to attack for objectors?

## Argument

- ② Sense and reason cannot arise from what is senseless and irrational.  
[Cavendish's materialist and rationalist thesis]
- ③ But humans arise from the ordinary **parts** of nature.



# Objection: The Combination Problem

[T]he Images of sensible Objects, they spreading to some space in the surface of the [brain ...] one part [...] has the *perception*, suppose of the *head* of a man, the other of a *leg*, the third of an *arm*, the fourth of his *breast*, [...] yet there is nothing to perceive *the whole man*.

– More, *An Antidote agasint Atheisme*, [1653] 1662, appendix, in *The Cambridge Platonism Sourcebook*

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Henry More (1614–87): a Cambridge Platonist **against materialism**: 'though the *Conarion* [i.e. pineal gland] may be the Organ of sundry perceptions from corporeal Objects, and the Tent or Pavilion wherein the Soul is chiefly seated; yet we utterly deny that without an *Immaterial inhabitant* [i.e. soul] this *arbitrarious Motion* which we are conscious to our selves of can at all be performed in us or by us'

– Chamberlain, 'What Is It Like to Be a Material Thing? Henry More and Margaret Cavendish on the Unity of the Mind' (2022), etc.

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The combination problem is most obviously a challenge for constitutive micropsychism, [... more broadly] panpsychism. According to constitutive micropsychism, micro-level entities have their own very basic forms of conscious experience, and in brains these micro-level conscious entities somehow come together to constitute human and animal consciousness. The problem is that this is very difficult to make sense of: “little” conscious subjects of experience with their micro-experiences coming together to form a “big” conscious subject with its own experiences.

– Goff, Seager, and Allen-Hermanson, ‘Panpsychism’, *SEP* §4.2

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# Cavendish's Answer

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[R]ational Parts, may in one composed figure, have opposite actions; As for example, the Mind of many may be divided, so as to hate one person, and love another; nay, hate and love one and the same person, for several things, at the same time: as also, rejoice and grieve at the same time [...] for the Mind being material, is **dividable as well as composable**; and therefore its Parts may as well oppose each other, as agree.

– *Observations*, ch. 1.35

[A]lthough every part hath its own knowledg and perception; yet, when **many parts are conjoin'd into one Figure**, then [...] they become better acquainted. And, as many men assembled in a Church, make but one Congregation, and all agree to worship one God, in one and the same manner or way; so, many Parts conjoin'd in one Figure, are, as it were, so many Communicants, all agreeing, and being united in one Body.

– *Observations*, ch. 1.37q5



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# Further Philosophical Questions

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Assignments

- Is a human being merely an ordinary part of nature?
- If a human being is merely an ordinary part of nature, what does this mean for **scientific methodology**?
- If a human being is merely an ordinary part of nature, does panpsychism follow?
- Is there independent reason to recognise an active principle within material things?
- If there is such an active principle, must it be mind-like? Are we back at panpsychism again?



# Malebranche on Occasionalism (Occasional Causation)

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1 Weekly Quiz

2 Introduction to 'Experimental Philosophy'

3 Introduction to Panpsychism and Occasionalism

4 Cavendish on Occasional Causation  
■ Argument about the Cause of Perception

5 Cavendish's *Arguable* Panpsychism  
■ Arguments for Panpsychism

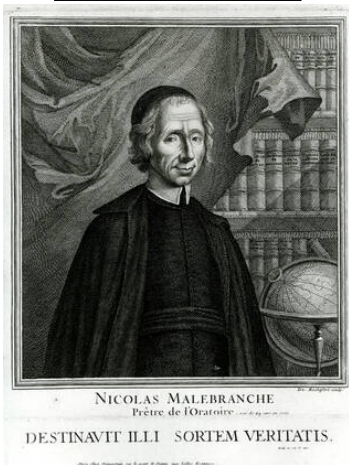
6 Malebranche on Occasionalism (Occasional Causation)  
■ Arguments about Bodily Motion

7 Assignments for the Next Lecture



# Père Nicolas (de) Malebranche (1638–1715)

## Biographical Overview



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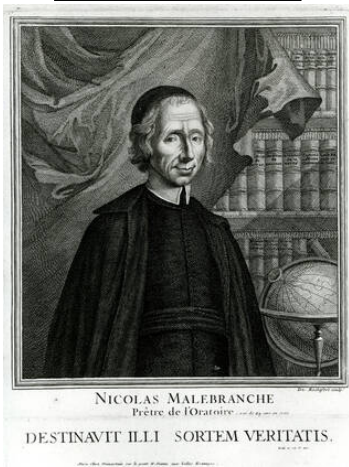
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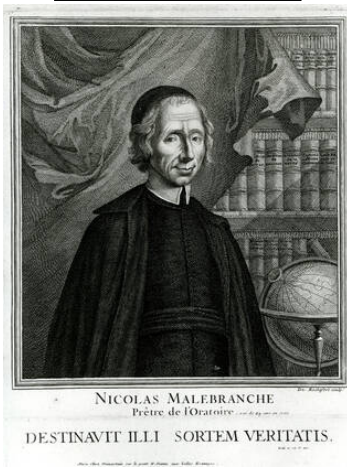
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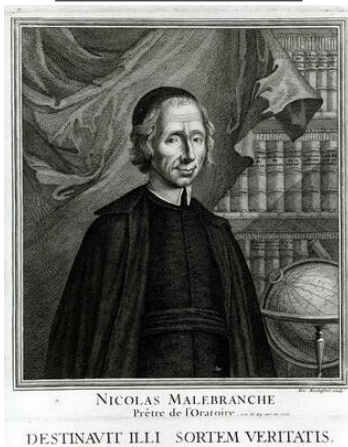
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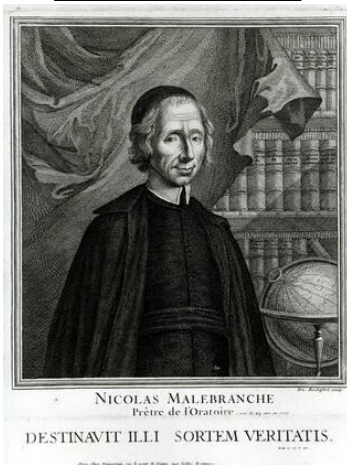


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after **Arnauld's Cartesian work: *On True and False Ideas* (1683)**, holding to representationalism about ideas (objects as representational contents) in one's act of perception, against Malebranche's theory of 'vision in God' ('we see all things [i.e. ideas] in God.'). Cf. Wahl (1988), etc.



# Père Nicolas (de) Malebranche (1638–1715)

## Biographical Overview



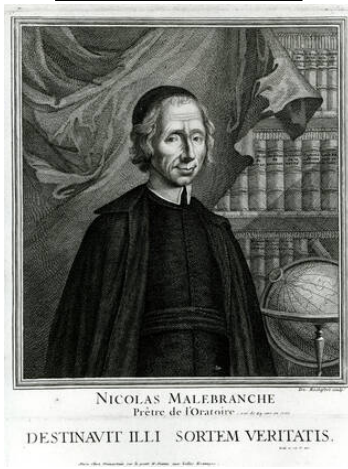
**MacTutor** (history of *maths*,  
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- **6 August 1638** – Born in Paris.
- **1660** – Joins the Congregation of the Oratory (l'Oratoire).
- **14 September 1664** – Ordained.
- **1674–75** – *The Search after Truth* (placed on the Church's *Index* in 1709)
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An 'occasional cause' of his death (?)  
 Malebranche was to have a strong influence on many who visited Paris while he and his disciples exerted a strong influence there. One who was strongly influenced was **George Berkeley** who visited Paris in 1713 and *planned to meet* (arguably met) with Malebranche.

- **13 October 1715** – Dies in Paris.

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# Reading Questions

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## Occasionalism

- What is Malebranche's view about causation?
- What does Malebranche mean by 'occasional cause'?



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– *Search after Truth*, 448



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What is the conclusion of the argument?



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## Argument about bodily motion

- ① Only the will of God (and not anything in finite minds or bodies) has an *a priori* necessary connection to the motion of bodies.
- ② If there is an *a priori* necessary connection between A and B, then A causes B.
- C Therefore, only the will of God can cause the motion of bodies.



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– *Search after Truth*, 448

## Alternative formulation 2

- ① If God does not move bodies, then there is no God-body connection.
- ② There is a connection between God (divine mind) and bodies.
- C Therefore, God *must* move bodies. [Modus Tollens]



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# Why We Cannot Move Our Arms

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For how could we move our arms? To move them, it is necessary to have certain animal spirits, to send them through certain nerves in order to inflate and contract them, for it is thus that the arm attached to them is moved. [...] And we see that men who do not know that they have spirits, nerves, and muscles move their arms. [...] Therefore men will to move their arms, and only God is able and knows how to move them.

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## Argument

- ① Only God knows how to move our arms.
- ② One *cannot* do anything, unless one knows how to do it.
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# Occasional Causation

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A natural cause is therefore not a real and true but only an **occasional cause**, which determines the Author of nature to act in such and such a manner in such and such a situation.

– *Search after Truth*, 448



# Assignments for the Next Lecture

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- 1 Weekly Quiz
- 2 Introduction to 'Experimental Philosophy'
- 3 Introduction to Panpsychism and Occasionalism
- 4 Cavendish on Occasional Causation
  - Argument about the Cause of Perception
- 5 Cavendish's *Arguable* Panpsychism
  - Arguments for Panpsychism
- 6 Malebranche on Occasionalism (Occasional Causation)
  - Arguments about Bodily Motion
- 7 Assignments for the Next Lecture



# Next Week 7: Locke and Astell

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Cavendish and  
Malebranche

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Weekly Quiz

Experimental  
Philosophy

Panpsychism and  
Occasionalism

Cavendish on  
Occasional  
Causation

Argument about the  
Cause of Perception

Cavendish's  
*Arguable*  
Panpsychism

Arguments for  
Panpsychism

Malebranche on  
Occasionalism

Arguments about  
Bodily Motion

Assignments



Assignment 1: Read Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book I, chs. 1–2; Astell's *Christian Religion* §§226–31, 388–93.



Assignment 2: Read the 'Argument Advice' and 'Essay Questions' in PDF. And ask me or your assigned TA for anything unclear in the documents and slides.

- Keep active in the **WeCom/企业微信** group for this course, and pay attention to the **Blackboard** (SS149, Spring 2024), in which you can find all the basic info and recommended references.
- **Office hours** of the instructor (Center for Social Sciences, C111) and TAs (their offices) are Mondays 2-4pm, or any working time of appointment, by WeCom direct message or email.