CHAPTER 5

Violations of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (in Leibniz and Spinoza)

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You may ask: is this chapter an endeavor in the study of the history of philosophy or is it an endeavor in contemporary philosophy? And I may answer: it's both. Instead of wondering about how this chapter fits with prior notions of what is good or bad work in either of these domains, just sit back and enjoy the ride.

My central concern here – violations of the Principle of Sufficient Reason (hereafter: 'PSR') – does indeed stem from my engagement with two figures from the history of philosophy: Leibniz and Spinoza. Both of these philosophers are big fans of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, the principle according to which each thing that exists has an explanation.[1] Indeed, a strong case can be made that each of these thinkers structures his entire system around the PSR more or less successfully.[2] However, despite these similarities, the character of each philosopher's commitment to the PSR differs, and the differences have illuminating implications for our understanding of the power of these

[1] Spinoza: see *Ethics* 1p11d2. Leibniz: see *Monadology* §32. I use the standard system for referring to passages from the *Ethics*. Thus, e.g., 1p11d2 = *Ethics* Part 1, Proposition 11, second demonstration. Unless otherwise noted all references to Spinoza are to the *Ethics*.

I use the following abbreviations:

(i) Editions of Spinoza's works: *Spinoza Opera*, Gebhardt 1925: Geb.
(ii) Editions of Leibniz's works: *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Berlin Academy: A
Opuscules, Couturat 1903: C
Die Philosophischen Schriften, Gerhardt 1875–1890: Ger
Leibniz: Philosophical Essays, Ariew & Garber: AG
Philosophical Papers and Letters, Loemker 1969: L
De Summa Rerum, Parkinson 1992: DSR
New Essays on Human Understanding, Remnant and Bennett: NE
Fragmente zur Logik, Schmidt 1960: S

[2] Spinoza more, Leibniz less!

rationalist systems and for the metaphysical issues these philosophers take up that concern us today. One way to distill these differences is by exploring the perhaps surprising ways violations of the PSR arise for Leibniz and Spinoza. It will turn out that Leibniz is, or would be, unable to handle such violations, while Spinoza can handle them more or less in stride in his more resilient and, in some ways, more exotic, rationalist system.

To elicit these violations of the PSR, I would like to highlight an important strand in Leibniz's wonderfully rich thinking about relations. I don't pretend to capture all that Leibniz says about relations throughout his career. But I aim to articulate at least some of his commitments on this topic. As is well known, Leibniz thinks that relations are (somehow) not in, not states of, the things (apparently) related and that they are (somehow) ideal. I will return to the ideality of relations briefly later, but mostly I want to focus on one of Leibniz's reasons for thinking that relations are not states of the things (apparently) related. I think that this line of thought is rather good and that it is of a piece with Leibniz's best uses of the PSR. After drawing out this good strategy in Leibniz, I will extend this rationalist line of thought perhaps further than Leibniz himself does in order to reveal the violations of the PSR in Leibniz. This revelation – unwelcome from Leibniz's point of view – will set the stage for a comparative evaluation of the resources that Leibniz and Spinoza may have for handling such violations.

So one of my goals is to play Leibniz and Spinoza off each other. Because these figures are two of the greats and because their systems are still not well understood, I think we should care about this investigation. But I believe we should care also because of the philosophical issues at stake: the arguments that Leibniz and Spinoza develop have – as I will stress – considerable power. In particular, in the course of elucidating Leibniz's and Spinoza's commitments to the PSR, I will present an argument for – and at least tentatively endorse – Leibniz's view that the states of a thing are due only to the nature of the thing itself, a view that can be seen as a version of Leibniz's famous predicate in subject principle (hereafter: PISP). On the basis of this argument, I will also present an argument for – and at least tentatively endorse – an extreme form of the theory that the world itself is the only thing that exists. That is, I will tentatively argue for a monism of the kind to be found in Spinoza.

5.1 GROUNDING RELATIONS

Leibniz advances the following controversial principle:

> If *x* is F, then the state of being F must be due to, explained by, *x*'s nature exclusively.[3]

In other words, anything true of *x* is, for Leibniz, due to *x*'s nature alone. The explanatory basis for states of an object is simply the object's nature. Leibniz sometimes puts the point in terms of the idea or notion of an object. We find evidence – from various stages in Leibniz's career – for this reading. Thus we find Leibniz saying in 1686 in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*:

> all true predication has some *basis* [*quelque fondement*] in the nature of things. (*Discourse on Metaphysics* §8, Ger IV, p. 433; my emphasis)

See also *Discourse on Metaphysics* §14:

> what happens to each [substance] is a *consequence* of its complete idea or notion *alone* (*ce qui arrive à chacune n'est qu'une suite de son idée ou notion complete toute seule*). (My emphasis; translation altered, Ger IV, p. 440)

See also "Primary Truths" (*c.* 1686):

> the predicate or consequent is always in the subject or antecedent, and the nature of truth in general or the connection between the terms of a statement, consists in this very thing . . . The connection and inclusion of the predicate in the subject is explicit in identities, but in all other propositions it is implicit and must be shown through the analysis of notions. (C, p. 518; AG, p. 31)

See also *New Essays* (*c.* 1703):

> Whenever we find some quality in a subject, we ought to believe that if we understand the nature of both the subject and the quality we would conceive how the quality could arise [*résulter*] from it. (p. 66)

See also the following passage from around 1695 in Leibniz's logic notes:

> If there is somebody who is Strong, Brash, Learned, a King, General of an army, Victor in the battle of Arbela, and the other things of this kind that are ascribed to Alexander the Great, God, intuiting the individual essence of Alexander the

[3] Leibniz does use the term "state" as well as "accident," "property," and others. (For Leibniz's uses of "state" see "De Affectibus" in Grua 1948, II, pp. 512–13. For other related terms, see Clatterbaugh 1973, p. 2.) There are important distinctions here, not all of which are clear in Leibniz, but I won't dwell on them, for in each case in which a thing has a property or accident or is in a certain state, there must be something in virtue of which this is the case.

Great, will see a complete concept ... from which those things all follow [*consequuntur*]. (S, pp. 475–6, quoted in Mates 1986, p. 85, n5)

In general for Leibniz, as I mentioned,

> If *x* is F, then the state of being F must be due to, explained by, *x*'s nature exclusively.

Notice that in the passages just quoted, Leibniz sees the nature of a thing as the basis for its properties and as being that of which certain changes are consequences. This terminology suggests that the nature of a thing serves as the explanatory ground of its states. This claim is, in effect, a version of Leibniz's PISP.

But *why* does Leibniz hold this claim? He sees the principle as importantly connected to the PSR ("Primary Truths," C, p. 519; AG, p. 31; see also *Discourse on Metaphysics* §13), and indeed, he proclaims that if this principle is not true, then "I don't know what truth is" (G II, p. 56; L, p. 337). Unfortunately, many of Leibniz's readers have been tempted to call his bluff here. We are inclined to say that although Leibniz is right, e.g., that my being wise has something to do with my nature, we are also inclined to say that it may also be due in part to other factors such as the wisdom pills I take every morning with my breakfast. My being wise seems not to be due to my nature alone. Why then does Leibniz hold that the properties of a thing are due to its nature alone?

To begin to articulate some of Leibniz's reasons for the PISP, it will help to see that this claim is a specific and implausible version of a general and much more plausible claim. The general claim is this:

> (**1) If an object *x* is in a certain state (or has a certain property or whatever), then there must be some thing or things in which this state is grounded, some thing or things in virtue of which the thing is in that state.

Unlike the PISP, (**1) allows that my being wise may be due in part to things other than my nature. (**1) requires only that there be some thing in virtue of which I am in that state. Although this claim is not itself a commitment to the full-blown PSR, it is a rationalist claim in that it issues a demand for an explanation, a demand that there be an explanation for certain states. Because this claim is rather plausible, I have placed asterisks before it. (Throughout this section, I will use the asterisks to mark what I see as plausible claims in a rationalist spirit.)

I want to show how one can get from the plausible (**1) to Leibniz's implausible PISP. To begin the process, I want to consider a specific kind of state that *x* may be in – what might be called a relational state. Since *x* is in the state of being related in some way to *y*, it follows from (**1) that there is some thing or things in virtue of which *x* is related to *y*. In the spirit of (**1), it seems right to say that this state depends on, at least, *x*.

If the relational state *x* is in of being related to *y* is grounded in (at least) *x*, what is the relation between *x* and *y* dependent on? Just as it seems natural to demand that there be a ground for states, so too it seems natural to demand that there be some ground for relations. Just as states are not free-floating but are, instead, states of, and grounded in, something, so too relations are relations *between* or *among* things and so they seem to be grounded in those things. The general demand here is that relations, like states, must be grounded.

So here is another plausible principle:

(**2) If objects *x* and *y* stand in a relation, then there must be some thing or things in which that relation is grounded.

I believe Leibniz accepts this demand. This is clear when he says to Des Bosses that a power of determining oneself without any cause implies a contradiction for it implies a relation without a foundation.[4] Here Leibniz explicitly affirms that relations must be grounded. This is evident also from the passages quoted below in which Leibniz seeks the ground of relations. One can see (**2) as following more or less directly from the PSR which demands an explanation for each thing. But one can also see this as simply a plausible demand for grounding along the lines of (**1). By seeing how Leibniz tries to meet this plausible demand for explanation, we will have a way of seeing how he would motivate the PISP. Thus my goal in this section is to place asterisks before the PISP.

Let's focus for now on relations between substances. Take a case in which a substance *x* stands (or apparently stands) in a relation to another substance *y*. According to (**2), this relation must be grounded in some thing or things. We can see that Leibniz – in order to reveal the nature of this ground – carries out a three-step argument. I will be focusing primarily on the first two steps.

Leibniz's first step is to say that the relation between *x* and *y* cannot be a state of *x* in particular as opposed to *y*, because there is no reason to locate the relation in *x* exclusively, to see the relation as grounded in *x* exclusively,

[4] Leibniz to Des Bosses, 8 Feb. 1711, Ger II, p. 420.

given that there is equally good reason to see the relation as grounded in *y* instead. Similarly, the relation cannot be a state of *y* exclusively because if it were, then there would be no good reason that the relation is not grounded in *x* instead. In general, because grounding the relation in one of *x* or *y* exclusively would be arbitrary, the relation cannot be grounded in *x* or *y* exclusively. This first step in Leibniz's argument relies on something like the PSR.

At this point, a natural thing to say is, of course, that while the relation cannot be grounded in one of *x* or *y* but not the other, it is grounded in *x* and *y* together, i.e. the relation depends on *x* and also depends on *y*, and is thus grounded in both together. In other words, the relation is partially grounded in *x* and partially grounded in *y*. Although this is more plausible than seeing the ground of the relation in only one of *x* or *y*, Leibniz rejects this view too: for Leibniz, a relation cannot be a state of, or grounded in, the two apparently related substances in this joint manner. Leibniz denies, as he puts it to Des Bosses in 1716,

> the existence of an accident that can, at the same time, be in two subjects and has one foot in one, so to speak, and one foot in the other. (29 May 1716, Ger II, p. 517; AG, p. 203)[5]

Leibniz denies that relations between substances can be, as it were, pants that pairs of substances wear. This rejection of pants, this denial that a relation is a state of the related substances together is the second key step in Leibniz's investigation of the explanatory basis of relations.

But now we must ask: how then is the relation grounded if not in *x* or *y* individually or together? Leibniz will not, of course, have recourse to the claim that the relation is not grounded – that would be to go against the plausible (**2), not to mention that it would be to go against the PSR. Instead, Leibniz claims that the relation is grounded in a mind that compares *x* and *y*. Leibniz makes clear that ultimately the relevant mind is God's mind. So the relation between *x* and *y* consists, for Leibniz, simply in the fact that God has ideas of *x* and *y* and that these ideas are linked in God's intellect, that God somehow compares *x* and *y*. Thus Leibniz says:

[5] Leibniz also says to Des Bosses "I do not believe that you will admit an accident that is in two subjects at the same time" (21 April 1714, G II, p. 486; L, p. 609), and to Clarke, "an accident in two subjects, with one leg in one and one in the other" is "contrary to the notion of accidents" (Ger VII, p. 401; L p. 704; AG, p. 339). Cf. Avicenna: "Therefore in no way may you think that one accident is in two subjects" (Henninger 1989, p. 5).

It appears that relations are not other than truths. In themselves, relations are not things which can be created: they are born by virtue of the divine intellect alone. ("Notes on Aloys Temmnik's *Philosophia Vera Theologicae et Medicinae Ministra*" (1715 or 1716), quoted in Mugnai 1992, p. 21)

Relations and orderings are to some extent "being of reason," although they have their foundations in things; for one can say that their reality, like that of eternal truths and of possibilities, comes from the Supreme Reason. (NE, p. 227)

The reality of relations is dependent on mind, as is that of truths; but they do not depend on the human mind, as there is a supreme intelligence which determines all of them from all time. (NE, p. 265)

God not only observes each single monad and all its modifications, but also the relations between them. The reality of relations and truths consists in this. (Notes for Des Bosses, 5 February 1712, Ger II, p. 438; AG p. 199)

And so, by making this final, idealist move, Leibniz believes he is able to make the existence of relations compatible with the demand that relations be grounded.

We can see all three steps at work – in compressed form – in the following important passage from Leibniz's correspondence with Des Bosses:

orders, or relations which join two monads, are not in one monad or the other, but equally well in both at the same time, that is, really in neither, but in the mind alone. (*Ordines . . . , seu relationes, quae duas monades jungunt, non sunt in alterutra monade, sed in utraque aeque simul, id est, revera in neutra, sed in sola mente.*) (29 May 1716, Ger II, p. 517; AG, p. 203)

Here Leibniz makes the first move out of what seems to be a concern to avoid arbitrariness. Relations "are not in one monad or the other, but equally well in both at the same time." At the same time, he makes the second move: relations are "equally well in both at the same time, that is, really in neither." Finally, he makes the idealist move: relations are "in the mind alone." And, again, this train of thought seems to depend on the plausible grounding claim (**2).

Before evaluating this three-step argument for the ideality of relations, I want to examine a popular line of interpretation that might be thought to limit the anti-relational import of this argument. On some interpretations, although Leibniz rejects the reality of relations for something like the reasons I have just outlined, he nonetheless accepts the reality of relational states or relational accidents of individual substances. If this interpretation is correct, then Leibniz is friendly to the reality of relationality of some kind, even if not to the reality of relations themselves. Proponents of this reading often appeal to passages such as the following.

First, Leibniz says in the fifth letter to Clarke in a passage part of which was already quoted:

> The ratio or proportion between two lines L and M may be conceived three ways: as a ratio of the greater L to the lesser M, as a ratio of the lesser M to the greater L, and lastly, as something abstracted from both, that is, the ratio between L and M without considering which is the antecedent or which the consequent, which the subject and which the object . . . In the first way of considering them, L the greater, in the second, M the lesser, is the subject of that accident which philosophers call "relation". But which of them will be the subject in the third way of considering them? It cannot be said that both of them, L and M together, are the subject of such an accident; for, if so, we should have an accident in two subjects which is contrary to the notion of accidents. Therefore, we must say that this relation, in this third way of considering it, is indeed out of the subjects; but being neither a substance nor an accident, it must be a mere ideal thing. (G VII, p. 401; L, p. 704; AG, p. 339)

Similarly, Leibniz writes to Des Bosses:

> My judgment about relations is that paternity in David is one thing, sonship in Solomon another, but that the relation common to both is a merely mental thing whose basis is the modifications of the individuals. (21 April 1714, G II, p. 486; L, p. 609)

In these passages, Leibniz might seem to regard relational states, such as paternity in David, states which are located non-arbitrarily in one particular substance, as real (and not ideal). At the same time, he seems to regard more abstract relations (as opposed to relational states), such as the relation between a father and son or the similarity between similar substances, as things that can only be arbitrarily located in one particular substance and thus as things that are not real (and are ideal).[6]

Without being able to do full justice to this subtle reading, I will make two observations which, jointly, cast doubt on seeing Leibniz as endorsing the reality of relational states but not the reality of relations.

(1) Even if substances have relational states or accidents, for Leibniz, he may nonetheless regard these accidents as not fundamental, but rather as grounded in non-relational accidents. Nothing in the passages just quoted indicates that the relational accidents are fundamental. They may be grounded in intrinsic, non-relational, perhaps perceptual, accidents.[7] It is significant that, even in the letter to Clarke just cited, it is not clear that Leibniz accepts the reality of relational accidents. In that passage,

[6] See Kulstad 1980, McCullough 1996, pp. 172–5, and Clatterbaugh 1973, pp. 61–73.
[7] This line of interpretation is developed by Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne 1999.

Leibniz merely invokes an accident that, he says, "philosophers call 'relation'." It is clear from this that, for Leibniz, when, e.g., *a* is lesser than *b*, *a* is the subject of an accident. But it is not clear that, for Leibniz, the accident of which *a* is the subject is genuinely relational. Leibniz simply says that philosophers call this accident a relation; he himself does not call it a relation or even a relational accident. A similar point may apply to the David–Solomon example in the letter to Des Bosses. There is a real accident in David and this accident leads philosophers to say that David stands in a certain relation to Solomon. But, for all Leibniz says here, it may be that the genuine accident of which David is the subject is not a relation or even a relational accident.

(2) The hybrid position articulated in the alternative reading – i.e. no real relations, but real relational accidents – may not be philosophically coherent. One way to raise this worry is as follows. On most interpretations of Leibniz, although two substances are real and not dependent on being perceived by a mind, relations between the two substances are ideal in that they require that a mind (God's mind) compare the two substances. If this is the case, then it seems natural to say – in contrast to the hybrid reading – something similar about so-called relational accidents: these items are ideal in that they require that a mind compare the relevant substances. Thus just as the relations do not appear or show up without a mind getting in the act, so too so-called relational accidents – unlike intrinsic accidents – do not appear or show up without a mind getting in the act. For Leibniz to deny the reality of relations while affirming the reality of relational accidents would thus be, it seems, for him to draw an invidious distinction. The burden is thus on the proponents of the hybrid position to explain away the apparent tension between the two views such proponents attribute to Leibniz.

Thus, I believe there is good reason to see Leibniz as rejecting the reality not only of relations, but also of relational accidents. Further, I think that if Leibniz's three-step argument against the reality of relations succeeds, then he also has good reason to reject the reality of relationality in general – to reject the reality of relations and of relational states.[8]

So let's return to that three-step argument against the reality of relations in order to see if it is successful. And to do this, I will work backwards through the three steps and test for plausibility. The idealist move seems the least plausible of the three. Normally, we would say that when a mind compares two things, the mind picks up on relations that are already out

[8] For a fuller treatment of problems with the hybrid interpretation, see Mugnai forthcoming.

there, independently of the mental comparing. But, on the Leibnizian view, the relations are, in effect, constituted by a mind. This seems to get things backwards. But given that Leibniz has already, in the previous two steps, denied that the relations are grounded in *x* or *y* themselves and given that – because of a plausible application of the PSR – he holds that this relation must be grounded, what choice does he have other than to ground the relation in a mind? I believe that there is an alternative, one that Spinoza adopts, as I will argue later. Fortunately, in the justification I offer below for Leibniz's PISP, I will not have to rely on the idealist step in Leibniz's argument concerning relations.

Let's turn to Leibniz's second step in his account of the grounding of relations. Why does Leibniz reject the view that the relation between *x* and *y* is grounded jointly in the nature of *x* and in the nature of *y*? That is, why does Leibniz deny that *x* and *y* can have pants?

When Leibniz rejects pants in the correspondence with Clarke, he does not seem to offer a justification. However, I think we can see Leibniz's reasons here as turning on the plausible grounding principle about relations, (**2). If the relation between *x* and *y* were a state of *x* and *y* jointly, then this relation would be determined by, explained by, grounded in, *x* and *y* together. The "jointly" and "together" here are crucial, for these terms indicate that the relation is grounded at least in part in the fact that *x* and *y* are together, the fact that they *coexist* with certain natures, i.e. the fact that they are related somehow. So the relation between *x* and *y* is grounded in their standing in a certain relation. But this is hardly an illuminating explanatory ground: at best it merely passes the buck to another relation that needs to be explained (and thus threatens to lead to an infinite regress of relations), at worst it is an out-and-out circular explanation. It's not an option for Leibniz (or for a proponent of the PSR) to say that the relation is ungrounded or is grounded in other relations which are grounded in other relations and so on ad infinitum. To adopt such a view would be to say that ultimately there is no *thing* or things in virtue of which *x* and *y* stand in this relation. This result would violate the plausible grounding principle (**2) (and also the PSR). So if we appeal to pants to explain the relation, the relation remains unexplained.

One might object that the line of thought sketched in the previous paragraph mischaracterizes what it is for *a* and *b* together to ground a relation. It might be argued: For *a* and *b* together to ground a relation, R, is just for *a* to be a partial ground of R and for *b* to be a partial ground of R. *a* can stand in a partial grounding relation to R and so can *b* without it being the case that R is grounded in relations in a circular fashion or in a

way that ineliminably appeals to relations. *a* partially grounds R and *b* partially grounds R, and because *a*'s partial grounding of R is not dependent on *b* (*a* acts on its own, as it were), it is not the case that R itself is dependent on *a* and *b* *as well as* some relation between *a* and *b*. Rather, R depends simply on *a* and *b* or, as one might put it in order to make clear the absence of a relation as among the grounds of R: R is grounded simply in *a*, *b*. By means of this counterargument, one might think that pants are, after all, legitimate.

However, this strategy won't avoid the result that the relation cannot legitimately be grounded in *a* and *b* together. Consider the claim – implicit in this objection – that in order for R (a relation between *a* and *b*) to hold, *a* must partially ground R. This claim is simply a more specific version of (**2). (**2) says, in effect, that in order for a relation to hold it must be grounded in things. The claim I have just invoked makes the more specific point that in order for a relation between *a* and *b* to hold, the relation must be partially grounded in *a* (and also partially grounded in *b*). Call this relation of partial grounding (between *a* and R) R′. So R holds in part because R′ holds. Why does R′, the relation of partial grounding between *a* and R, hold? There's a relation, R′, of partial grounding between *a* and R only because *a* coexists with *b*. Call the relation of coexistence R″. Were it not for R″, the coexistence of *a* and *b*, *a* wouldn't be able to partially ground R and thus, were it not for R″, R′ – the relation of partial grounding between a and R – wouldn't hold at all. So R exists in part because of R′ which exists in part because of R″. Now in virtue of what do *a* and *b* coexist, i.e. in virtue of what does the relation, R″, of coexistence hold? Just as R′ obtains in part because *a* and *b* coexist, so too R″ obtains because *a* and *b* coexist. This is because R″ obtains in part because *a* partially grounds R″. But, *a* partially grounds R″ in virtue of *a*'s coexistence with *b* – it's in part because *a* coexists with *b* that *a* is able to partially ground R″. Without the coexistence of *a* and *b*, *a* couldn't partially ground R″. Thus, R″ obtains in part because *a* partially grounds R″ and *a* partially grounds R″ in part because *a* and *b* coexist. But the coexistence of *a* and *b* just is R″. So R″ holds in part because R″ holds. That is, *a* and *b* coexist in part because *a* and *b* coexist. More fully: the coexistence of *a* and *b* depends on the partial grounding of this coexistence by *a*, and the partial grounding depends on the coexistence of *a* and *b*. And so the coexistence depends on the coexistence. And here we reach a circular explanation of a relation. This circular explanation of R″ undermines the explanation of our original relation R itself. R obtains in part because of R′ which obtains in part because of R″ (the relation of coexistence), and R″ obtains in part because

of R″ itself. Since R″ is not properly explained, neither is R which is explained in part in terms of R″. But if R is not properly explained, then it seems that R is not properly grounded in objects and so (**2) would be violated.

Thus we can see again that if we allow pants, if we allow R to be partially grounded in *a* and partially grounded in *b*, then R must be ultimately ungrounded. This result violates (**2), and thus we can see why Leibniz might reject pants and – precisely because (**2) is plausible – not only Leibniz but also we have reason to reject pants. Thus:

(**3) The relation between *x* and *y* cannot be a state of *x* and *y* together.

There are strong indications that Leibniz relies on this kind of argument for rejecting pants when he voices concern about an infinite regress of relations. First, consider an unpublished passage quoted by Mugnai in which Leibniz says that if relations were real, they would be simultaneously in two subjects and they – the relations – "would go into infinity."[9] Leibniz seems to be worried, as Mugnai puts it, that "if we admit that relations are real entities, we have to admit that so also are relations of relations, and so on, accepting an unjustifiable proliferation of entities which are all equally real" (p. 18). The concern here is about precisely the kind of infinite regress that I have said relations as pants would lead to.

Here is another such passage:

> It is not surprising that the number of all numbers, all possibilities, all relations or reflections are not distinctly understood; for they are imaginary and have nothing that corresponds to them in reality. For example, suppose that there is a relation between *a* and *b*, and that that relation is called *c*; and let a new relation be considered between *a* and *c*, and let that relation be called *d*, and so on to infinity. It does not seem that any one may say that all those relations are true and real ideas. Perhaps only those things are purely intelligible which can be produced; that is, which have been or will be produced. ("Notes on Metaphysics," December 1676, A VI 3, pp. 399–400; DSR, p. 115)[10]

Again, in rejecting the reality of relations Leibniz seems to be worried about an infinite regress of relations.

[9] "*Si relations essent entia in rebus ipsis realia aliter quam per conceptionem, forent accidentia simul in duobus subiectis, nam relation pari iure in utroque est; relations praeterea irent in infinitum.*" Cited in Mugnai 1992, p. 18, n9.

[10] I am indebted to Tom Feeney here. This passage is also cited in this connection in Mugnai forthcoming.

Thus the reason I gave earlier for denying pants, a reason based on Leibniz's own view that relations must be grounded, would certainly appeal to Leibniz. It is worth noting that the above argument for the denial of pants is in the spirit of F. H. Bradley's famous regress argument concerning relations (*Appearance and Reality*, Book 1, Chapters 2 and 3). Bradley, like Leibniz (and Spinoza), is a fan of the plausible grounding principle (**2) and, indeed, of the PSR.[11] However, as we'll see, this reason for denying pants leads to a kind of monism that Bradley embraces (and Spinoza too), and that Leibniz for much of his life struggled against.

Finally, let's turn to Leibniz's first step, i.e. his claim that

(**4) The relation between *x* and *y* cannot be a state of *x* in particular (as opposed to *y*) or a state of *y* in particular (as opposed to *x*).

As we saw, this claim seems to be at work in the compact passage from the correspondence with Des Bosses.[12] And, as you can already see by my having just slapped asterisks on this claim, I regard this claim as plausible and, indeed, as a plausible application of the PSR. The relation between *x* and *y* is beholden to *x* and to *y*, dependent on *x* and on *y*. And so it would seem arbitrary, inexplicable, and indeed just plain unfair for *x* to get to be the subject of the relation between *x* and *y*, while *y* just sits around (and similarly if we located this relation in *y* exclusively).

Here's another way to make this point: if the relation depends on both *x* and *y*, but is a state of only one, there must be something to statehood over and above dependence. But what would that something be? There seems to be no way to articulate the difference other than to say unilluminatingly: statehood is the special kind of dependence that is statehood. There would, then, be two kinds of dependence, but no illuminating way to explain the difference between them. This difference would thus be a brute fact. It would also then be a brute fact that there's any state at all in this case over and above mere dependence, and so, a fortiori, it would be a brute fact that there is a certain state located here and not there.[13]

[11] This argument is also in the spirit of certain medieval arguments against the reality of relations, arguments to be found in Henry of Harclay and in William of Ockham. See Henninger 1989, pp. 110–12, 121–2. For more on the connection between Bradley and Leibniz, see Mugnai manuscript. For the PSR as the driving force behind Bradley's regress, see van Inwagen 2008, p. 45, and Russell 1910, p. 374.

[12] It's also at work in Leibniz's claim that "a relation is with equal right in both [subjects]." This passage is quoted in Mugnai 1992, p. 18, n9, and is, indeed, the clause immediately before Leibniz's complaint, mentioned earlier, that real relations would go into infinity.

[13] The reasoning here is closely related to what can be seen as one of the greatest hits of rationalism: Leibniz's argument against the absoluteness of space (especially in the correspondence with Clarke).

Recall where we left things. Leibniz holds the PISP, i.e. the view that each state of a thing is a consequence of the nature of that thing alone, but it is not at all clear how Leibniz would motivate that view. I will now argue that Leibniz's first two steps in his argument concerning the reality of relations go a long way toward justifying the PISP.

For the purposes of a reductio, let's say that the PISP is false and, in particular, that *x* has a feature F or that *x* is in a state of being F and that this state is due in part to something other than *x* (and its nature), say *y*. In this case, there is a relation of dependence between *x* and *y*. In order for this case to be a counterexample to the PISP, this relation of dependence must be real: the PISP is compatible with there being merely ideal relations of dependence between substances, but not with real relations of dependence. Since the relation is to be real, what is it in? Applying the reasoning in the discussion of relations in general, we can see that the relation between *x* and *y* cannot be a state of one of these substances to the exclusion of the other. (This is Leibniz's first move.) Nor can the relation be a state of both of the substances together. (This is the second move, the denial of pants.) Thus the relation of dependence between *x* and *y* – if real – has no legitimate ground.

Because the purported counterexample to the PISP – i.e. a case in which *x*'s state of being F is due to a distinct substance *y* – entails that there is an ungrounded relation between *x* and *y*, and because Leibniz's rationalism dictates that there are no ungrounded relations, it follows that the purported counterexample to the PISP is illegitimate. In other words, there is no case in which *x* has a feature that is due to some other substance. Thus all of *x*'s features must be due to *x* alone, and this result is basically the PISP.

In brief, the argument is that features of a substance that are due to some other substance presuppose unintelligible relations of dependence, and so there cannot be features of a substance that are due to other substances. To reach this radical conclusion, all Leibniz needs are his first two rationalist moves concerning relations which can be seen as stemming, in part, from the general claim, (**2), that relations must be grounded. If you want to reject Leibniz's PISP (and not many people don't), then you must find a way to reject one or both of Leibniz's first two moves both of which are, as I have argued, plausible, and which

Just as God cannot arbitrarily locate an extended object in one location rather than another in absolute space, so too a relation cannot be arbitrarily grounded or "located" in one relatum rather than another.

reflect the plausible general claim, (**2), concerning the grounding of relations. In light of this defense of the PISP, I am prepared to place – somewhat tentatively – asterisks on the PISP:

** If *x* is F, then its being F must be due to, explained by, *x*'s nature alone.

This way of defending the PISP helps us to see that Leibniz is committed to a general assimilation of dependence and statehood and that Leibniz has good grounds for being so committed; in other words, there are good reasons to hold that a state depends on a substance, *x*, if and only if that state is a state of *x*. That is, a certain state of being F depends on a substance if and only if that state is a state of that substance and that substance is therefore F. (See especially *Discourse on Metaphysics* §14, quoted earlier.) Let's look at both halves of this biconditional. Obviously, if something, S, is a state of *x*, then S depends on *x*. As we have just seen, the converse also seems to be true: if a state S depends on a substance *x*, then S is a state of *x*. I will refer to this coextensiveness simply as the assimilation of statehood and dependence.

One of the breathtaking things about Leibniz's PISP is that with it he gives us a well-motivated account of statehood: statehood is nothing more than dependence. Or, at least this is what Leibniz and the rest of us are committed to by (**2) and by Leibniz's plausible first two moves regarding relations. In Leibniz's case, this commitment stems from his commitment to the PSR which undergirds this line of thought. But we will see that he quickly violates his own commitment here.

5.2 REAL RELATIONS AND A RATIONALIST DILEMMA

To begin to see such violations, let's turn to a kind of relation that Leibniz labels as not real – i.e. causal relations. Leibniz denies that there are any real causal relations between distinct substances – or at least between distinct finite substances. As we will see soon, the infinite substance generates important and problematic exceptions. If substance *x* causally interacts with substance *y*, then we may ask: what grounds this causal relation? The relation cannot be a state of *x* exclusively or of *y* exclusively (this is the first Leibnizian move) nor can it be a state of the two substances together (this is the second Leibnizian move). Leibniz concludes that causal relations between distinct (finite) substances are not real. The non-reality of causal relations between finite substances is, of course, at the heart of Leibniz's pre-established harmony (*Monadology* §78; NE, p. 440).

One relation in this area will be particularly important for my argument, i.e. the relation of being passive. If *y* causes a change in *x*, then *x* stands in the relation of being passive, being acted on. But, for Leibniz, this passivity proves to be elusive: it cannot legitimately be a state of any substance. Notice that although *x* seems to be acted on, the passivity cannot simply be a state of *x*. This is because the passivity of *x*, i.e. *x*'s being acted on, is due also to *y*. Given Leibniz's assimilation of statehood and dependence (i.e. given the PISP), it follows that this state is also a state of *y*. But the passivity can in no way be a state of *y* because, as we've stipulated, *y* is active here and not passive. We can see then that, for Leibniz, nothing can legitimately ground the state of being passive in this case. *x* cannot serve as the complete ground of the passivity because the passivity is not due to *x* alone. And *y* cannot, in this case, be passive at all because *y* is the cause and not the effect.

So the passivity in a case of an alleged causal relation between *x* and *y* can, at best, be partially grounded (in *x* itself) and thus would be a brute fact. One finite substance cannot genuinely be passive in relation to another in Leibniz's system, and Leibniz can be seen as rejecting real intersubstantial finite causation for this reason. Indeed, as we will now see, Leibniz also seems committed to the view that nothing can be genuinely passive in relation to any other thing. And this is where Leibniz's problems begin.

This problem arises most explicitly in the case of the causal relation that is creation. God creates finite substances that are in some way distinct from himself (see, e.g., *Theodicy* §395, *Monadology* §55, "On the Ultimate Origination of Things" in Ger VII, pp. 302–8; AG, pp. 149–55; L, pp. 486–91). This causal relation is real and not merely ideal. If there were no genuine causal relations between God and finite substances, then what can account for the existence of finite substances? Surely, Leibniz would stress, finite substances cannot account for their own existence. So the existence of the finite substances would be a brute fact if God does not really do the work of causing them to exist. And, of course, Leibniz rejects brute facts.

But by allowing these real causal relations, Leibniz still gets stuck with brute facts, as we can see by applying the Leibnizian reasoning we have outlined concerning relations in general to the specific case of creation. Let's ask what are by now our usual litany of questions: what substance is the ground of the real causal relation between God and, say, substance *x*? The relation is, at best, partially grounded in *x*, but it cannot be fully grounded in *x* because this relation is due to God as well. Nor can the

relation be fully grounded in God's nature for the relation is in part a function of the nature of *x*. As in the other cases, it would seem unfair, arbitrary and a brute fact to locate the relation in one only of the two substances. This is the first Leibnizian move. Further, the relation cannot be a state of both God and *x* together. To say that it is would be to regard two substances as having pants and, as we have seen, Leibniz's plausible, second move in the argument regarding the reality of relations is to reject pants.

So where can the causal relation – the causal relation of creation – between God and *x* be grounded if not in God or *x* separately or together? As we have seen, this relation cannot be grounded in a mind instead of being a real relation between the substances. And so there seems to be nowhere for Leibniz to turn in order to find the ground for the reality of the relation of creation. This real causal relation thus seems to be – on Leibniz's own terms – a not-fully grounded, partially free-floating, brute fact, a violation of the plausible grounding principle (**2) and, indeed, of the PSR.

I will not, however, stress this problem concerning creation because the notion of creation is often thought to be fraught for Leibniz (and for anyone else). I want to turn instead to a much more insidious problem in this vein. This problem arises when we turn from relations between one substance and another and look instead within each substance. Here we find another relation that Leibniz regards as real, i.e. the relation between a single substance and its states. For Leibniz each substance, finite or not, causes its own states. These states are not caused by any other (finite) substances, and this causal relation is not ideal. Indeed, the reality of this kind of intrasubstantial causal relation is what grounds the merely apparent causal relations between one finite substance and another. To begin to see what the problem is with this (intrasubstantial) causal relation, just ask: what is this causal relation grounded in? In this case, it would, as before, seem arbitrary for the causal relation to be grounded in either the substance or its state to the exclusion of the other. Further it would seem problematic for the relation to be grounded in both the substance and its state together: pants internal to a substance would be as objectionable as (and just as prone to infinite regresses or circles as) pants that straddle two substances. Thus while we can go some distance toward grounding the relation by pointing to either the substance or its state, we cannot fully ground it in either, nor can we ground it in the two together. The intrasubstantial relation of dependence thus seems to be at best only partially and not fully intelligible.

We can see this problem perhaps even more clearly when we turn to the passivity a state exhibits in relation to the substance of which it is a state.

The state, call it S, is passive in relation to the substance – after all, the substance causes it. S itself thus has a state, the state of being passive, and so the passivity is grounded in state S, but is only partially grounded in S. The passivity of the state also depends, of course, on the substance itself: the state is passive because it is a state of that substance. Given the assimilation of statehood and dependence, the passivity in this case must itself be a state of the substance. That is, the substance itself is passive in this matter. But how can this be? In this matter, the substance is active and the state is passive. And so we cannot say that here the substance is – as the assimilation of statehood and dependence would lead us to say – in some way passive. Thus although we can go some distance toward grounding the reality of the state of passivity in S itself (and perhaps in other passive states), we cannot fully ground the passivity in S or in other states or in the substance itself. Thus passivity is not fully intelligible. Once again, we find that passivity cannot find a proper home. This is the elusiveness of passivity *within* each substance and not, as before, between God and finite substances.

Thus Leibniz seems to be committed to a real relation of passivity within finite substances, a relation that is not grounded properly and is thus a brute fact. Indeed, most, if not all, features of states of substances would be similarly unintelligible at least to some extent. Thus take the following feature of a state of a substance: its being a state. What would the state's state of being a state be a state of? The state's state of being a state cannot be fully intelligible in terms of the state of which it is a state. This is because the state's state of being a state is dependent on something else, i.e. on the substance in question. But the state of being a state cannot be a state of the substance because then the substance itself would be a state and that would be contradictory. Thus being a state is not fully intelligible as a state of the state nor can it be a state of the substance. Nothing, then, truly has the state of being a state. This is the elusiveness of statehood, and it shows that the state of being a state is ultimately unintelligible and not properly grounded, for Leibniz. Thus once again, there seems to be a pervasive brute fact in Leibniz that arises from Leibniz's own strategy – dictated by the plausible (**2) and ultimately by the PSR – of denying the reality of relations.

Leibniz thus faces a dilemma. (**2) leads to the conclusion that real relations between distinct things and, indeed, real relations between a thing and its states are ruled out. On this view, there can be no genuine multiplicity of objects that stand in relations of dependence and no

genuine states of objects that depend on those objects. Such multiplicity and such states are precluded by our assiduous application of (**2). Thus if Leibniz is committed to the real existence of a multiplicity of objects and to the existence of states of objects (and he certainly seems to be by his talk of creation and intrasubstantial causation), then he must give up the plausible claim that relations must be grounded in a thing or things. So Leibniz's dilemma is this: EITHER give up the claim that there is a multiplicity of objects and that there are states of objects OR give up the claim that relations are grounded.

Indeed, it is not just Leibniz who faces this dilemma, but any of us who is committed to the existence of a multiplicity of objects and to the existence of states of objects and also committed to the principle that relations must be grounded. The dilemma is particularly acute for Leibniz because to take the second horn of the dilemma – to deny that relations must be grounded – would be to deny the PSR. This is because the principle calling for the grounding of relations is an implication of the PSR. Thus at stake in this dilemma, for Leibniz, is the fate of the PSR itself, the cornerstone of his system. For Leibniz, the dilemma boils down to this: either deny multiplicity or deny the PSR. Since Leibniz is not willing to deny either of these things, the dilemma seems intractable for him.

But even for those of us not explicitly committed to the PSR, the dilemma is troubling, and that is because it seems so plausible to think both that there is a multiplicity of objects (etc.) and that relations must be grounded in something. So for those not explicitly committed to the PSR, the dilemma boils down to this: either deny multiplicity or deny that relations are grounded. Is there any way for Leibniz or us to get out of this dilemma? For guidance in this troubled time, let us turn to Spinoza, who faces this dilemma too.

5.3 DEGREES OF EXISTENCE AND A WAY OUT OF THE DILEMMA

Spinoza does not develop a theory of relations with as much sophistication and care as does Leibniz. But Spinoza would surely – guided as he is by the PSR – accept the grounding of relations (and states generally). Even more importantly, Spinoza is perhaps more explicit than is Leibniz on the assimilation of statehood and dependence. Spinoza's treatment of the relation of being in something (i.e. inhering in something), the relation of being conceived through something and the relation of being

caused by something as coextensive suggests strongly that Spinoza endorses the assimilation of statehood and dependence.[14]

Because of these shared rationalist commitments, Spinoza – like Leibniz – faces the problem of the intelligibility of certain intrasubstantial relations. The problem, for Spinoza, would be couched not in terms of states of substances, but rather in terms of states of modes of substance. Modes are literally in the substance, i.e. they are states of substance, i.e they are ways in which substance exists. Modes as states are dependent on substance, they are passive in relation to substance. How can this passivity of modes be understood? Just as we saw in the case of states of substances, the passivity of a mode cannot be understood as a state of the substance which the modes are in, for that substance, i.e. God, is in no way passive. The passivity of a mode also cannot be fully grounded only in the mode itself, for this feature of the mode is dependent not only on the mode, but also on something other than the mode itself, i.e. on the substance. Thus the passivity of the mode seems not to be adequately grounded, seems not to be fully unintelligible, seems to be a brute fact, just as passivity does in Leibniz's system. Similarly, given Spinoza's commitment to the PSR, he would find problematic the relations that come with any multiplicity of objects. Thus both Spinoza and Leibniz face the same dilemma: either reject a multiplicity of objects and states or reject the PSR. And, as before, the dilemma need not be put in terms of the PSR, but can be articulated in terms of the more plausible claim that relations must have some ground in the world. Thus, for Spinoza as for Leibniz as for us, the dilemma is this: either reject a multiplicity of objects and states or reject the claim that relations are grounded.

When faced with this dilemma which is in part a threat to the PSR itself, what does Spinoza, a good rationalist, do? We can see his response in two ways. One way of putting the Spinozistic response is this: "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." If you can't avoid the brute facts, then embrace them. The response (seen in this way) is to take the second horn of the dilemma: either reject multiplicity or reject the PSR. Alternatively, the Spinozistic response may also be portrayed this way: there is no multiplicity of objects and states. The response (seen in this way) is to embrace the first horn of the very same dilemma. Thus, Spinoza takes both horns of the very same dilemma. Like the great philosopher and baseball player, Yogi Berra, who said, "When you come to a fork in the

[14] See Della Rocca 2008a.

road, take it," when Spinoza comes to a fork in the road, he takes it. How is this possible? Allow me to demonstrate.

Let's say that Spinoza holds that existence is not an either–or matter, rather existence comes in degrees. Let's say also that Spinoza holds that intelligibility and unintelligibility also come in degrees. (We saw degrees of intelligibility in the case of intrasubstantial relations: the relation between a substance and its state is partially intelligible in terms of the substance and in terms of the state, but not fully intelligible in terms of either or both together.) Finally, let's say that Spinoza holds that things that exist to a lesser degree do so precisely to the extent that they are unintelligible. Thus, on this view, existence is coextensive with intelligibility. (In fact, on this view, existence would, I believe, be identical with intelligibility, but the claim of coextensiveness is all we need for our purposes.) Existence and intelligibility rise and fall together, and because intelligibility comes in degrees, so too does existence. On this view, then, to be is coextensive with being intelligible, and to be intelligible to some degree goes hand in hand with existing to some degree.

If we (or Spinoza) allow for degrees of existence in this way, then it seems natural to offer the following corollary of the PSR. As initially stated, the PSR is the principle that whatever exists has an explanation. But if things can exist only to some degree, and if existence goes along with intelligibility, then we would expect that those things would be unintelligible, inexplicable, to some degree as well. In this light, a proponent of the PSR who sees existence as equivalent to intelligibility should be willing to grant this corollary:

Things exist to the extent that those things are intelligible.

This principle allows that there may be, somehow, things that are unintelligible to some degree, but requires that these things do not fully exist. The principle would rule out not unintelligible things per se, but rather unintelligible things that exist to exactly the degree that fully intelligible things do. There would be a correspondingly modified version of (**2), the plausible claim that relations must be grounded. This corollary would be:

Relations exist to the extent that they are grounded.

The notion of degrees of existence – and thus the formulation of the corollary of the PSR and the corollary of (**2) – is unusual, at least from the point of view of contemporary philosophy, and it might be thought to be incoherent. I don't believe it is incoherent, though I do not have the

space here to address the puzzles that the notion of degrees of existence might be thought to raise.[15] Here I merely want to point out that, if Spinoza accepts the notion of degrees of existence and the corollary of the PSR, he can allow unintelligible things within his system, as long as those things do not fully exist. In this way, Spinoza could allow that passive things – to the extent that they are passive – are not intelligible and involve brute facts and do not exist. Spinoza can also allow relations between substance and modes as long as he also specifies that these unintelligible things, these passive things, do not fully exist. Similarly, Spinoza can allow that there is somehow a multiplicity of objects as long as he specifies that this multiplicity qua multiplicity is not fully intelligible and thus does not fully exist. This move would enable Spinoza to avoid the dilemma that Leibniz and the rest of us face. Yes, the PSR and the claim that relations are grounded lead to the view that passivity and multiplicity and relations as such are unintelligible, but the PSR with its corollary, also lets us incorporate unintelligibility within our philosophical system as long as passivity and multiplicity and relations are given the lesser ontological status they so richly deserve, i.e. the lesser status of existing only to some degree. So, in a way, Spinoza takes the second horn of the dilemma: he denies the PSR by allowing for violations of it. But these violations do not fully exist and so they are not in conflict with the modified PSR which allows for degrees of intelligibility and degrees of existence. At the same time, Spinoza takes the first horn of the dilemma: he denies that there is a multiplicity of states and relations. But this denial is qualified: while there is no multiplicity, no states, and no relations that fully exist, there can be such things as long as they exist to a lesser degree. It is by accepting the notion of degrees of existence and thus by accepting the modified PSR (and the modified grounding principle concerning relations) that Spinoza is able, as Yogi Berra recommends, to take the fork in the road. Spinoza can thus avoid the unpleasant choice between denying multiplicity and denying the PSR (or denying the grounding principle concerning relations). Or, to put the point another way: without accepting the notion of degrees of existence, Spinoza would be faced with a very unpleasant choice indeed, a choice between rejecting multiplicity and rejecting the PSR (and the plausible grounding principle). And if we too accept multiplicity and accept (at least) the plausible grounding principle concerning relations – and most of us do – then we too are required to accept the notion of degrees of existence.

[15] I take up one such puzzle – raised by David Lewis – in Della Rocca 2008b, p. 269.

Does Spinoza hold this view of existence? He certainly seems to. The heart of this view is the equivalence of existence and intelligibility: it is this equivalence that makes it natural, as I argued, to embrace the corollary of the PSR. And we do find that Spinoza embraces the equivalence of existence and intelligibility and does so because of the PSR itself. Spinoza explicitly identifies God's essence and God's existence in 1p20. As I have argued elsewhere, since God's essence is just God's being conceived through itself (1def3, 1def6), God's existence for Spinoza is just God's conceivability, i.e. God's being intelligible through itself. Further, Spinoza's naturalism and the PSR dictate that just as God's existence is God's conceivability, so too the existence of things in general is just their conceivability or intelligibility: to think otherwise would be to see God and other things as playing by different rules.[16]

Given the equivalence of existence and intelligibility, and given also Spinoza's commitment to the view – stemming from the Leibnizian reflections concerning the reality of relations – that passivity and multiplicity and relations are not fully intelligible, Spinoza is committed to the view that passivity and multiplicity and relations do not fully exist.

Thus Spinoza's acceptance of the coextensiveness of existence and intelligibility and his corresponding commitment to degrees of existence is at least part of what enables Spinoza to avoid the Leibnizian dilemma that we all face. And, as I've suggested, if we know what's good for us, we too will accept the notion of degrees of existence and thus avoid the dilemma. It might seem as though Leibniz can make a similar move. After all, Leibniz does seem to accept that passive things have a lesser ontological status than active things (see, e.g., *Monadology* §41), and perhaps this would lead him to allow that there may be some unintelligible things (that exist only to some degree). Finally, perhaps this would lead him to accept the corollary of the PSR. In this way, Leibniz could escape the Leibnizian dilemma.

5.4 MOSES AND MONISM

But matters are not so simple. There is more – and necessarily there is more – to the Spinozistic strategy than the acceptance of degrees of existence. For Spinoza, although unintelligible things do exist to some degree, the perspective on the world according to which there are (to some degree) brute facts is not the best or most accurate one. If the PSR is true,

[16] See Della Rocca 2008a, p. 36, and Della Rocca 2003, pp. 82–8.

then the world is fully intelligible and there must be a perspective on the world from which there are no brute facts. Further, if the PSR is true, this perspective must be fully accurate. But if brute facts exist even to some degree, then it seems that the PSR is just false. There would be no true view of the world according to which there are no brute facts. To avoid this worry, there must be a way to "cash in" the brute facts that exist only to some degree and redeem them so that they find their place in a fully intelligible reality.

How is this possible?

Notice first that there will be brute facts as long as there is passivity or multiplicity or relations, as long as there are individual finite things that limit one another. So in this light consider two ways to view the world. First, we can see the world as full of more or less separate things which have the relations of activity and passivity that finite things enter into. Because these things are passive, they don't exist, at least insofar as they are passive, and this passivity is a brute fact, one that doesn't fully exist.

Now consider the world as consisting of only one thing. On this view, we quantify over only one thing (one substance, if you will). On this view, there are no individual finite things, rather there is only the active world, the active substance. Finally and importantly, on this view, there is no passivity and no distinct things to be related, and so there is none of the unintelligibility, none of the brute facts that passivity and relations inevitably bring. There is only the active substance.

Next compare these two ways of viewing the world. Given the PSR, the second way must be more accurate, more true, because only it is a view according to which the world is fully intelligible, does not contain brute facts, and does not contain passivity. The first point of view is not completely illusory, it captures reality to some degree and the objects recognized on this view exist to some degree. But whatever reality is captured by this first point of view is also captured by the second point of view which recognizes only one object. The finite, passive individuals drop out as we shift perspectives in this way, but all that is really lost in the transition is the passivity, the unintelligibility, the brute facts. And, in light of the PSR, to lose such things is to lose nothing at all. The passive, finite individuals, insofar as they are passive, are nothing, no thing.

Thus the PSR may dictate a view of relations according to which certain things exist only to some degree and are intelligible only to some degree. But, if one simply remains with these somewhat unintelligible things, one will be unable to do justice to the PSR which requires that the most accurate perspective on the world is one on which there are no brute facts

at all. It is for that reason that a proponent of the PSR who wants to avoid the Leibnizian dilemma must advance the view that there are ultimately no finite, determinate, passive things, rather what there really is is only one thing. Thus, if one accepts the PSR, then, to avoid the dilemma, the unintelligibility that comes with finite individuality must be cashed in for the full intelligibility and reality of the one active substance.

This is, I believe, the route Spinoza takes. First, note that he endorses the view that individuals, insofar as they are passive, are nothing. We can see Spinoza as getting at this point in his famous dictum "determination is negation" (*determinatio negatio est*, Letter 50). And we can see him discussing the shift in perspective in his letter on the infinite (Letter 12). Finite individuals are seen as real from a limited, less accurate perspective and drop out when the shift is made to a more accurate, monistic perspective:

> if we attend to quantity as it is in the imagination, which is what we do most often and most easily, we find it to be divisible, finite, composed of parts, and one of many. But if we attend to it as it is in the intellect, and perceive the thing as it is in itself, which is very difficult, then we find it to be infinite, indivisible and unique. (Geb IV, p. 56)

I think we can see Spinoza's views on privation in a similar light. From the perspective according to which the world consists of more or less separate, unintelligible things, privations seem real (just as passivity does). But from the absolute, monistic perspective, the privations drop out (just as passivity does). As Spinoza puts the point, a certain "privation can be said only in relation to our intellect, not in relation to God's" (Letter 19, Geb IV, p. 92).

For Spinoza, finite things qua finite do not exist, but what is real about finite objects is captured more perfectly from the divine perspective, according to which only the active God exists. Thus we can see that the corollary of the PSR that Spinoza may be willing to endorse is acceptable only if he also holds that, instead of fully existent finite things, there is only one substance. On this view there can fully exist no relations between distinct things, on this view there can fully exist no creation by God of things distinct from God, and on this view monism is true.

So although Spinoza does not directly take on the dilemma that emerges from Leibniz's rationalist account of relations, I think Spinoza does see clearly that for the PSR to be true, one must quantify over only the one substance, reject the notion of creation, and view finite and passive things as, to some extent, unreal.

And here we can see more clearly why Leibniz cannot adopt Spinoza's way out of the dilemma, for Leibniz is, of course, unlike Spinoza, wedded to creation and to the denial of monism. Spinoza is thus better able than Leibniz to deal with the dilemma and the brute facts that relations bring with them. And the tragic irony is that despite all his wonderful work in delivering us from confusion about relations and getting us to appreciate the rationalist underpinnings of the theory of relations, Leibniz is unable to resolve the dilemma he so insightfully helps us to see. Like Moses, Leibniz can lead his followers to the promised land – in this case, the rationalist promised land – but he cannot himself enter it.

But can we enter the promised land and should we? Certainly if we – like Spinoza – accept the PSR, then, given the Leibnizian arguments concerning relations, we should enter the promised land of monism. But can we get to the promised land without invoking something as strong as the PSR? Yes, I believe that all we need to invoke is the plausible claim that relations must be grounded. Given this relatively uncontroversial claim, it follows – as we have seen – that relations are not fully real and that the only thing that fully exists is the one world. Of course, this relatively uncontroversial claim and the PSR itself are in need of further scrutiny before we can confidently accept the results advanced in this chapter.[17] But, in the meantime, we emerge from this historical/non-historical investigation of relations and violations of the PSR not only with a better understanding of Leibniz's and Spinoza's rationalist systems but also with at least the outlines of a strong case for monism. And just as this argument for monism seeks to elide the apparent differences among objects, so too the example of this chapter seeks to elide the apparent differences between historical and non-historical approaches to philosophy.[18]

[17] In Della Rocca forthcoming, I explore in a rationalist spirit some problems for the rationalist position developed here.

[18] Versions of this chapter were presented at a faculty discussion at Yale, at the Society for Early Modern Philosophy at Yale (SEMPY), at the Leibniz/Spinoza conference at Princeton in September 2007, at colloquia of the philosophy departments at Michigan State University (the McCracken Lecture), Bloomsburg University, the University of South Carolina, and Northern Illinois University, at an early modern workshop at Harvard, a conference at the University of Washington, and at the Second International Conference of the European Society for Early Modern Philosophy in Berlin in February 2010. I would like to thank the many people at these events for their warm reactions and helpful comments. I am especially grateful for helpful discussions and correspondence with Gaurav Vazirani, Leslie Wolf, Sung-il Han, Omri Boehm, Julia von Bodelschwingh, John Grey, Tomis Kapitan, Tom Feeney, Kelley Schiffman, Pedro Stoichita, Anja Jauernig, Ken Winkler, Sukjae Lee, Stephan Schmid, Massimo Mugnai, Mark Kulstad, Dan Garber, Dennis Deschene, Selim Berker, and Brian Schnieder.