

“The Specter of Spinozism”

Steven Nadler

1. “In nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way.” (Spinoza, *Ethics*, Ip29)
“Things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced.” (Spinoza, *Ethics*, Ip33)
2. “God acts by general volitions when he acts in consequence of general laws that he has established ... I say, on the other hand, that God acts by particular volitions when the efficacy of his will is not determined by some general law to produce some effect” (Malebranche, *Traité de la Nature et de la Grace*, Premier Elucidation, §§1-2: OC V.147-48).
3.
 - a. Laws governing the communication of motion between bodies.
 - b. Laws governing the union between mind and body.
 - c. Laws governing the union of the soul with God.
 - d. Laws that provide angels and demons with the power to move bodies.
 - e. Laws of grace.
4. “When the glory that he derives from the perfection of his work counterbalances that which he receives from the uniformity of his conduct. He has these serious reasons when what he owes to his immutability is equal to or of less consideration than what he owes to another one of his attributes in particular” (Malebranche, *Traité de la Nature et de la Grace*, XII.12)
“... when he acts as much or more according to his nature by departing from the general laws he has prescribed for himself than by following them. For God always acts according to what he is. He inviolably follows the immutable order of his own perfections.” (Malebranche, *Traité de la Nature et de la Grace* XII.12)
5. “Did he [Malebranche] really think that this was an expression perfectly conforming to the idea of the perfect being, to say of God that He consults His wisdom? One consults only when one is in doubt; and one consults about how to accomplish one’s desires only when there may be some difficulty in achieving what one desires. Neither the one nor the other can be said about the perfect being, whose knowledge is infinite and whose will is all-powerful.” (Arnauld, *Réflexions*, OA XXXIX.449)
6. “By following Malebranche in the manner in which he conceives God, I do not see how He can be indifferent to creating or not creating something outside Himself, if He was not indifferent to choosing among several works and among several ways of producing them. For God . . . , according to [Malebranche], having consulted His wisdom, is necessarily determined to produce the work that it [wisdom] has shown him to be the most perfect, and to choose the means that it has shown Him also to be the most worthy of Him.” (Arnauld, *Réflexions*, OA XXXIX.600)

7. "The only thing free, with respect to God, is to have wanted to create something. But everything else is the result of a more than Stoic fatalism, with the exception of miracles, which He has done by particular volitions. But one does not see how even miracles can be excepted. For He only performs them, according to the author [Malebranche], when order demands it." (Arnauld, *Réflexions*, OA XXXIX.599)

8. "Supposing that God acts, [then] it must be the case that He produces whatever is the most perfect among possible beings; order invincibly so determines Him." (Fénelon, *Réfutation*, 329)

9. "If the least perfect work is impossible, it is false that God chose from among many possible designs the most perfect to do his work. God could see as possible only that which was truly so. The only thing possible is that which immutable and necessary order permits ... What is less perfect has no objective possibility ... If [God] could do only what is the most perfect, the world taken as whole is not only the most perfect work, but it is the only work that God could produce. ... This infinity of plans reduces to a single one, since one cannot choose among impossible plans." (Fénelon, *Réfutation*, 341-2)