

Free Will and the Freedom of the Sage in Leibniz and the Stoics

I.

Leibniz follows the ancient Socratic tradition according to which only the virtuous person is truly free. According to this tradition, the virtuous, wise person—the sage—is free in the sense of being self-sufficient: acting according to reason without being led astray by passions, his aims are in line with what he can achieve through his own powers. This view finds a modern expression in Rousseau’s famous claim that “to be governed by appetite alone is slavery, while obedience to the law which we have prescribed to ourselves is freedom,” namely “moral freedom, which alone makes man truly the master of himself.”¹ Christian Wolff, working in the Leibnizian tradition, offers the similar claim that the wise, virtuous man is a free man since he is a “law unto himself.”² And Kant shows a clear debt to this tradition when he suggests that whoever follows the command of reason attains “moral freedom.”³ Indeed, Kant’s term “autonomy,” *i.e.*, (moral) self-legislation, suggests a more concrete connection with this tradition:⁴ it recalls not only the claims of Rousseau and Wolff just mentioned, but also the ancient use of the term “*autonomos*” (for example by Epictetus) to describe the independence achieved by the sage.⁵

Kant’s version of this view is subject to a notorious objection: if the virtuous alone are free, then how are we responsible for moral evil?⁶ And this raises a question not only about Leibniz’s view, but about the whole tradition that attributes freedom to the sage: if the sage alone is free, then how can the rest of us be considered responsible for our actions?

II.

For the Stoics, the self-sufficiency (*autotelês*, *autarkês*) or freedom (*eleutheria*) achieved through virtue is not a freedom from causal determinism or fate: far from being exempt from fate, the sage is precisely the one who accepts fate and is not troubled by irrational passions or affects rebelling against the inevitability of events.⁷ Among modern philosophers, this kind of view is most forcefully stated by Spinoza, who presents the exemplar of the free man as the man who, by regarding everything as necessary, overcomes the servitude of his affects and “lives by reason alone.”⁸ Spinoza’s free man does not thereby have a “free will,” that is, a will free from causal necessity: Spinoza denies free will to the freest of men and even to God.⁹

This is not to say that those in the Stoic tradition neglected to address concerns about moral accountability. Such concerns are especially relevant to Stoicism on account of its adherence to a deterministic cosmology. And indeed, even in antiquity the charge was leveled against the Stoics that their cosmology implied that humans cannot be held accountable for their actions. Plutarch gives voice to this concern: “Chrysippus grants an unrestricted licence for vice when he treats it as not only the product of necessity or in accordance with fate, but also as in accordance with god’s reason and with the best nature.”¹⁰ For their part, the Stoics sought to avoid this unwanted consequence without abandoning their characteristic determinism: they argued that our actions or choices “happen because of us” (*par’ hêmas gignesthai*) or are “dependent on us” (*eph’ hêmin* or *in nostra potestate*) in a way that preserves moral accountability without undermining causal determinism.¹¹ This accountability is not based on freedom (*eleutheria*), but rather on our spontaneity or self-command (*autexousia*).¹²

The important point to see here is that, for the Stoics, the question whether our character or our actions “depend on us” is quite distinct from the question whether we have the freedom of a sage. The ordinary person who lives according to “passions” is no less responsible for his character and actions than the sage: a passion is a false desire containing an assent to the impression that something is good (*e.g.*, wealth and honor) or bad (*e.g.*, death) when it is in fact neither good nor bad but rather “indifferent.” This assent is imputed to the ordinary person since it issues from his own mind; his assent is the result of his own nature, not result of coercion.¹³ The freedom of the sage does not consist in an increased accountability for such assent or its resultant actions—as if only the sage’s assents lacked external coercion. His freedom consists rather in the noble condition of liberality achieved *as a result* of assenting only to what is truly good or good by nature: the sage is free in the sense of being “fearless, magnanimous, and not humbled.”¹⁴

To understand the nature of this freedom achieved by assenting only to what is good by nature, it is helpful to remember that the Greek word that the Stoics use for “freedom” (*eleutheria*) has a strong political connotation; it is contrasted with tyranny and especially with slavery (*douleia*).¹⁵ The view that only the sage is truly free is thus of a piece with the Socratic/Platonic view that only the philosopher is a ruler in the authoritative sense. In this vein, Epictetus remarks: “In every subject the man who possesses a skill must necessarily be superior to the man who lacks it. So in general, the man who possesses knowledge of how to live, how can he be anything other than the master?”¹⁶ Thus Diogenes Laertius reports that Zeno of Citium depicted “only the virtuous people in his *Republic* as citizens and friends, relations, and free [*eleutherous*],” while “all who are not virtuous are foes, enemies, slaves, and estranged from one another”¹⁷ And he

reports further that the Stoics claim that in addition to being free, “the wise are also kings, since kingship is rule that is answerable to no one.”¹⁸

To describe the sage as free in this sense would be to portray him as being without the passions whose satisfaction would depend on circumstances beyond his control. This is contrasted with the ordinary person possessed by passions, who is in a condition of slavery: just as a slave’s desires are satisfied only at the whim of the tyrant or master, so the desires of the person with passions are satisfied only by chance or at the whim of other human beings.¹⁹ If, for example, I love honor as something good and fear death as something bad, I will be dependent on the esteem of others and will act according to other people’s wishes in order to win their favor and avoid violence at their hands. And since my desires will be directed in this way at what I cannot ultimately control, I can never be happy. But, again, this lack of power to attain what matters most to me does not at all diminish my accountability for assenting to the impressions that honor is good and that death is bad, the assents that make me obsequious and fearful. Epictetus is characteristically clear on this point:

And can anyone compel you to desire what you do not wish?—‘No one. [...] But when I desire something, someone can hinder me from getting what I desire.’ If you desire something that is your own and not subject to hindrance how will he hinder you?—‘In no way.’ [...] You are handing yourself over to be a slave and putting your head under the yoke if you admire anything that is not your own and hunger for anything that is subject to others and mortal.²⁰

In other words, it is my own continuing assent to these impressions that entangles me in relations of dependence on things and other people. Relations of

dependence do not coerce me to value wealth and esteem; my valuing of wealth and esteem is rather the root of these relations of dependence. The sage, by contrast, desires nothing that would make his success and happiness limited by chance or the whim of other people, and he can therefore never be defeated by external occurrences or manipulated or humbled by others: “That man is free who lives as he wishes; who can be neither compelled, nor hindered, nor constrained; whose impulses are unimpeded, who attains his desires and does not fall into what he wants to avoid.”²¹ Freedom (*eleutheria*) is thus what distinguishes the sage from the ordinary person.²² Wisdom imparts a dignity to the sage analogous to, but far greater than, the dignity of the free citizen in control of his own destiny.

III.

The Stoics were able to keep questions of accountability distinct from questions of the freedom of the sage by employing an unambiguous vocabulary for each area of discussion.²³ But this option was not easily available to those modern philosophers who were drawn to the moral ideal of the Stoic sage: the Latin term for the freedom of the sage, *libertas*, had been well-established by the modern period as a term indicating a precondition of moral accountability.²⁴ Therefore, to deny freedom (*libertas*) to the will would have aroused the suspicion that one was exculpating sinners of their crimes. This was not a problem for someone like Spinoza, who was not concerned with the problems of moral accountability associated with the free will tradition. He was happy to reserve the term “freedom” for the independence achieved by the sage, and he even criticized the Stoics themselves for suggesting that the passions “depend entirely on our will.”²⁵

Like Spinoza before him, Leibniz endorsed an account of what we might call the freedom of the sage.²⁶ But unlike Spinoza, Leibniz took the problems of the

free will tradition very seriously. Indeed, the problem of our accountability for sin occupied a central place in Leibniz's philosophizing from the earliest stages of his career.

When the young Leibniz confronts the problem of accountability for sin, one of his central concerns is to counter the libertarian solution offered by de Molina and his followers. He objects to the Molinists' presupposition of an *indifferentia pura*—an ability “to will this or that without some cause”—as incompatible with God's omniscience and omnipotence: like the rest of created nature, acts of willing must have sufficiently determining causes. In an essay dated to 1670-71, Leibniz offers an claims that this necessitation of the will is compatible with accountability for sin since the will is determined by “the apparent goodness” of things: whatever the human being does he does of necessity, but he still “can do what he wills and will what he finds good.”²⁷ This strategy mirrors the Stoic strategy for making room for moral accountability within a deterministic universe.

Leibniz soon rejects the implication of this early account that the freedom of the will is compatible with the necessity of all created nature. In an essay dated to 1677-80, Leibniz objects to the necessitarianism of the “sect of new Stoics.”²⁸ But of course this does not mean that he defects to the Molinist view that the contingency required for freedom presupposes a local, psychological “indifference” regarding possible objects of the will.²⁹ He appeals instead to the contingency of *all* of created nature. All of created nature is contingent since other worlds are intrinsically possible in the sense that they are not logically contradictory. Since it is logically possible that the sinner could have instead chosen the path of virtue, his choice was contingent. This is true even though it is impossible for him to have chosen otherwise given that *this* is the world that was actually created (and even though God Himself is determined to choose *this* world). In short, the choice of the sinner is hypothetically, but not logically or

absolutely necessary.³⁰ The causality of the human will is merely a particular case of such contingency. The appeal to such universal contingency vindicates his own earlier account of freedom: he can now say that although the will is moved by the representation of the best with complete certainty, the reasons offered by the intellect (its representations of what is good) merely “incline” the will without “necessitating” it:

God determines our will to choose what seems better, without, however, necessitating it. For, absolutely speaking, the will is in a state of indifference, as opposed to one of necessity, and it has the power to do otherwise or even to suspend its action completely; these two alternatives are possible and remain so.³¹

With this account, Leibniz preserves the contingency required for freedom without undermining the universal applicability of the principle of sufficient reason.

Since this contingency is universal, the question remains how human agency differs from the rest of nature. Leibniz’s answer to this question is essentially continuous with his earlier position that a free agent is one that “can do what he wills and will what he finds good”: the intellect’s perceptions of what is best depend not only on the perceived objects, but also on the agent’s own temperament. He concludes that the will therefore conforms to Aristotle’s definition of the voluntary or, as Leibniz calls it, the “spontaneous,” namely that the principle or origin (*principium, archê*) of action lies in the agent: “*spontaneum est, cum principium actionis in agente.*”³² But spontaneity is also merely a necessary and not a sufficient condition for the attribution of freedom since brute animals (and perhaps even falling stones) can be said to be spontaneous according

to this definition.³³ Leibniz therefore claims, appealing again to Aristotle, that “free” means “*spontaneum cum electione*” (spontaneous with choice). That is, freedom is spontaneity in accordance with rational appetite and intelligent deliberation concerning the appropriate means towards one’s end.³⁴

Leibniz’s account of spontaneity is, of course, enriched by his development of a metaphysics of monads. But the particulars of this development need not concern us here. What is relevant here is that Leibniz continues to maintain the essentials of this account of freedom throughout his career. He therefore speaks of freedom in the *Theodicy* (of 1710) in terms of “the two conditions of freedom mentioned by Aristotle, that is, *spontaneity* and *intelligence*, which are found united in us in deliberation, whereas the beasts lack the second condition”³⁵ Freedom is *spontaneitas rationalis* or *intelligentis*, that is, rational spontaneity or the spontaneity of an intelligent being.³⁶

IV.

Leibniz’s account of the compatibility of the principle of sufficient reason with the freedom of the will in important respects resembles the Stoics’ account of the compatibility of their fatalism with that which “depends on us”: in each case, our judgments concerning what is good and bad constitute our own nature or character, thus determining us to act in a way that preserves our accountability.

However, it might seem that the Stoics’ strategy for preserving moral accountability is not available to Leibniz on account of his definition of freedom in terms of intelligence and rationality. Leibniz says:

There is more freedom where more is done from reason, and there is more slavery where more is done from the passions of the soul.

For the more we act from reason, the more we follow the

perfection of our own nature. And surely the more we act from passions, the more we are enslaved to the power of external things.³⁷

Leibniz claims that true freedom arises only with wisdom, thus only with an *adequate and complete* conception of what is best. Consequently, only God is truly free, whereas human beings are slaves who can attain freedom only to the extent that they turn toward virtue by extirpating the passions hindering them from the cognition of what is truly best. But if the freedom essential for moral accountability were realized only by God and approximated only by the sage, then it would follow that the more sinful we are, the less free and hence less accountable we would be. That is certainly an awkward view for someone who places human responsibility for sin at the center of his theodical project.

V.

Leibniz's account of the freedom attained through wisdom has not provoked the sort of objection made against Kant's similar view: that it seems to call into question the freedom and hence moral accountability of the sinner. But it seems that Leibniz would be vulnerable to that objection unless he can maintain a principled distinction between the freedom of the sage and the freedom that consists in being spontaneous with choice or intelligence. We have seen that a parallel distinction is implicitly drawn by the Stoics, and it would thus be natural for Leibniz to do so as well.

Despite this fact, commentators have not attributed to Leibniz an awareness of such a distinction between free will and the freedom of the sage.³⁸ In fact, Leibniz himself might seem to undermine the possibility of drawing such a distinction: in

his dynamics of the physical world, Leibniz uses the term “passion” to distinguish what is acted upon as opposed to what acts.³⁹ Therefore “genuine substances are active only when their perceptions [...] are becoming better developed and more distinct, just as they are passive only when their perceptions are becoming more confused.”⁴⁰ This might seem to imply that a person under the sway of passions does not act with free will since he does not really act but is only acted upon. However, it is probably best to think of the action/passion distinction from dynamics to be at most analogous to the reason/passion distinction from moral psychology. After all, to call an event an “action” or to call a being “active” in the context of dynamics is by no means to invoke the concept of freedom. More importantly, it seems clear that in the relevant context of moral psychology, Leibniz considers passions to be compatible with free will: they mark an imperfection rather than a lack of intelligence or choice. Hence Leibniz remarks concerning spontaneity: “on a rigorous definition, the soul has within it the principle of all its actions, *and even of all its passions*, and that the same is true in all the simple substances scattered throughout nature, although there is freedom only in those that are intelligent.”⁴¹ This passage would not be intelligible if our passions undermined the freedom defined as spontaneity with choice or intelligence.

In fact, Leibniz does distinguish the freedom that ensures moral accountability from the special freedom attained through the perfection of the intellect. To be sure, Leibniz confuses matters by frequently speaking of both kinds of freedom without distinguishing them. This is unfortunate since the two kinds of freedom are almost bound to be confused since they both can be defined in terms of the perception and choice of the good. But when the issue of the ambiguity of the word “freedom” is raised in the *New Essays*, Leibniz draws the relevant distinction:

The *freedom to will* [*la liberté de vouloir*] is also understood in two different senses: one of them stands in contrast with the mind's imperfection or slavery [*esclavage*], which is an imposition or constraint, though an inner one like that which the passions impose; and the other sense is employed when freedom is contrasted with necessity. Employing the former sense, the Stoics said that only the sage is free; and one's mind is indeed not free when it is possessed by a great passion, for then one cannot will as one should, *i.e.*, with proper deliberation. It is in this way that God alone is perfectly free, and that created minds are free only in proportion as they are above passion; and this is a kind of freedom which, properly speaking, *pertains to our intellect* [*entendement*]. But the freedom of the mind that is contrasted with necessity *pertains to the bare will* [*la volonté nue*], insofar as this is distinguished from the intellect. It is what is known as 'free will' [*le franc-arbitre*]; it consists in the view that the strongest reasons or impressions which the intellect presents to the will do not prevent the act of will from being contingent, and do not confer upon it an absolute or (so to speak) metaphysical necessity. It is in this sense that I always say that the intellect can determine the will, in accordance with which perceptions and reasons prevail, in a manner which, although it is certain and infallible, inclines without necessitating.⁴²

Unfortunately, even this passage is less than fully clear. By contrasting the freedom of the sage with the freedom from necessity, Leibniz might seem to be introducing the freedom of the sage as a gloss on the spontaneity with choice or

intelligence that distinguishes the human soul from other simple substances.⁴³

And that would subject Leibniz to an acute problem about the freedom of the imperfect intelligent being and therefore about our accountability for sin.

However, the emphasis here on the contingency of the “bare” will does not mean that Leibniz thinks a “free will” can lack spontaneity and intelligence. The emphasis is typical for Leibniz and can be traced to fact that he takes necessitarianism (for example in Spinozism and theological voluntarism) to be the real threat to the freedom of the will. Despite this emphasis, the passage defines “the free will” not merely in the metaphysical terms of contingency, but also in moral-psychological terms: the intellect inclines without necessitating the will. And a few pages later Leibniz makes clear that he intends this phrase to express the combination of contingency and intelligence required for freedom: “the determination to which motions are subject is blindly compelling [*brute*]; whereas it is free, i.e., accompanied by choice, in a thinking being, who is only inclined and not forced by considerations of good and bad.”⁴⁴ When Leibniz defines freedom as *spontaneitas intelligentis* or *rationalis*, he means that the free will is *spontaneum cum electione*, not that freedom requires that *electio* to be aiming at what is truly the best.

With this in mind, we can see that Leibniz is offering the following distinction in the passage from the *New Essays*: whereas the sage’s freedom is achieved by *knowing* the best, the freedom required for moral accountability is the freedom to choose whatever we *take* to be best. And whereas the sage’s freedom is possessed in its perfect form only by God, the freedom to choose what we take to be best is possessed by every will—good as well as evil, infinite as well as finite.⁴⁵ Indeed, the implication is that the human will, considered in itself (*i.e.*, apart from the intellect and thus apart from the adequacy of its judgments concerning what is best), is just as free as God in choosing what it takes to be good.⁴⁶ This also gives

sense to Leibniz's remark in the passage from the *New Essays* that the "slavery" of the mind is an "inner" constraint: presumably he means to contrast such an "inner" constraint with the "outer" constraint experienced by non-intelligent beings, e.g., through (apparent or "phenomenal") physical interactions. Even though we are sinners, "our spontaneity suffers no exception."⁴⁷

The distinction between free will and the freedom of the sage allows Leibniz to claim without contradiction that "that evil state of the slave, which is also our own, does not prevent us (any more than him) from making a free choice of that which pleases us most."⁴⁸ That is, although the evil will lacks the freedom that pertains to the intellect, it nonetheless acts according to its own (imperfect) perception of the good. Indeed, slavery is a universal condition of the human free will:

Man in his fallen and unregenerate state is under the domination of sin and of Satan because it pleases him to be so; he is a voluntary slave through his evil concupiscence. Hence a free will and an enslaved will are one and the same thing [*le franc arbitre et le serf arbitre sont une même chose*].⁴⁹

The important implication here is that it would be a confusion to object that the freedom contrasted with slavery cannot serve as a basis for moral accountability. Whatever Leibniz has to say about moral accountability does not rely on an appeal to the distinctive freedom achieved by the sage. Moral accountability is instead based on the freedom that the human being possesses quite apart from its virtue or vice, from its wisdom or foolishness: namely the freedom to be inclined by the perception of the good without being necessitated, that is the freedom of a spontaneous intelligence.⁵⁰

NOTES

¹ *On the Social Contract* I.viii ¶3. Translation in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. V. Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 54. The context is political rather than moral.

Translations have been sometimes modified without comment. The following abbreviations are used for select primary sources:

- Ak.* Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. the Prussian (now German) Academy of Sciences (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–). Cited by series, volume, and page number.
- AG* Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. R. Ariew & D. Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989).
- AT* Descartes, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Adam & Tannery (Paris: Vrin/C.N.R.S., 1964-79). Cited by volume and page number.
- Couturat* Leibniz, *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz. Extraits des manuscrits*, ed. L. Couturat. (Paris: Alcan, 1903)
- CSM* *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, eds. Cottingham, Stoothof, & Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985-1991). Cited by volume and page number.
- Grua* Leibniz, *Textes inédits*, ed. Grua (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).
- KGS* *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*. vol. 1-22 edited by the Prussian Academy of Sciences, vol. 23 edited by the German Academy of Sciences, and from vol. 24 edited by the Academy of Sciences at Göttingen. (Berlin: George Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter, 1900ff.). Cited by volume, page, and line number.
- LS* *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, ed. A. A. Long & D. N. Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987), vol. 1: translations.

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- EN Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Greek text and English translation by H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard Univ Pr, 1975 [¹1926]). Cited by book, chapter, and Bekker number.
- PS Leibniz, *Die Philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. J. Gerhard (Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung: 1875-90). Cited by volume and page number.
- ST Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Latin text with English translation, ed. T. Gilby OP (Cambridge, Blackfriars, 1970).

² Ch. Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen zu Beförderung ihrer Glückseeligkeit, den Leibhabern der Wahrheit mitgetheilt* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: 1733), §§81, 24, 38-39: “If we do not rely on distinct knowledge, we will become accustomed to distinguish the good through the pleasure it offers us. [...] But then man is in the condition of slavery, and so he is not really free.” Such a man is motivated to the good only by the fear of punishment and hope of reward. But “a reasonable man,” on the other hand, “needs no further law, for because of his reason he is a law unto himself.” Translation in *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*, ed. J. Schneewind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 339, 336; cf. p. 349n9. With this claim, Wolff apparently means to recall Paul’s remark that Gentiles who have not received the law can still be a law unto themselves (*heautois nomos*) if the law is inscribed on their hearts (*Romans 2:14*). For a probable ancestor of this view, see Aquinas *ST Ia-IIae* q. 91 art. 2 co. and *Summa Contra Gentiles* III cap. 128 n. 1. For an account of the Stoic influence on Aquinas’s own moral philosophy, see Irwin, “Stoic Naturalism and Its Critics” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. B. Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 345-364. And for a warning about interpreting Aquinas as offering a view of autonomy in the Kantian sense, see Schneewind, *Inventing Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 21. Schneewind refers to Aquinas’s assertion, in the context of a discussion of this passage

from *Romans*, that “none imposes a law on his own actions” (*ST* Ia-IIae q. 93 art. 5). Aristotle also remarks that the “cultivated gentleman,” by controlling himself, “will be a law unto himself” (*hoion nomos on heautoi*), but he does not, to my knowledge, associate this characteristic of his with freedom (*EN* IV.viii 1128a 32). This passage is quoted in Klaus Reich, “Rousseau und Kant,” *Neue Heft für Philosophy* 29 (1989), p. 87.

³ Kant is recorded in lectures from around the time of his first *Critique* as saying: “reason raises [the human being] above the animals, and the more he acts according to it, the more moral and at the same time freer he becomes” (*KGS* XXIX: 900.14-19; *cf.* p. 899.32-36). Also see the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*KGS* V: 161), and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (*KGS* VI: 382.28-29, VI: 407, 409). For the term “moral freedom” see the *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (*KGS* VI: 123n, 180, as well as XXVIII: 255, 677). (Kant does not seem to employ the term “moral freedom” with a consistent meaning.)

⁴ That Kant’s conception of autonomy derives from an idea original to Wolff is claimed in J. Schmucker, *Die Ursprünge der Ethik Kants in seinen vorkritischen Schriften und Reflexionen*. (Meisenheim/Glan: Anton Hain, 1961) and H. Poser, “Die Bedeutung der Ethik Christian Wolffs für die deutsche Aufklärung,” *Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa* 20 (Weisbaden: 1980), pp. 206-217. A synopsis and discussion of these interpretations is offered by Ch. Schröder, *Naturbegriff und Moralbegründung: Die Grundlegung der Ethik bei Christian Wolff und deren Kritik durch Immanuel Kant* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1988), p. 17.

⁵ *E.g.* *Discourses* IV.i.27, IV.i.56. Translation in *The Discourses of Epictetus*, ed C. Gill (London: Everyman, 1995). John Cooper discusses the similar use of the term “*autonomos*” by Dio Chrysostom in who, although not exactly a Stoic, was, like Epictetus, a student of the Stoic Musonius Rufus. See Cooper, “Stoic Autonomy” in *Autonomy*, eds. E. Paul, F. Miller, & J. Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-29.

⁶ Hud Hudson gives a summary of how Kant's account of freedom as autonomy (moral self-legislation) gives rise to this "imputability problem" in *Kant's Compatibilism* (Ithaca: University of Cornell Press, 1997), p. 150. The classic statement of this problem in English is in Henry Sidgwick, "The Kantian Conception of Free Will," *Mind* (old series) 13 (July, 1888), pp. 405-412. Carl Reinhold had already made a similar objection in Kant's own lifetime. See "Einige Bemerkungen über die in der Einleitung zu den 'Metaphysischen Anfangsgründen der Rechtslehre' von I. Kant aufgestellten Begriffe von der Freiheit des Willens" in *Materialien zu Kants "Kritik der praktischen Vernunft"*, eds. Bittner & Cramer (Frankfurt/Main., Suhrkamp: 1975), pp. 310-324. Also see C. Korsgaard, "Morality as Freedom" in her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), pp. 159-187.

⁷ On the sage's submission to the will of Zeus, see, e.g., Epictetus *Discourses* IV.i.89f., 98f., 131.

⁸ *Ethics*, II prop. 44 and IV 68, dem. Translation in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. E. Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Rousseau makes a similar point when his namesake instructs Emile: "Do not rebel against the hard law of necessity" (*Emile* Bk. II, p. 83). Translation in *Emile or On Education*, ed. A. Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979). Emile—Rousseau's own exemplar of the free man—shows he learns this lesson when he remarks: "It is you, my master, who have made me free in teaching me to yield to necessity. [...] Since I do not wish to fight it, I do not attach myself to anything to hold me back. [...] All the chains of opinion are broken for me; I know only those of necessity" (Bk. V, p. 472).

⁹ *Ethics*, I prop. 32 and prop. 33.

¹⁰ *Stoic Self-Contradictions*, 34, 1049f-1050d (= *LS*, p. 331); cf. Cicero, *On Fate*, §§39-44 (= *LS*, p. 386ff.).

¹¹ Richard Sorabji identifies at least eight arguments available to the ancient Stoics in response to the charge that their determinism undermines moral responsibility. See his *Necessity, Cause, and Blame* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 64-88. Also see Charlotte Stough, “Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility,” in *The Stoics*, ed. Rist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) and Dorothea Frede, “Stoic Determinism” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. B. Inwood.

¹² Stough comments: “The Stoic ideal of freedom [*i.e.*, *eleutheria*] is often confused with the quite different concept of ‘freedom of the will’ [*e.g.*, the *autexousion* according to which our actions are *eph’ hēmin*]. The early Stoics did not conflate the notion of what is attributable to us [*i.e.*, *ta eph’ hēmin*] with that of freedom [...]” (“Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility,” p. 231n46).

¹³ Stough comments: “The man who is ignorant and thus a slave to Nature and his passions is no less an agent, a doer of actions, than the enlightened sage who is free. That part of behavior that is attributable to us as a person [*i.e.*, *ta eph’ hēmin*], whether undertaken in a state of freedom or slavery [*i.e.*, *eleutheria* or *douleia*], is just that for which we are morally responsible” (“Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility,” p. 224).

¹⁴ Attributed to Zeno by Plutarch (*On Listening to Poetry*, 33d). Quoted in S. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) p. 339.

¹⁵ For the meaning of “*eleutheria*” as a political metaphor see Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom*, p. 339f.

¹⁶ *Discourses* IV.i.117-118.

¹⁷ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 7.32-33 (= *LS*, p. 430). Also quoted by S. Bobzien “Stoic Conceptions of Freedom and Their Relation to Ethics,” in *Aristotle and After*, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, ed. R. Sorabji, (London, Supplement 68, 1997), p. 78.

¹⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.122 (= *LS*, p. 431f.). For a similar line of argument, see the exchange between Diogenes the Cynic and Alexander the Great depicted in Dio Chrysostom's *On Kingship* that Foucault discusses in his lectures on *parrhesia*. See Foucault *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), pp. 128, 131.

¹⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.122 (= *LS*, p. 431): the Stoics say of the wise man that “only he is free, but the inferior are slaves. For freedom is the power of autonomous action [*exousia autopraxias*, that is, the authority to act on one's own—DF], but slavery is the lack of autonomous action.” John Cooper remarks: “As Cicero explains the Stoic view [...], if freedom is the power to live as you will (*potestas vivendi ut velis*), then, in fact, only the wise are free. [...] Everyone else acts in obedience to circumstances, acting as *circumstances* direct, so as to avoid pain, or monetary loss, or the like, and following opportunities for pleasure or gain as circumstances dictate. Such a person acts in the abject and broken spirit of a slave, as Cicero puts it, ordered about willy-nilly—as a person that has no will of its own (*arbitrio carentis suo*)” (Cooper, “Stoic Autonomy,” p. 5; referring to Cicero's *Stoic Paradoxes* 5, sec. 34-35).

²⁰ Epictetus, *Discourses* IV.i.74-75.

²¹ Epictetus, *Discourses* IV.i.1.

²² See Epictetus, *Discourses* IV.i.52.

²³ Bobzien points out that the early Stoics did not even discuss questions of accountability in the same type of treatise as questions about the freedom of the sage: questions about accountability fell within the domain of physical treatises, whereas questions about freedom fell in the domain of ethics or politics (*Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, p. 331f.).

²⁴ See Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 333.

²⁵ *Ethics* V, Preface. Spinoza linked this Stoic doctrine to Descartes' account of the freedom of the will. See *Ethics* III, Preface.

²⁶ A useful treatment of the Leibniz's account of the freedom of the sage is offered by M. Seidler, "Freedom and Moral Therapy in Leibniz," in *Studia Leibnitiana* 17/1, pp. 15-35.

²⁷ *Ak.* VI 1:545; cf. Jack Davidson, "Leibniz on the Labyrinth of Freedom: Two Early Texts" in *The Leibniz Review* 13 (2003), p. 24. (My discussion of Leibniz's early views on freedom is indebted to Davidson's essay, although I ultimately deviate from his interpretation on the central point at issue.)

²⁸ *Ak.* VI 4: 1384-1388 = *AG*, pp. 281-284. By the "new sect of Stoics," Leibniz means principally Spinoza, but also Descartes and his followers by implication. His target is not the Stoic account of moral accountability, but rather theological voluntarism, which he claims is incompatible with providence. Also see D. Rutherford, "*Patience sans Espérance*: Leibniz's Critique of Stoicism," in *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. B. Inwood & J. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 63. Cf. Plutarch's objection to the Stoic account of responsibility referenced in note 10, above.

²⁹ E.g., *Theodicy*, §302. Translation by E. M. Huggard in *Theodicy*, ed. A. Farrer (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1951). Leibniz attributes this indifferentism here to the "Scholastics" by which he means especially Molina and his followers and probably Ockham as well. In the so-called "Conversation on Freedom with Bishop Stensen," Leibniz claims that this kind of indifferentism is "alien" not only to the thought of Aristotle and Augustine, but also to the thought of "Aquinas, Scotus, and most early Scholastics" (*Ak.* VI 4:1380). It is true that Aquinas, invoking Aristotle, claims that we always act with a view to the good. In this respect Leibniz's position can seem Thomistic rather than Stoic. But in order to account for human and divine free will, Aquinas appeals, in the end, to a psychological indifference among objects of the will: *bonum est multiplex*. This implies that for Aquinas, it is ultimately a matter of will which good we

or God choose among possible goods. See *ST* Ia-IIae 6.2 ad 2, Ia 82.2 ad 1 and Ia 19.10 ad 2. This is an idea foreign to Leibniz's own intellectualism, which is instead more authentically Socratic.

³⁰ This basics of this account are already present in the *Confessio Philosophi* ("The Philosopher's Profession of Faith") of 1673. See '*Confessio philosophi*': *Ein Dialog. Kritische Ausgabe mit Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, ed. O. Saame (Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1967), p. 62ff.

³¹ *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §30; cf. §13 (= *AG*, p. 60ff.). Descartes seems to offer an anticipation of this view: "when a very evident reason moves us in one direction, although morally speaking we can hardly move in the contrary direction, absolutely speaking we can" (*AT* IV: 173 = *CSM* III: 245). Leibniz has usually been thought to hold that this "inclination" of the will constitutes a causal determination. This is doubted by Murray and Paul, among others. See M. Murray, "Leibniz on Divine Foreknowledge of Future Contingents and Human Freedom" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55 (1995), pp. 75-108; M. Murray, "Spontaneity and Freedom in Leibniz," in *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom*, ed. D. Rutherford, & J. A. Cover (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 194-216; and J. C. Paull, "Leibniz and the Miracle of Freedom" *Noûs* 26 (1992), pp. 218-235. It is certainly true, for example, that in the unpublished essay "Necessary and Contingent Truths" (*Couturat*, pp. 16-25) Leibniz suggests that human freedom is opposed not only to metaphysical necessity but also to physical necessity. However, I think the evidence favors the view that "inclination" constitutes causal determination. On this, see Sleigh, "Leibniz on Freedom and Necessity," *The Philosophical Review* 108 (2), pp. 245-277. However, this particular interpretative debate can be safely ignored for present purposes since, as will become clear presently, Leibniz does not take contingency to be a sufficient condition for human freedom anyway.

³² *Couturat*, p. 474; cf. *Ak.*, VI 4: 1380.

³³ Hence Aquinas: “The Philosopher says that *both children and animals participate in the voluntary*” (*ST Ia-IIae* 6.2 s. c.; *cf.* 13.2). Aristotle himself could deny that inanimate objects (such as falling stones) are voluntary since he says that the voluntary presupposes not only an internal principle, but also a kind of knowledge (*EN* III.iii 1111a 22-23). Aquinas therefore makes knowledge a condition for the voluntary (*ST Ia-IIae* 6.1 co.), but Leibniz apparently does not follow him in this regard.

³⁴ *Confessio Philosophi*, p. 82f.; *cf.* Davidson, “Leibniz on the Labyrinth of Freedom,” p. 29.

³⁵ *Theodicy* §302. Therefore: “There is *contingency* in a thousand actions of nature; but when there is no judgment in him who acts, there is no *freedom*” (*Theodicy*, §34; *cf.* §§65, 288). See *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), II.xxi.9. Leibniz claims, in addition, that self-awareness and memory distinguish minds as “capable of punishment or reward” (*Discourse on Metaphysics*, §§34-36; *New Essays*, II.xxi.5). Self-awareness and memory can therefore hardly be special achievements of the wise man, *pace* Phemister, “Leibniz, Freedom of Will and Rationality,” in *Studia Leibnitiana* 23/1 (1991), esp. p. 31.

³⁶ Freedom is *spontaneitas intelligentis*, that is, *une spontanéité jointe à l’intelligence* (*PS* 108, 109). And Leibniz says he follows “the ancients” in describing freedom as a “species of spontaneity” and more particularly as “rational spontaneity” (*spontaneitas rationalis*) (*Ak.*, VI 4: 1380). (Leibniz’s invocation of Aristotle on the two conditions of freedom parallels Aquinas’s account. See, e.g., *ST Ia-IIae* 6.1-2 and 13.1 co.)

³⁷ *PS* VII: 109. In an essay dated around 1680, Leibniz remarks: “The more a man has knowledge, the freer he is, for error and constraint are equally opposed to freedom of action” (*Ak.* VI 4: 1407). This remark is best understood as an endorsement of Aristotle’s commonsensical observation that that various kinds of inability and ignorance limit the scope of acts and omissions for which we could be responsible (*EN* III.i 1109b 30).

Leibniz makes clear that such forensic considerations regarding freedom of action are different from the problem of the freedom of willing itself. With regard to willing itself, we are “masters of our actions.” Cf. *Theodicy* §291 and *New Essays*, II.xxi.11.

³⁸ M. Seidler (“Freedom and Moral Therapy in Leibniz,” p. 34f.) asks, “Why, if humans are metaphysically free, as Leibniz claimed, must they struggle in order to be free in their daily lives?” Seidler takes this to be an irresolvable “tension” in Leibniz’s account that amounts to a “self-refutation.” Furthermore: “That Leibniz failed to see the inconsistency between his two approaches to the freedom problem may have been partially due to his reliance on Stoic precedents [...]” (p. 35). Also see J. Davidson, “*Video Meliora Proboque, Deteriora Sequor*: Leibniz on the Intellectual Source of Sin,” in *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom*, eds. D. Rutherford, & J. A. Cover, esp. p. 250-252. Davidson recognizes the potential difficulty with taking the freedom realized only through virtue to be the same freedom that ensures moral accountability for vice. But he concludes that this does not prevent the vicious from having sufficient freedom to be held accountable.

³⁹ *Monadology*, §52, (= *AG* p. 219); cf. the “Specimen Dynamicum,” in *AG*, pp. 117-138.

⁴⁰ *New Essays* II.xxi.72; cf. *Monadology* §49 (= *AG*, p. 219). Contrary to Murray’s suggestion (“Spontaneity and Freedom in Leibniz,” p. 200), Leibniz distinguishes activity and passivity here rather than spontaneity and lack of spontaneity. Indeed, spontaneity is compatible with passivity. See note 41, below.

⁴¹ *Theodicy*, §65; emphasis added. Hence even our passions arise from “our own inner being, with complete spontaneity” (*Theodicy*, §296)

⁴² *New Essays*, II.xxi.8; emphases altered.

⁴³ Sean Greenberg reads the passage this way. See “Leibniz against Molinism: Freedom, Indifference, and the Nature of the Will,” in *Leibniz: Nature and Freedom*, eds. D. Rutherford, & J. A. Cover, esp. p. 227f. In a similar vein, M. Seidler (“Freedom and

Moral Therapy in Leibniz,” p. 17f.) claims that the distinction Leibniz is trying to draw in this passage is wholly confused since the freedom of the “bare” will requires the extirpation of the passions. But Leibniz can seem like he is making such a gross error only if we conflate his account of intelligence as a condition of the free will with his account of wisdom as a condition of the freedom of the sage.

⁴⁴ *New Essays*, II.xxi.12. It is Locke, not Leibniz, who takes all unfree acts to be necessary.

⁴⁵ “Now it is only the genuinely good that is capable of pleasing God: and consequently that which pleases God most, and which meets his choice, is the best” (*Theodicy* §110). Finite minds, however, are moved by whatever *seems* good to them: God decrees “that the will always tends toward the *apparent* good” (*Discourse on Metaphysics* §30 = *AG*, p. 60; emphasis added). Thus: “speaking rigorously, we never have perfect freedom of mind. But that does not prevent us from having a certain degree of freedom that the beasts do not have, that is, our faculty of reasoning and choosing in accordance with how things *appear* to us” (*Grua*, p. 362 = *AG*, p. 112; emphasis added). Hence “free will tends toward good, and if it meets with evil it is by accident, for this evil is concealed beneath the good” (*Theodicy*, §154).

⁴⁶ “It is reasonable and certain in almost the same way that God will always do the best, even though what is less perfect does not imply a contradiction” (*Discourse on Metaphysics* §13 = *AG*, p. 45f.). “Thus man is there like a little god in his own world or *microcosm*, which he governs after his own fashion [...]. But he also commits error, because he abandons himself to the passions, and because God abandons him to his own way” (*Theodicy*, §147; cf. *Monadology* §83 = *AG*, p. 223). In ascribing a God-like freedom to man, Leibniz is apparently following Descartes’ account of freedom in the fourth *Meditation* (*AT* VII: 56ff.; cf. 432f. and letters to Mesland at IV: 115-118 and 173ff.). Indeed, I believe we can see here an implicit distinction between the two kinds of freedom that Leibniz later sought to distinguish explicitly.

⁴⁷ *Theodicy*, §290.

⁴⁸ *Theodicy*, §289.

⁴⁹ *Theodicy*, §277. The term “*le serf arbitre*” echoes the *servum arbitrium* asserted by Augustine and Luther in the context the question of justification and divine grace. But Leibniz characterizes the human will as enslaved not because it is incapable of becoming worthy of salvation, but rather because it is “enslaved to the power of external things” (see note 37, above). In this respect, his concept of an enslaved will is more Stoic than Augustinian (*cf.* Epictetus’s remark referenced in note 20, above). However, Augustine’s concept of the *servum arbitrium* (and even Luther’s concept of the *Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*) can also be understood as distinct from the question of “free will.”

⁵⁰ I thank R. Matthew Shockey, Gideon Manning, Gabriel Richardson Lear, Robert Pippin, Stephen Engstrom, Candace Vogler, and the editor of this journal for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.