

## *Malebranche on Ideas*

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In this paper I offer an interpretation of Malebranche's conception of ideas. This is no easy matter. Malebranche says so many different things about ideas that it is daunting to try to weave them all together. To make matters worse, some of the things he says are not very clear. Worse still, some of the things he says are not obviously consistent with each other or with other Malebranchean doctrines. It is not surprising, therefore, that his account of ideas came under attack from the beginning, and continues to be attacked to this day.<sup>1</sup> It is with trepidation, then, that I offer any interpretation at all. It is with even greater trepidation that I suggest that this interpretation affords Malebranche a clear and coherent theory of ideas, one that is consistent with the rest of his philosophy, has its primitives in the right places, and may even satisfactorily address the common charges laid against him.

For just one example, a particularly troubling early charge was that in claiming there is an intelligible extension 'in God,' Malebranche is ultimately taking God to be an extended substance, and treating material bodies as parts or modifications of God, just like Spinoza.<sup>2</sup> But while

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1 For an early attack, cf. Arnauld, *True/False*; for contemporary ones, cf. Iorio (1980), Jolley (1990).

2 Cf. Arnauld: 'Now all of that suits what [Malebranche] calls *infinite intelligible extension*: and the word *intelligible*, which he gives to this extension in order to contrast it with *material extension*, is only a pure illusion to disguise a doctrine which would cause horror if one presented it in the open, as an extravagant philosopher dared to do a few years ago' (*Défense*, Part V, OA 38: 537). Another early critic making this charge is De Mairan: 'Therefore if intelligible extension is in God, every body is the modification of the divine essence, or the divine essence is the substance of all

Malebranche certainly denied holding these controversial doctrines, he appeared to be unable to deny *successfully* that he held them. As Iorio (1980) puts it:

To clear himself completely of this association with Spinoza two serious questions had to be answered without equivocation: (1) what precisely is the relation of intelligible extension to God; and (2) how are intelligible extension and material (created) extension related? ... [It] must be confessed that Malebranche's evasive language from one work to another ... [makes] a final determination of his position well nigh impossible. (21)

While there is not the space here to address Malebranche's relation to Spinoza in general,<sup>3</sup> I do think that Malebranche's conception of ideas, once properly understood, affords him an unequivocal, and overall satisfactory, response to these two questions. Indeed, the ability of my interpretation to deliver such a response is, I think, one of its important virtues.

A caveat to start: The proposal I shall make is not one to be found explicitly in Malebranche's texts. However, I do believe that it is buried just beneath the surface, and my analysis of its various implications constitutes an argument that he really does believe it, even if he fails to articulate it explicitly. (Why he might fail to articulate it I explore in III.iv below.) If you remain unconvinced that Malebranche actually holds the view, then you may, alternatively, construe this paper not as an actual interpretation of Malebranche but as an account of what Malebranche 'virtually' holds: either what he would have held had he worked out the details, or should have held given his other commitments.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, then, I

- (I) briefly propose an interpretation of Malebranche's conception of ideas,

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bodies' (CDM, 83; OC 19, 878). Also, Locke on Malebranche: 'What is this better than what those say, who make God to be nothing but the universe ...?' ('Remarks,' 11, 253). For a more recent version of the charge, cf. Nadler (1992), 150.

3 For a detailed discussion of Malebranche and Spinozism, see Moreau (1947).

4 I borrow the phrasing after the colon from an anonymous reviewer. Perhaps a 'virtual' account is all we could reasonably hope for, given, as the reviewer put it, 'the dearth of texts on many of the seminal questions relating to Malebranche's theory of ideas,' or, as Iorio puts it above, 'Malebranche's evasive language from one work to another ...' (21).

- (II) defend that interpretation by showing its implications for and coherence with a variety of Malebranchian themes,
- (III) respond to some problems with the interpretation, then
- (IV) see how it affords Malebranche a response to Iorio's two questions.

## I The Proposal: Malebranche's Ideas

Thus, by the word *idea*, I mean here nothing other than the immediate object, or the object closest to the mind, when it perceives something, i.e., that which affects and modifies the mind with the perception it has of an object. (*Search* 3.2.1, 217)

Thus, the word *idea* is equivocal. Sometimes I take it as anything that represents some object to the mind, whether clearly or confusedly. More generally I take it for anything that is the immediate object of the mind. But I also take it in the most precise and restricted sense, that is, as anything that represents things to the mind in a way so clear that we can discover by simple perception whether such and such modifications belong to them. (*Elucidations* 3, 561)

Note, first, that in the first passage Malebranche defines 'ideas' in terms of their causal role in perception.<sup>5</sup> Such a definition leaves open what their exact nature may be, i.e. just what it is that fulfills that role.<sup>6</sup> The second passage, to the contrary, provides an epistemic characterization of ideas. I will focus on ideas 'in the most precise and restricted sense,' i.e. clear ideas, the primary examples of such being the ideas of extension and its various modifications.<sup>7</sup> My question, then, shall be this: what are ideas, such that they play both these causal and epistemic roles?

Now, despite His being simple, Malebranche's God has conceptually distinguishable states or aspects (though not 'modes')<sup>8</sup> that are primi-

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5 'Perception' includes both pure perception (i.e. conception) as well as visual perception.

6 Malebranche writes that it is 'indubitable that ideas have a very real existence' because they have a 'great number of properties ... which can never be the case for nonbeing' (*Search* 3.2.1, 218). Thus our examination of the nature of ideas will include an examination of their properties, in Part II.

7 '[We] conceive clearly only extension and numbers and some general principles' (*CDM*, 88).

8 Malebranche clearly holds that God is capable of manifesting distinguishable volitions, for example, despite being both simple (*Search* 3.2.6, 231) and insusceptible to modification (*Elucidations* 10, 625). (See also note 27 below.) How this could work

tively possessed of intentional or representational content.<sup>9</sup> I propose, generally, that ideas are identical to these states. Given divine simplicity, these states are themselves metaphysically identical; since there is no real distinction between God's thoughts or beliefs (for example) and His volitions, there is *ultimately* no need to identify ideas particularly with one or the other. Still, there may be some reason to prefer such an identification, as we'll see. Hence my specific proposal:

(P) Ideas are identical to possible divine volitions.

What are 'possible divine volitions' (PDVs)? Divine volitions are conceptually distinguishable states of God, primitively possessed of representational content; it is by their exercise or execution that God manifests His efficacy in the world; and while they are 'actual' states or aspects of God, they are 'possible' insofar as they are considered independently of whether in fact they are executed by God. We might perhaps identify PDVs with the 'simple willing' Malebranche invokes in his theodicy;<sup>10</sup> alternatively, we might identify them with God's capaci-

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ultimately may be inexplicable, as, Malebranche notes, many things concerning the infinite being may be (*Search* 3.2.4, 226; 3.2.6, 231, 232; cf. *Elucidations* 10, 618, and *Réflexions*, 23, 130ff.). Still, it shouldn't be held against him, for such a view appears to be a theological commonplace. (Cf. Aquinas, *Summa*, Pt 1, Q. 15, Art. 2.)

9 Malebranche offers no substantive explanation of how God has such states, and probably doesn't think such an explanation is available or even necessary, given God's infinite nature. But this lacuna cannot be considered a particular criticism of Malebranche, either, for all the disputants in the debate at hand share it; Arnauld (for example) insists that our minds can primitively have representational content but also offers no explanation of how that's possible, just as Malebranche writes: '[We] do not know what the soul's dispositions consist in which make it readier to act and represent objects to itself' (*Elucidations* 11, 636). (Cf. Nadler [1992]: '[The] way in which an idea presents or displays a [representational] content ... is basic and inexplicable.... This is true for Malebranche, and it is also true for Descartes, Arnauld, and Régis' [50-1].) Overall, Malebranche's main concern is to show that *our* manifesting representational content cannot be primitive, but requires a relation to God; he has no reason not to accept that *God's* manifesting representational content may be primitive. (Cf.: '[All] creatures ... are in God, though in a completely spiritual way that is incomprehensible to us.... But such is not the case with created minds' (*Search* 3.2.5, 229); similarly, explaining why finite souls can't see bodies in their own substances: 'God contains every creaturely perfection, though in a divine and infinite way.... But the soul ... cannot see in itself what is not there' (*Elucidations* 10, 625). For some discussion of the 'link in Malebranche between eminent containment and representation' see Schmaltz [2000], 62-3.)

10 Malebranche distinguishes between God's practical volitions and His willing 'simply,' where the former amount to volitions God actually executes (which we could

ties to create or bring about various things, some of which He exercises and some of which He doesn't.<sup>11,12</sup> In either case, note, importantly, that (P) identifies ideas with the volitions and *not* with the contents of the volitions.

I will elaborate on (P) as I proceed. Meanwhile here are five quick initial reasons to entertain (P), most to be developed below as well:

- (i) As we'll see in II.iv and II.v below, Malebranche considers ideas to be immutable, eternal, necessary, infinite, and uncreated, and

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call 'actual' volitions to contrast with *merely* possible, i.e. unexecuted, divine volitions): 'Quand on dit que toutes les volontez de Dieu sont efficaces, on l'entend des volontez *pratiques*. Car Dieu veut des choses qu'il ne fait point: parce que quoi qu'il y ait quelque raison de les vouloir, il n'y en a pas assez pour les vouloir faire' (*Recueil*, 655). When Malebranche is not concerned to distinguish between practical and simple volitions — which is most of the time — he will typically restrict the notions of willing and volition to 'actual' volitions, i.e. executed PDVs.

- 11 This alternative avoids the perhaps uncomfortable distinction between 'executed' and 'unexecuted' volitions. An anonymous referee worried that reference to divine 'capacities' runs afoul of Malebranche's rejection of dispositions, citing *Elucidations*, 11. But what Malebranche is rejecting there is that we have a clear idea of the soul, i.e. that we *know* what the soul's dispositions are, ontologically speaking, not that the soul *has* any dispositions in the relevant sense. Malebranche writes: '[We] do not know what the soul's dispositions consist in which make it readier to act and represent objects to itself.... And if I did not have good reasons that lead me to believe that I do in fact have such dispositions (although I [do not know] them in me), I would judge [wrongly] by consulting only inner sensation that my soul has neither habits nor a spiritual memory' (*Elucidations* 11, 636-7). More importantly, that reference to divine 'capacities' is in fact perfectly acceptable to Malebranche is illustrated throughout that entire *Elucidation* by his lengthy discussion of the various modifications of which both physical and mental substances are 'capable.' Divine 'capacities' are just the things or states of affairs God is capable of bringing about (i.e. PDVs), of which only a subset are actually exercised, just as finite substances are capable of undergoing various modifications, only a subset of which they actually do.
- 12 Another alternative that avoids the distinction between 'executed' and 'unexecuted' volitions identifies PDVs with God's 'loves': 'Dieu veut le salut de tous les hommes: mais Dieu ne veut pas fair tout ce qui est necessaire pour les sauver tous. En un mot, Dieu veut, Dieu aime les choses à proportion qu'elles sont aimables ... Et parce que sa sagesse est plus aimable que son ouvrage, quoi qu'il aime les hommes, & veuille les sauver tous, il ne fait pour cela que ce qu'il doit faire, afin que sa conduite porte le caractere de ses attributs' (*Recueil*, 655). God's 'loves' extend both to the actual and to the merely possible, so are neutral with respect to whether their objects exist. On this alternative, again, we could restrict the notions of willing and volition to actually executed PDVs (cf. n. 10 above).

Here is yet another alternative: there may also be cases where it is best to identify ideas with God's thoughts, as discussed in III.iv below. (Cf. Watson [2002].)

considers their having these properties as reasons to 'locate' them in God. Identifying ideas with God's representational states in general would explain just why ideas have these properties, and clearly 'locate' them in God. Any ontological alternative must posit the existence of entities sharing some of God's essential properties.

- (ii) Malebranche thinks that God is the only true cause, and further, that God acts via His will, i.e. via His volitions.<sup>13</sup> In addition, he thinks that ideas are causally efficacious, at least in 'affecting' our soul with both pure perceptions and sensations.<sup>14</sup> The only direct way to reconcile these claims is to equate ideas specifically with divine volitions. Similarly,
- (iii) Malebranche writes: 'ideas are only the efficacious substance of the Divinity' (*Conversations*, III, 79).<sup>15</sup> Since God acts via His will, God's 'efficacious substance' is easily identified with His will, and ideas with His volitions (themselves ultimately identical to His will).
- (iv) Malebranche writes: 'It is only creatures, only particular beings which can be created, which are visible by the ideas representing them' (*DMR* 2.5, 23). If ideas are PDVs, Malebranche's point here makes good sense: God creates by means of volitions; only 'creat-

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13 Cf. *Search* 6.2.3, 450.

14 'It is certain that ideas are efficacious, since they act upon the mind and enlighten it, and since they make it happy or unhappy through the pleasant or unpleasant perceptions by which they affect it' (*Search* 3.2.6, 232); 'I call this extension intelligible, because this idea does not affect me through my senses. But as soon as I open my eyes, I say that it is this same idea and not some other that affects me with sensible perceptions that are called colors ...' (*CDM*, 86); '... [The] same idea of extension can be known, imagined, or sensed, according to the way the divine substance containing it applies it diversely to our mind' (*DMR* 2.12, 30); 'There is, then, one and only one idea of our hand which affects us in different ways, which acts on our soul and modifies it by color, heat, pain, etc.... It is, then, the idea ... of bodies which affects us in different ways ... which acts in our mind through its all-powerful efficacy and which touches and modifies it with color, taste, pain, by what there is within it representing bodies' (*DMR* 5.5, 77).

15 Similarly, 'All our ideas, therefore, must be located in the efficacious substance of the Divinity' (*Search* 3.2.6, 232); particular beings are 'represented by the infinite being that contains them in His most efficacious and, consequently, most intelligible substance' (*Search* 3.2.7, 237). The point stands whether ideas are identical to or 'in' God's efficacious substance (should these even be distinct).

able' beings could figure in such volitions; if ideas are volitions, then ideas should only be of creatable beings; hence only creatable beings are visible by means of ideas.<sup>16,17</sup>

- (v) Malebranche equates ideas with the divine essence insofar as it is participable by creatures.<sup>18</sup> As we'll see, a PDV just is (or grounds) the very possibility of some creature deriving its existence from, hence participating in, God; since God's will is an aspect of God's essence, a PDV is thus perfectly described as the divine essence insofar as it is participable by creatures.

## II (P)'s Implications for Malebranchean Themes

There are various Malebranchean themes interpretation of which ultimately must cohere. These include: (i) the ontology of ideas, (ii) the efficacy of ideas, (iii) ideas as archetypes, (iv) involuntarism re: the eternal truths, (v) other properties of ideas, (vi) the 'indirect' perception of bodies, and (vii) vision in God.

### *i. The Ontological Status of Ideas*<sup>19</sup>

Malebranche accepts the Cartesian ontology, according to which everything is either substance or mode;<sup>20</sup> if the former, either body or mind, if the latter, either a mode of extension or a mode of thought. So what are ideas? They are neither bodies nor minds. Nor are they modes of our minds: Malebranche divorces himself from Arnauld, who takes ideas to be equivalent to our perceptions, which are modes of our minds.<sup>21</sup> Nor

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16 Similarly, Malebranche often relates ideas to the possible works and worlds God can create; cf. *Treatise* I.12, 13, 116, and *Réponse*, 287.

17 Though see III.iii and III.iv below for some wrinkles here.

18 *Elucidations* 10, 625; cf. *Search* 3.2.6, 232.

19 This has long been seen to be a problem for Malebranche. (Cf. Locke's 'Examination' 18, and more recently, Nadler [1992], 96.)

20 *DMR* 1.2, 7. Cf. *Search* 3.2.8, 244; *Elucidations* 12, 639.

21 Arnauld: '...[What] [Malebranche] is calling *ideas* is no longer *the thoughts of the soul* or *perceptions of objects*, but particular *representations of objects* distinct from these perceptions ...' (*True/False*, ch. 3, 57).

are they modes of God, either, since God has no modes.<sup>22</sup> Nor are they 'parts' of God in any literal sense, as God is simple.<sup>23</sup> What Malebranche actually says on the subject is that 'ideas are only the efficacious substance of the Divinity.'<sup>24</sup> Further: 'God's ideas of creatures are ... only His essence, insofar as it is participable....'<sup>25</sup> But what do these mean?

Jolley (1990) suggests construing ideas as abstract, logical '3rd realm entities.' This is, initially, a plausible suggestion, one which perhaps fits nicely with a natural tendency to identify ideas with representational contents. Unfortunately, as Jolley himself notes, construing them this way seems inconsistent both with their efficacy and with Malebranche's Cartesian ontology.<sup>26</sup> To Malebranche's equation of ideas with God's essence, Jolley objects that Malebranche thus transforms God into an abstract entity inconsistent both with Cartesian ontology and the Christian conception of the Divine Person (79). To Malebranche's equation of ideas with God's 'efficacious substance' Jolley (1994) objects that Malebranche is treating God as a cause *qua* region of ideas, which is inconsistent with Malebranche's view that God is a cause *qua person*, by virtue of His will (220).

Jolley's objections are sound. However, what he has shown is simply that treating ideas as abstract entities is inconsistent with the Cartesian ontology, the efficacy of ideas, and the nature and causal activity of God *qua* Person. The proper conclusion, I suggest, is that Malebranche does not construe ideas as abstract entities (or as representational contents).

(P) solves all this nicely. If ideas are PDVs, then it is true that they are neither substances nor identical with our modes. Further, since Malebranche believes that God has distinguishable volitions despite His simplicity and modelessness, then ideas won't be divine modes either.<sup>27</sup>

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22 *Elucidations* 10, 625; cf. *Recueil*, 245.

23 *DMR* 8.7, 135.

24 *Conversations*, III, 79; cf. *Search* 3.2.6, 232.

25 *Elucidations* 10, 625. Cf. also *DMR* 2.2, *Conversations*, III, 79.

26 See also Jolley (1994). Cf. Nadler (1992), 97, 150.

27 (See note 8.) That he accepts both distinguishable aspects of God (perfections, faculties, volitions, beliefs, ideas, even persons, etc.) despite divine simplicity and modelessness is reflected in the following: 'Now, it is a property of the infinite ... simultaneously to be one and all things; to be composed, as it were, of an infinity of perfections, and so simple that each perfection it possesses contains all the others without any real distinction' (*DMR* 8.8, 137-8); cf. *DMR* 8.7, 135, and 8.13, 142. Also: 'What kind of reality is God's operation as distinguished and separated from His substance?' (*DMR* 8.5, 133; a rhetorical question where context makes clear that

Nor are they abstract entities, so they don't confront the problems Jolley raises by construing them as such. But none of this conflicts with the Cartesian ontology, at least on the common assumption that God Himself, volitions and all, does not.

Moreover, it is easy to see why Malebranche might call PDVs both the 'efficacious substance of the Divinity' and the divine 'essence insofar as it is participable.' As noted in part I, since God acts by His will, His volitions are ultimately identifiable with His 'efficacious substance'; and since a PDV — say, to create creature  $x$  — just is (or grounds) the very possibility of  $x$  deriving its existence from God and so sharing, imperfectly, the divine perfections constituting the divine essence,<sup>28</sup> then those volitions would be His 'essence insofar as it is participable.'<sup>29</sup>

Further, in response to Arnauld, Malebranche writes: 'Sir, I believe that intelligible extension is neither a substance, nor a mode of a substance, notwithstanding the axiom of the Philosophers' (*Recueil*, 245). If intelligible extension is just the idea of extension, then, qua PDV it will be neither substance nor mode: not a mode because God has none, and not a substance because a volition is not the divine substance *simpliciter*, 'in itself,' but only 'insofar as it is participable.'<sup>30</sup> On (P), in short, ideas and intelligible extension raise no particular ontological problems.

## ii. The Efficacy of Ideas<sup>31</sup>

Malebranche's ideas are causally efficacious, at least in being capable of 'affecting' our soul with both pure perceptions and sensations. Alquie

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God's operation, via volition, is identical to His substance); cf. *DMR* 8.2, 130. Finally, he admits the incomprehensibility of there being 'three persons' in God's 'simple and indivisible nature,' and wonders how there is in God 'indivisible substances, different perceptions,' and 'an infinity of ideas with no particular modifications' (*Réflexions* 23, 131-2).

28 '[Every] creature is but an imperfect participation in the divine being' (*Search* 3.2.6, 232); cf. *DMR* 2.6, 24.

29 See also II.vii below.

30 'Indubitably, intelligible extension is ... the idea of ... extended substance' (*CDM*, 87); cf. *Recueil*, 117. 'Intelligible extension is also not a substance: because it is not the divine substance in itself; it is only the divine substance insofar as it is participable by corporeal creatures' (*Recueil*, 245).

31 This issue is examined in further detail in III below. There is a question of exactly when Malebranche first introduced the notion that ideas are efficacious. Robinet (1965) argues that it is not really until 1695 (259), while Schmaltz (2000) argues that 'it is clear' that there are anticipations of the doctrine in the 1693 *Réponse* and the

(1974) argues here that Malebranche conflates the inconsistent claims (a) that ideas are efficacious, and (b) that God alone acts on the mind by means of ideas (210-11).<sup>32</sup> Jolley (1994) attempts to reconcile (a) and (b) by suggesting that 'God acts by means of ideas' might just mean that God uses the efficacy of ideas as His instrument. Since Malebranche locates ideas 'in' God, Jolley continues, this comes close to saying that God acts on our minds *qua* locus of ideas, and in so saying 'very nearly' makes (a) and (b) equivalent. Jolley offers further support for this equivalence by citing Malebranche's remark that 'ideas are only the efficacious substance of the divinity' (*Conversations*, III, 79). But Jolley then objects, as in II.i above, that Malebranche is again wrongly treating abstract entities, or God *qua* locus of ideas, as causal. Finally, Jolley worries that equating (a) and (b) in this way requires us to 'set on one side possible complications posed by occasionalism' (220).

(P) solves all this nicely as well. If ideas are identical to divine volitions, then (a) and (b) are indeed equivalent, avoiding Alquié's objection. But since they are not abstract entities they avoid Jolley's first objection, and since they are divine volitions they avoid Jolley's worry about occasionalism: God, via His will, remains the only true cause. Again, *qua* PDVs ideas are aptly described as 'the efficacious substance of the divinity.'

Jolley (1990) concludes that it is 'futile to attempt a real defence of Malebranche's claim that ideas have causal properties' (76). Instead he offers an account of what might have led Malebranche to his 'mistaken' claim. Malebranche claims that ideas are prior to perceptions; Jolley suggests this is a logical priority, and that that would, for Malebranche, allow perceptions to have a kind of causal dependency on ideas. But even Jolley notes that this would not be very persuasive for Malebranche, since it at best establishes that ideas are causally necessary for perceptions, not that they are causally sufficient, which is what is desired. I would add that ideas, for Malebranche, also cause sensations, and ideas are not logically prior to sensations in the way they may be for perceptions. Jolley's suggestion thus would not explicate the power of ideas to cause sensations.

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1688 *DMR* (78), and Alquié (1974) finds a reference to it in a letter whose date may be as early as 1684 (209, notes 7, 8, referring to *OC* 18, 280); in my view it is at least implicit even in Malebranche's conception of our 'union with God' in the 1674 preface to *Search*. Nevertheless we need not resolve the issue here. This section merely shows that (P) fits with the efficacy of ideas *whenever* Malebranche introduces the claim.

32 Jolley (1994) cites *Entretiens* 408, 409, where Malebranche makes both claims (219).

(P) obviates this whole line of inquiry. Ideas, qua divine volitions, are at least the right kind of thing to cause both sensations and pure perceptions in a way consistent with occasionalism.

### iii. Ideas as Archetypes

Malebranche speaks of ideas being 'archetypes' or 'models' of beings, in particular of possible beings.<sup>33</sup> On Malebranche's view of the original creation, God consulted the archetypes in His wisdom to determine which possible world to actualize, then created the world on the model of those archetypes.<sup>34</sup>

How shall we understand this process on (P)? One option: for God to consult His wisdom is, in part, for Him to consult what is possible; if ideas are PDVs, then in contemplating archetypes God is contemplating His own possible volitions (including their contents), ultimately choosing which volitions to execute. An idea may thus be called a 'model' or archetype of  $x$ , and be 'located' in God's wisdom, insofar as the corresponding volition to create  $x$  remains unexecuted and merely an object of contemplation. To create a being on the model of an idea, or on the basis of an archetype, then, would be to execute a possible volition after contemplating it.

God, on this view, knows what is possible by consulting His wisdom and knows what is actual by knowing what He has decreed: in the former He knows His PDVs, and in the latter He knows which of these He has executed.<sup>35,36</sup> Similarly, we, in our intellectual perception of ideas, know

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33 Intelligible extension is 'the idea or the archetype of created extension' while created extension is 'that of which this idea is the model' (*Dialogue*, 101); cf. *DMR* 2.10, 38, and *Recueil*, 99. '[The idea of extension] represents [bodies'] nature, in being the archetype on which God created them.... Certainly God saw the world before creation, as He sees it now. It is true that He saw it only as possible, prior to or independent of His decrees' (*Réponse*, 287).

34 'In order for the plan which God freely took to make the world to be wise and well-informed, it is necessary that ... the model of the world and of an infinity of possible worlds be prior to the volition or to the decree of creation' (*Réponse*, 308); 'The wisdom of God reveals to Him an infinity of ideas of different works, and all the possible ways of executing His plans' (*Treatise*, I.12, 116); cf. *Treatise* I.13, 116.

35 'Certainly God saw the world before creation, as He sees it now. It is true that He only saw it as possible, prior to or independent of His decrees. But with His decrees assumed, He saw it as actually existing' (*Réponse*, 287) (I take 'decrees' to be executed volitions). 'It is certain that God contains within Himself in an intelligible fashion the perfections of all the beings He has created or can create, and that through these intelligible perfections He knows the essence of all things, as through His volitions

what is possible, while it is generally only through sensation that we know of the actual existence of any particular object.<sup>37</sup>

For a second option for cashing out (P) on archetypes, recall that volitions are primitively possessed of representational content. A given volition may thus be considered with respect to God, or with respect to its content. When considered with respect to God, a volition is construed dynamically or actively, as the manifestation of divine activity; when considered with respect to its content, it is construed statically or non-actively. To speak of an idea as a 'model' or an 'archetype,' then, might be to construe the volition non-actively, with respect to its content; to speak of creating the being on the model of the idea is to speak of the

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He knows their existence' (*Elucidations* 10, 617) (I take 'essences' here to concern the possibility of a thing, and 'volitions' to be decrees). 'The infinitely perfect Being sees in his own essence an infinity of possible worlds' *Dialogue*, 101; God contains within Himself the possibilities of things (via His PDVs), but these things only become actualized through His decrees.

- 36 An anonymous referee noted that, since Malebranche's God sees various possible worlds which He does not create, (i) there must exist uncreated 'pure possibles,' and that (ii) 'there must be some distinction between God's wisdom and power' (since the possibles exist in the former but are not brought about by the latter). Now God's 'power' may refer to two things, either (A) God's capacities (not all of which are exercised) or (B) what God in fact *actually* wills. If (A) it refers to the former, then, on (P), God's wisdom indeed is identical with His power — in direct accordance with the divine simplicity which Malebranche repeatedly and explicitly stresses (*Search* 3.2.6, 231; cf. n. 27 above, and Part III.iv below). Simplicity is preserved because there is nothing in God's wisdom not in His power, and vice versa: (a) all the 'possibles' in His wisdom, insofar as they are identical to or grounded in PDVs, are also in His power, which is constituted by His capacities, i.e. PDVs; and (b) since He has complete knowledge of all His capacities or PDVs, as well as of which of His capacities He has exercised, everything in His power is also in His wisdom. If (B) God's 'power' refers to what God actually wills, then there is indeed a distinction between God's wisdom and power, as the referee suggests, but it is one which (P) accommodates: God's wisdom includes His knowledge of all possibilities (i.e. PDVs), while only a subset of these, viz. the exercised PDVs, would constitute His power. But even this distinction is ultimately consistent with the divine simplicity Malebranche stresses, as long as divine simplicity may be reconciled, as Malebranche believes it may, with a multiplicity of distinguishable divine states and faculties (cf. notes 8, 27 above).
- 37 In grasping ideas intellectually we are grasping God's essence only insofar as it is participable by or representative of material creatures. 'Consequently it is not strictly speaking God whom you see, but only the matter He *can* produce'; 'God enlightens us ... according to His general reality and relative to His *possible* works' (*DMR* 2.2, 21-22, my italics). Meanwhile, 'God reveals the existence of His creatures to us in two ways: through the authority of the holy Scripture, and through the mediation of our senses' (*DMR* 1.5, 9).

volition with respect to its being a manifestation of divine activity, something exercisable by God.

Walton (1969) has a different linguistic intuition here:

It must also be noted that unlike “idea,” “model” calls attention to God’s activity as well as His Wisdom for He not only *knows* what He is doing, but He also is *using* what He knows in order to create. Malebranche is shifting from “ideas” to such phrases as “*les idées ou les archétypes*” or “*le modèle*” to emphasize that truths and ideas are more than static objects. (150, n. 40)

If you prefer Walton’s linguistic intuition — where ‘model’ and ‘archetype’ suggest activity while ‘idea’ does not — then note how well (P) fits Malebranche’s shifting language here as well, on both options above. On the first: a PDV gets executed, but it’s the very same volition which either is or is not executed; as such any given volition may be considered from a static or a dynamic perspective. The static ‘idea’ language suggests the former, on which the PDV is merely an object of contemplation; the dynamic ‘archetype’ or ‘model’ language suggests the latter, reflecting the fact that the given volition may be executed and so result in the creation of something. On the second option: the static ‘idea’ language refers to the volition considered with respect to its content, while the dynamic ‘archetype/model’ language refers to the volition considered with respect to divine activity.

#### *iv. Involuntarism re: The Eternal Truths*

Malebranche, contra Descartes, denies that the eternal truths are dependent upon free divine volition.<sup>38</sup> This fact would seem to raise trouble for any attempt to identify ideas with divine volitions, for the involuntarism suggests that eternal truths, and the ideas which constitute them, are uncreated, while (P) would seem to suggest that they are created. But in fact, I think, we may resist this conclusion.

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38 Cf. note 40 below. ‘But the reason we consult is ... independent and necessary ... more independent than God Himself ... [If] eternal laws and truths depended on God, if they had been established by a free volition of the Creator ... there would no longer be any true science...’ (*Elucidations* 10, 614-5). A related passage concerning relations of perfection: ‘[Everything] is inverted if we claim that God is above Reason and has no rule in His plans other than His will.... According to this principle, the universe is perfect because God willed it. Monsters are works as perfect as others according to the plans of God.... However we invert the world, whatever chaos we make out of it, it will always be equally admirable.... All the beauty of the universe must therefore disappear in view of that great principle that God is above the Reason which enlightens all minds, and that His wholly arbitrary will is the sole rule of His actions’ (*DMR* 9.13, 168-9).

To see why, consider, first, how (P) fares with some additional properties of ideas. In addition to thinking that ideas are efficacious and serve as archetypes, Malebranche also says that they are immutable, eternal, and necessary.<sup>39</sup> As we saw in Part I, that fact gives us reason to identify ideas with God's representational states in general, lest we posit the existence of something non-divine sharing these divine properties. But now consider further that, with his involuntarism, Malebranche holds that God's power extends (and is limited) to that which is logically possible.<sup>40</sup> To say His power is so limited is to say that the domain of the logically possible is not itself directly subject to God's will. But if what God is capable of bringing about is 'limited' in this way, then which volitions it is possible for Him to have is not itself directly subject to His free will.<sup>41</sup> But if so, then the set of PDVs will be immutable, eternal, and necessary. If ideas are PDVs, then, they will be immutable, eternal, and

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39 *DMR* 1.8-9, 14-15.

40 'First Objection: God wills order ... His will does not presuppose order... If God willed that twice two not be four... This would be a truth... Reply: This upsets everything ... This consequence is clear to anyone who follows step by step the false principle that God produces order and truth by an entirely free will ... God can do nothing ... without knowledge... His volitions suppose something; but what they suppose is not something created' (*Elucidations* 8, 586; note that while Lennon/Olscamp leave out the word 'not' in 'If God willed that twice two not be four ...,' I've filled it in on the basis of *OC* III, 84). (See *Elucidations* 10, 614ff. for a general rejection of voluntarism; cf. note 38 above.)

41 This may sound awkward, but makes sense. For example, God cannot will that a round square exist, or that a stone is more valuable than a human, but that He cannot have these volitions is not *itself* subject to His will: it is not the case (for example) that He wills that He be unable to will that a round square exist, and it is not the case that He is able to will that He be able to will that a round square exist. (For some related discussion, see III.iii.a below.) Similarly, God does have (say) a PDV that a circle of diameter  $d$  exists; but *that* He has such a PDV is not directly subject to His will in the same way. One way to make this point is that God is unable to have certain kinds of meta-volitions. Another way is to say that God is incapable of willing arbitrarily (or against order, or Reason) — 'Dieu veut, Dieu aime les choses à proportion qu'elles sont aimables' (*Recueil*, 655) — so there is an important sense in which just which PDVs He has is *not* up to Him: thus Malebranche denies that 'God produces order and truth by an entirely free will ...' (*Elucidations* 8, 586). (Such 'limits,' however, are 'internal' limits, and are consistent with divine omnipotence as Malebranche construes it; see *Recueil*, 655-6. Thus the sense in which God (necessarily) cannot 'contradict Himself,' or 'act in ways which aren't the most wise, which don't bear enough of the character of His attributes, and which don't have, with respect to the work they must produce, the greatest relationship of simplicity and fecundity which they can' (*Recueil*, 656), is the sense in which His PDVs are necessary.)

necessary. But then if eternal truths just involve relations between ideas,<sup>42</sup> and ideas are PDVs, and the domain of the possible volitions is not itself subject to free divine volition as just described, then the relations between those volitions would not be subject to free divine volition either — so the eternal truths would not be directly dependent upon free divine volition, and would be immutable, eternal, and necessary.<sup>43,44</sup>

The points in the preceding paragraph cannot be overstressed. Given Malebranche's involuntarism, it is natural to think that the eternal truths do not depend on God's will, and so to resist (P). But in fact all that must be resisted is the identification of ideas, hence of eternal truths, with the contents of freely exercised volitions. It is perfectly consistent with that constraint to identify ideas with PDVs themselves. Indeed, on my account we may understand exactly why Malebranche (a) considers Reason 'coeternal and consubstantial with [God]' (*Elucidations* 10, 614), and (b) asserts that God does not 'create' wisdom but 'is always begetting it through the necessity of His being' (*Elucidations* 8, 586). Reason and wisdom, as manifest in ideas qua PDVs, are identical, in effect, with the *structure*, and not *content*, of God's will, and this structure is not itself subject to God's will as described above, hence is uncreated. Or put differently: while God is perfectly free to exercise any of His capacities, which capacities He has — which PDVs — is not up to Him but is simply part of what He is. Thus the structure of God's will is precisely describable as 'coeternal and consubstantial' with God, as well as '[begotten] through the necessity of His being.'<sup>45</sup>

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42 'Now, truths are but relations of equality or inequality between these intelligible beings [i.e. ideas] ...' (*Elucidations* 10, 617); cf. *Search* 3.2.6, 234, *Méditations Chrétien-nes*, IV.4, 37.

43 'Truths, therefore, as well as ideas, are necessary and immutable. It has always been true that twice two is four and this cannot become false. This is clear, without it being necessary that God as sovereign legislator has established these truths ...' (*Elucidations* 10, 618).

44 The preceding shows that Malebranche's involuntarism about the eternal truths is accommodated by (P). What remains to be seen is whether the specific relations between ideas which result in the eternal truths is itself properly grounded in the relations between PDVs. That question requires an investigation into the relationship between volitions and their representational contents; unfortunately, neither Malebranche nor anyone else of the period has anything to say about that relationship.

45 See III.iii, (a-iii) below for related discussion.

Conjoining this point with the earlier point that any ontological alternative is unacceptable, it seems to me that (P) is not merely consistent with Malebranche's involuntarism, but in fact nicely elucidates it and may well provide its most satisfactory overall interpretation.<sup>46</sup>

*v. Other Properties of Ideas*

Malebranche ascribes yet additional properties to ideas: they are infinite,<sup>47</sup> publicly accessible,<sup>48</sup> they pre- and post-exist and are independent of and distinct from our states (or modes) of perceiving them,<sup>49</sup> and they are 'so clear that we can discover by simple perception whether such and such modes belong to them' (*Elucidations* 3, 561). In addition, they obviously provide the contents of our representational states. How does (P) fare with these?

Consider 'infinity.' Malebranche appears to mean various things in saying that ideas are infinite. (a) One is that there is an infinite number of them.<sup>50</sup> (b) Another is that the content of an idea may be infinite, as in the idea of infinite intelligible extension<sup>51</sup> or in the idea of an infinite being.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the content of an idea may 'contain' the infinite, for example in the way that intelligible extension is infinitely divisible<sup>53</sup> or capable of infinite modifications.<sup>54</sup> (c) Another possibility, noted by Jolley (1990), is that ideas are 'inexhaustible' and infinitely complex in the sense that one can 'ceaselessly' derive new truths from, say, the ideas of geometrical figures.<sup>55</sup> (d) Yet another possibility is that the possible denotation of an

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46 Cf. n. 36 above.

47 *Conversations*, III, 74; *DMR* 1.8-9, 14-15.

48 The idea of extension is 'common to all minds' (*DMR* 1.8, 14); ideas are 'common to all intellects' (*DMR* 1.9, 16); 'I am so certain that people, angels and even God see the same truths I see, that I see it is impossible for me to doubt that it is the same light which illumines all minds ...' (*DMR* 8.12, 141).

49 *DMR* 1.7 ff., 12ff., esp. 16; *DMR* 5.6, 77; *Conversations*, III, 71.

50 *Search* 3.2.4, 226; 3.2.6, 232; *Elucidations* 10, 614.

51 *DMR* 1.8-9, 14-15; *Dialogue* 68; *Elucidations* 10, 614, 626.

52 *DMR* 2.4-5, 22-23; *Dialogue* 67; *Search* 3.2.6, 232. (Though see III.iii.b below.)

53 *CDM* 87 (*OC* 19, 886); cf. *Search* 1.6.1, 26.

54 *Search* 3.1.1, 199.

55 *Recueil*, 153, 159; *Elucidations* 10, 614.

idea is infinite: the idea of a circle is infinite (or 'contains the infinite') in that the class of possible circles is infinitely large.<sup>56</sup> Compare, too, Malebranche's remark that intelligible extension is 'the intelligible idea of an infinity of possible worlds' (*Méditations Chrétiennes*, 99).

(P) is consistent with all these senses. (a) An infinite number of PDVs corresponds nicely to the infinite number of ideas. (b) Volitions, human or divine, are possessed of representational content. The content of a PDV may well be infinite, as it is possible for God to will an infinite extension into being;<sup>57</sup> thus the content of an idea may be infinite. Similarly, the infinite divisibility and infinite modifiability notions would be reflected in God's ability, via an infinite number of distinct volitions, to create parts of extension or specific modifications.<sup>58</sup> (c) The same holds for the truths Jolley mentions which we may 'ceaselessly' derive, since these are truths concerning the possible modifications of extension. Finally, (d) the connection between ideas and their possible denotations maps nicely onto the relationship between a volition and its effects: The possible volition to create a circular object may in principle be executed an infinite number of times.<sup>59</sup>

What about the fact that ideas are publicly accessible? That is accommodated as long as they are identified with anything external to an individual, and PDVs certainly do the trick. Similarly, PDVs both pre- and post-exist our perceivings of them, and are independent of and distinct from our modes of perceiving, just like ideas.

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56 Jolley (1990), 75-6, reads Gueroult (1955), 38, this way. Cf. *DMR* 2.4, 22, *Elucidations* 10, 614.

57 'Yes, the idea of extension is infinite, but its *ideatum* possibly not' (*CDM*, 104); I take Malebranche's qualification 'possibly' here to suggest that the *ideatum* is also possibly infinite. (Elsewhere, however, Malebranche writes that 'no created reality can be ... infinite ...' (*Search* 3.2.4, 227), including extension in the claim. Strategies for reconciling the PDV to create an infinite extension with the uncreatability of an infinite extension I address in III.iii.a below.)

58 For some general relevant discussion, see *CDM* 87-88.

59 'For the idea of a circle in general or the essence of a circle represents or applies to an infinite number of circles.... For to think of a circle in general is to perceive an infinite number of circles as a single circle' (*DMR* 2.4, 22). (P) explains at least one sense of this perfectly: one PDV is executable an infinite number of times, hence in perceiving that PDV (along with its content) we perceive a single circle which yet 'contains' an infinite number of circles. (See III.iii.a below for discussion of another sense.)

What about the clarity of ideas? Here note that Malebranche offers a definition of clarity, but no *ontological* account of the distinction between clear and confused ideas. This need not be considered a criticism, for the clarity of an idea would be related to its content, and (as noted, e.g. note 9) no one has anything substantive to say about content. One response here, then, may be to note that (P) at least has the tools to accommodate the clarity of an idea, by locating it in the (primitive) content of the corresponding PDV.

Another response may also be available, one which makes use of the results of section II.vi below. Perhaps an idea is clear to the degree to which it is perceived clearly; and to perceive (say) the idea of extension clearly is in fact to be placed in the relevant metaphysical relation (i.e. 'illumination'), which itself comes in degrees, not merely to one PDV but to a large (or infinite) set of related PDVs. The reason we can, by 'simple perception' discover all the possible modes of extension is that in perceiving the idea of extension we are in fact in the illumination relation to a high degree to all the PDVs concerning extension. I do not claim that Malebranche holds this view, for he appears to hold no view on the ontology of clarity; I merely suggest that (P) offers him the resources to develop such a view.

Finally, ideas provide the contents of our representational states. Malebranche, again, says little about how this process works. His primary concern is to argue — contra Arnauld — that our ability to manifest content requires our becoming related to something external to us, and in God.<sup>60</sup> Exactly how that external relation generates our representational content he does not attempt to explain, any more than Arnauld attempts to explain just how our own mental modes intrinsically exhibit content. With that caveat in mind, Malebranche's view (as I'll next develop) is simply that our perception or thought of a circle (say) will require our being 'illuminated' by the idea of a circle. On (P), it will thus require our becoming related in some manner to the PDV to create a circle, in such a way as to partially inherit its content.

#### *vi. The 'Indirect' Perception of Bodies*

Representationalist theories of mind easily suggest a 'veil of ideas,' viz. that ideas intervene between us and the objects we visually perceive. On

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60 His general strategy is to argue that representational content involves certain properties — such as many of those discussed in this and the preceding section, with special emphasis on infinity — that require ontological grounding in an infinite being. (See II.vii, and notes 9, 72, and 86.)

such a view, we do not perceive bodies at all, strictly speaking; we merely perceive ideas.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps this conception is fueled by the radical skepticism of Descartes's first Meditation: if we perceive only ideas and not bodies, then it is clear how it may turn out that no bodies correspond to our ideas.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps, too, the 'veil of ideas' conception is aided by dualism: minds being so distinct in nature from body, they seem incapable even of representing body, hence must be aware only of themselves.<sup>63</sup> Add to this the widely accepted view that at least ideas of secondary qualities don't resemble what's in bodies, and it is a short step to say that, strictly speaking, we do not see bodies at all; we are merely aware of our own mental states representing them.

It is easy to include Malebranche here, since 'ideas' play the pivotal role in his theory of perception, he uses arguments reminiscent of the first Meditation,<sup>64</sup> he accepts dualism, he treats sensations as mere modifications of the mind,<sup>65</sup> and he often writes that we perceive ideas 'directly' and bodies only 'indirectly.'<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, following Cook (1991) and Nadler (1992), I suggest that we reject such a classification.

Let us begin by noting two points: (a) Despite generally speaking otherwise, Malebranche does state that it is bodies we perceive, not ideas, even if we only perceive bodies by means of ideas.<sup>67</sup> (b) While he admits the possibility of radical skepticism, he does *not* generate it by denying

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61 Arnauld, for example, ultimately seems to read Malebranche this way (*True/False*, Ch. 11, 93ff; *OA*, 38, 228ff.), as does Locke ('Examination,' 239). In essence, too, this is how many recent commentators read Malebranche insofar as they treat ideas as any sort of stand-in for bodies. (See Nadler [1992], 163 n. 16, for numerous references.)

62 As such one might think that direct theories of perception, such as Arnauld's, have some advantage with regard to radical skepticism. Cook (1991) has shown that this is not so. (Cf. Nadler [1989], 133.)

63 This point is pushed heavily by Foucher in his *Critique*.

64 *Search* 3.2.1, 217; cf. *Dialogue*, 69.

65 '[Sensations] are nothing but modes of the mind ...' (*Search* 1.1.1, 2).

66 *Recueil*, 959. ('[If] God has created some being which corresponds to my idea as to its archetype, I can say that my idea represents this being, and that in seeing [the idea] directly I see [this being] indirectly' [*Réponse*, cited in Peppers (2003), 14].)

67 '[We] do not so much see the ideas of things as the things themselves that are represented by ideas.... [We] do not say that we see the idea of the square, which is joined to the mind, but only the square that is external to it' (*Search* 3.2.6, 231); 'But as for things outside the soul, we can perceive them only by means of ideas ...' (*Search* 3.2.1, 218);

that we see bodies; instead he says consistently, as Cook and Nadler show, that we do see bodies (though 'indirectly').<sup>68</sup>

Considered disjointly, (a) and (b) each challenge interpreting Malebranche as supporting a 'veil of ideas'; considered conjointly, they may be reconciled by taking 'perceiving a body by means of an idea' as equivalent to the 'indirect perception' of the body. The obvious problem then is this: just what is it to perceive a body indirectly, by means of an idea, if it is not to perceive an idea *in lieu of* a body — which seems equivalent to not perceiving the body? Cook raises this problem but does not offer a response.<sup>69</sup> I believe that a response is available, and it is one which (P) fits nicely.

On my view, Malebranche's account of visual perception is roughly this. When we perceive (say) a circular object we have a sensory awareness of certain colors, warmth, etc., conjoined with our grasping the idea of a circle. To say that we grasp the idea of a circle is to say at least that our state of perceiving has the content of a circle (or that a circular body is present). So an explanation of visual perception requires both an explanation of our sensory awareness and of how we come to be in states with representational contents. Malebranche explains the former via a theory on which the mind is intrinsically or primitively aware of its own modes. With regard to the latter, Malebranche claims that our being in states with contents requires our being related to something external to us, and in God.

Now to speak about the content of a state of perception is to speak about just *what* is perceived, or the object of perception. But there is a systematic ambiguity in these expressions. Suppose Fred disguises himself as George. When I perceive him so disguised, there are two legitimate answers to the question of what I perceive. On the one hand, it is Fred; but on the other, it is George (for I perceive Fred *as* George). Let us call the first reading of the question the 'de re' reading, and the second the 'de dicto.' Then we may say that, de re, the object of perception is Fred, while de dicto, it is George. When I speak, henceforth, of the content of a perception, I shall have in mind the object of perception, or simply perception, construed de dicto. (I shall refer to perception construed de

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68 'I believe that we see bodies, but not in themselves immediately and directly.... One is not wrong to believe we see them. One is only wrong when one believes that one sees them directly ...' (*Recueil*, 959).

69 Nadler does offer a response: ideas *qua* concepts mediate perception of bodies without being objects of perception (171ff.). This is an excellent response once given the claim that ideas are concepts, but it is ultimately that claim I am contesting throughout this paper.

re as 'perception-dr,' and perception construed de dicto as 'perception-dd'; I shall use 'perception' *simpliciter* when the distinction isn't important.).

On my account of Malebranche's view, then, to say that we are in a state whose content is that of (say) a circle is to say that we perceive-dd a circle; and for us to be in such a state it is necessary (and also sufficient) that we perceive-dr not a circle but the *idea* of a circle, which is in (or ultimately identical to) God. Malebranche's borrowed name for this process (or relation) of perception-dr is 'illumination,' and he says little about it<sup>70</sup> except to use a variety of metaphors in describing it<sup>71</sup> and to argue, in arguing for the vision in God doctrine, that some such process is necessary for us to manifest representational content. The main point for us now is that illumination is some causal and/or metaphysical process or relation that grounds our having states with content; on our own, we cannot have such states.<sup>72</sup> But while ideas are one of the relata of this relation, and as such are part of the *explanans* of our having content, they are not themselves the content of our states.<sup>73</sup> Again: we

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70 After sketching his illumination theory to Régis, Malebranche writes: 'It should not be required of me that I explain more clearly the manner in which God acts ceaselessly in minds: I admit that I know no more than this' (*Réponse*, 288).

71 For example, he speaks of ideas being 'received' by us (*Search* 1.1, 3), or 'present' to us (*Recueil*, 94, 135), or the objects 'closest' to us in perception (*Search* 3.2.1, 217), of our being 'touched' and 'affected' by ideas and of our minds becoming 'united' or 'intimately joined' to them and/or to God (*Recueil*, 212; *Search* 3.2.1, 217).

72 The 'on our own' is meant quite strictly. Malebranche holds not merely that we are *causally* incapable of generating representational states, but *metaphysically* incapable of manifesting them on our own: our mind's modes are intrinsically non-representational. ('What is the real question (*l'état de la question*)? Mr. Arnauld claims that the modalities of the soul are essentially representative of objects distinct from the soul; and I maintain that these modalities are only sensations which represent nothing to the soul distinct from itself' (*Recueil*, 50); more generally, '[My] substance and my modalities are but darkness' (*DMR* 3.7, 35; cf. *DMR* 5.5, 77); 'But it seems to me rash to wish to maintain this view: ... that with the soul made for thinking, it has within itself all that it needs to perceive objects' (*Search* 3.2.5, 228); cf. *Recueil*, 57ff.). (See Jolley [1994], section 1, and note 86, and II.vii and III.i below, for further relevant discussion.)

73 On this view, the idea 'represents' insofar as it allows the object to be known or perceived; a representation is that which mediates perception, but is not the object of perception. (Cf. Nadler [1992]: '[to] represent ... is simply to make that thing known without the thing itself being present' (48); Bracken [1963]: 'Malebranche speaks of these Ideas as representative entities for he sees them as representing, in the sense of making known, material things' (2); also Walton [1969], 385.) Here Malebranche is simply using, I suggest, a long-established distinction between the

perceive-dr the idea of a circle, but the content of our perception, what we perceive-dd, is just a circle.<sup>74</sup>

Conjoining the preceding sketch with (P): An idea is a PDV. The idea of a circle is (say) God's possible volition to create a circular object. For us to perceive a circle (say while perceiving the sun) is for our mind to enter into the illumination relation with that PDV (to perceive-dr the PDV). That PDV is a state or aspect of God which primitively manifests the content of a circle. In that illumination relation with that PDV we inherit or share its content. In perceiving-dr the idea, then, we come to perceive-dd a circle.

On this account it is clear that Malebranche does *not* subscribe to a 'veil of ideas.' When we perceive that circular object in the sky, what we perceive-dd, the content of our perceptual state, is indeed that circular object, not the idea of a circular object — so we do not perceive the idea in lieu of the body. Yet my account also explains why Malebranche is so easily (mis-)read as supporting a 'veil of ideas' theory: to do so is to take his doctrine of the indirect perception of bodies to concern only perception-dd, when in fact it ultimately concerns perception-dr.<sup>75</sup>

This observation then returns us to our original question: What is it to perceive a body indirectly, by means of an idea? In fact two possibilities present themselves, a narrower and a broader.

(1) *Narrower*: 'Indirect' applies not to the content of our perceptual state but *only* to the process by which we come to be in that state. Our perceiving-dd a circular object requires our entering into an illumination (or perception-dr) relation not directly with the object itself but with the idea of the object. (So ideas *are* perceived 'directly' insofar as we enter into the illumination (or perception-dr) relation directly with them.)

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object of perception and the means by which one perceives that object. (Cf. Nadler [1989], 77, who makes this point and cites Aquinas's *Summa*, I.85, A.2.) That ideas are 'means of perception' is also supported by Malebranche's frequent stress on their efficacy (see II.ii above). (Nadler [1989], 77, also cites Alquié [1974], Gueroult [1955], and Robinet [1965] as commentators recognizing Malebranche's stress on the causal (mediating) role of ideas.)

74 '[...]it is the same thing for the soul to perceive an object as to receive the idea that represents the object' (*Search*, 1.1, 3). The *object* is perceived(-dd) when the *idea* is 'received' (i.e. perceived-dr). Or: 'In order for the mind to perceive an object, it is absolutely necessary for the idea of that object to be actually present to it' (*Recueil*, 94). Again, the *object* is perceived(-dd) only if the *idea* is 'present' (i.e. perceived-dr).

75 Alternatively: it is to construe his conception of 'representations' as 'objects of perception' rather than as 'means by which perception occurs.' (See note 73.)

(2) *Broader*: 'Indirect' also applies to the content of our perceptual state. Here we might say that the content resulting from our illumination relation to (or perceiving-dr) the PDV to create a circle is perhaps best described not as of a circle, but of the *possibility* of a circular object; in perceiving-dd a circle, what we are perceiving-dd is the 'essence' of a circular body, viz. the possibility of there existing a body with that property.<sup>76</sup> The body itself is a particularized existing of that very same essence. To perceive-dd that essence, then, just is to perceive-dd that very body's essence. It is not to perceive-dd that body in its full, concrete, particularized existence, but it is to perceive-dd *that body* (not a 'veil of ideas') insofar as that body just *is* a particularized existing of that essence. Thus we may understand why Malebranche would say that we DO indeed visually perceive bodies, because we perceive-dd the essences which, particularized through existence, constitute them. Yet we do not perceive-dd bodies directly, since we do not grasp their existence directly; at best, our perceiving that they exist is a function of our awareness of our own sensory modifications.<sup>77</sup>

I see no reason to choose between (1) and (2); they seem consistent with each other and with Malebranche's texts, which may well equivocate between them. In any case (P) fits each of them quite nicely: (1) maintains only that perception-dd requires perception-dr of an idea, and is neutral on the precise nature of ideas, while (2) merely supplements (P) with an additional claim (about our representational contents), and so is at least consistent with (P). Or perhaps (2) is even better than 'at least consistent': If our representational content is best described as of a 'possible' circle, it is quite appropriate to see it grounded in our relation to a PDV, which is or grounds the very possibility of a circle.

Two points are worth noting.

(a) Our tendency is to construe an idea as quite distinct from the thing of which it is an idea (or 'ideatum'). That is correct, but can be a bit misleading in light of (2) above. For there is indeed a quite intimate relationship, on (P) and in light of (2), between idea and ideatum. An idea qua PDV is either identical to, or at least grounds, the essence of the body.<sup>78</sup> But the body just is a particularized existing of that very essence.

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76 Recall the 'archetypes' discussion in II.iii above.

77 God 'discloses creatures to us ... (1) as possible when the perception of the idea affecting us is pure, (2) as existing when the perception is sensible' (*Elucidations* 6, 575).

78 The two options: (i) that God has a PDV to create (say) a circular object of a certain type just *is* the very possibility of there existing such a circle (hence is identical to

So the idea either 'grounds' the body, or the body is a particularized existing of the idea.<sup>79</sup> This intimate relationship is only emphasized by Malebranche's failure explicitly to distinguish perception-dr and perception-dd. On (2), in perceiving-dr the idea what we perceive-dd is the essence of the body; absent the distinction, to perceive the idea just is to perceive the essence which constitutes the body. Conjoin this idea-body intimacy with Malebranche's insistence that ideas are in God, and it is hardly surprising that Malebranche was subject to the charge of Spinozism!

(b) And yet we must remain ever wary of keeping distinct the idea and the ideatum, for failure to do so, according to Malebranche, is precisely what leads to Spinozism.<sup>80</sup>

The advantage of (P), here, is that it provides a clear way for Malebranche to accommodate both (a) and (b). On (P), the idea of a body is God's possible volition to create the body; the body is what results when that volition is executed. Idea stands to body roughly as efficient cause stands to effect.<sup>81</sup> That is as distinct as anyone might like. Yet we can still accommodate the close relationship between idea and body via the close relationship between the *content* of the divine volition and the consequences of its execution: for from the execution of the PDV to create *x*, it is precisely *x* that results.<sup>82</sup>

In brief, then, what has made Malebranche so difficult to interpret is that he simultaneously inclines towards a very intimate relationship between idea and ideatum yet must resist the Spinozism by insisting on their distinction. (P) offers him the means to achieve both desiderata. PDVs are aspects of God with both representative content and causal

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the essence of the circle), or (ii) the content of the relevant PDV is itself best characterized not as of a circle, but as of a possible circle, in which case the essence of the circle is perhaps best identified with the content of the PDV and the PDV itself in some primitive way 'grounds' the content. We needn't resolve which option is preferable here.

79 Recall that creatures are 'participations' in the divine being: '[Every] creature is but an imperfect participation in the divine being' (*Search* 3.2.6, 232). Further, 'God's ideas of creatures are, as Saint Thomas says, only His essence, insofar as it is participable ...' (*Elucidations* 10, 625).

80 Cf. *CDM*, 104.

81 Though see III.i, and note 82, below.

82 Note that this close relationship allows (P) to accommodate various causal analyses here: insofar as the PDV includes the body in its content, we could consider the PDV as an exemplary or formal cause of the body as well. (Cf. *Réponse* 307-8; *DMR* 8.12, 142.)

efficacy; by virtue of the former Malebranche gets the intimacy, by virtue of the latter he gets the distinction.

vii. *Vision in God*

As above, when we perceive a material body such as a circular object (for example), we both are aware of certain sensory modifications in ourselves and are in a state whose content is of a circle. But since the content of our perception, i.e. what we perceive, viz. the circle, is infinite, immutable, eternal, and necessary, it must itself exist in God.<sup>83</sup> In that sense we perceive the object 'in God.'<sup>84</sup>

How does (P) fare with this doctrine? As above, perception-dd is grounded in perception-dr; since the circle we perceive-dd is infinite, immutable, eternal, and necessary as discussed earlier, perception-dd of it (Malebranche claims) must be grounded in perception-dr of a being which shares those properties. Perception-dr of a PDV fits the bill perfectly, for it just is perception-dr of God, in exactly the required way.

Note, too, that (P) (as developed in II.v above) perfectly fits Malebranche's own characterization of his debate with Arnauld.<sup>85</sup> That debate is not — as many, starting with Arnauld, have thought — about whether ideas in some way intervene between us and bodies: Malebranche also holds (as sketched above) that what we perceive, the content of our perception, is bodies, not ideas. Rather, the debate is over what is necessary to ground or explain our manifesting such contents, where Arnauld claims we need invoke merely our own mental modes and Malebranche claims we require a relation to God.<sup>86</sup> That is precisely

83 'That which is thus finite in itself *in essendo* cannot be infinite *in representando* ... because the nothing is not visible and one cannot perceive in the soul what is not there' (*Recueil*, 954): if we perceive something infinite (etc.), what we perceive must be in God. See Fafara (1978) for discussion of this argument.

84 The preceding was a very brief sketch of just one of Malebranche's many strategies, both positive and negative, for arguing for the vision in God doctrine. For a thorough account and analysis of his many strategies, see Nadler (1992), chapters 3 and 4.

85 See Nadler (1992), 183-5, for useful discussion, from which I borrow in this paragraph.

86 'What is the real question (*l'état de la question*)? Mr. Arnauld claims that the modalities of the soul are essentially representative of objects distinct from the soul; and I maintain that these modalities are only sensations which represent nothing to the soul distinct from itself' (*Recueil*, 50); 'I have always declared to M. Arnauld that if it were true [that all our perceptions are essentially representative], he would be

what Malebranche is claiming, on my view, in insisting that perception-*dr* be grounded in perception-*dr* of a PDV.

Further Malebranche both (a) equates ideas with the divine essence insofar as it is participable by creatures<sup>87</sup> and (b) holds that, in perceiving ideas in God, we are perceiving the divine essence, not absolutely in itself but in relation to creatures.<sup>88</sup> These fit (P) perfectly. As noted earlier with respect to (a), a PDV is the very possibility of some creature deriving its existence from God. And with respect to (b), PDVs are included within the divine essence, but no single PDV exhausts the divine essence or captures it in itself, and any single PDV is exactly the divine essence considered in relation to the possible creature its execution would create. The ideas God has of the world, i.e. the ways in which God's being may become limited hence manifest in finite creatures, 'are not different from Himself' (*Search* 3.2.5, 229) in exactly the way that His volitions, the actions by *which* He may limit His being and manifest it in finite creatures, are not different from Himself.

### III Some Possible Problems With (P)

So far I've sketched how (P) either casts a new spin on some familiar Malebranchian themes, solves problems with them, or is at least consistent with them. I'd like next to address some possible problems with (P).

- (i) If the idea of a circle, for example, is identical to the PDV to create that circle, then how can that idea be said to cause a perception or sensation in a person? Or distinct perceptions or sensations in different persons, when those distinct effects would seem to require various distinct divine volitions?
- (ii) Normally we invoke ideas to provide the contents of our representational states, including our volitions, which suggests that ideas are somehow independent of (or 'prior to') these states. If so, then volitions presuppose ideas. But then how can (P) reduce ideas to volitions?<sup>89</sup>

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right and I wrong on the question of ideas ... because the whole dispute between us concerning ideas depends on it ...' (*Recueil*, 902). For relevant discussion, see notes 9 and 72 above, and III.i below.

87 *Elucidations* 10, 625; cf. *Search* 3.2.6, 232.

88 *Search* 3.2.6, 231.

89 As Jolley (1990) suggests, ideas are logically prior to our perceptions because the

- (iii) Certain specific ideas raise particular problems. (a) For example, consider 'general' ideas, such as the idea of a 'circle in general,' which contains all the essential properties of circles but has no particular diameter, circumference, or area. Since God cannot create a general circle, that suggests He has no possible volition to create one; but then we have the idea of a general circle without a corresponding PDV. (b) The idea of 'God': can that be equated with some PDV without entailing the absurd suggestion that God wills Himself into existence?<sup>90</sup>
- (iv) Finally, why doesn't Malebranche ever simply say 'ideas are PDVs'? Why instead does he sometimes speak of ideas being 'in God's wisdom'? (*Elucidations* 10, 618)

i.

Addressing the questions raised here requires filling in a few more details in how (P) works. Let us identify intelligible extension, the idea of extension, with the PDV, V1, to create material extension; further, identify the idea of a particular type of circle with the PDV, V2, to create an actual circular object of that type. When Smith perceives-dd extension, or a circle, then, God causes him to perceive-dr these PDVs, V1 and V2. But now these causings will presumably require additional divine volitions: God wills V3, for example, that Smith perceives-dr V1.<sup>91</sup>

But this latter volition, V3, is not one Smith perceives. Nor does Smith perceive any PDVs which cause him to perceive various ideas (or to undergo sensory modification).<sup>92</sup> Why not? Because for God to cause Smith to perceive something is for Him to cause some modification of

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existence of a perception is logically dependent on the existence of an idea: a perception is always a perception of something (77; citing *Conversations*, 71). The same would apply, presumably, for volitions.

90 Other potentially problematic cases include (c) Moral ideas: Can the idea of 'goodness,' for example, be equated with a PDV? Which one exactly? and (d) The idea of a given mathematical object such as a number: would equating that idea with a PDV require a reductionist theory of mathematics, such that mathematical truths are ultimately reducible to (say) truths about the physical world? I postpone investigation of these cases to a later date.

91 'Thus, the mind can see God's works in Him, provided that God wills to reveal to it what in Him represents them' (*Search* 3.2.6, 230).

92 With respect to sensation: 'God, upon the presence of objects, excites our sensations in us through an insensible action that we do not perceive' (*Elucidations* 10, 621).

Smith's mind corresponding to that state of perception, which in turn is for Him to have volitions whose contents concern Smith's mind and its modes.<sup>93</sup> But we have no idea of our minds,<sup>94</sup> thus we do not perceive any PDVs whose contents concern our mind or its modes; that is why Smith does not perceive V3. But since we can and do perceive PDVs concerning material objects, we do have the idea of matter and its modes.

The idea of something, then, is distinct from God's volitions to cause persons to perceive the thing. Consequently distinct individuals can perceive the same idea, even though their distinct perceivings<sup>95</sup> are caused by distinct divine volitions. A similar story applies to Malebranche's suggestion that the same idea can affect one with both sensations and perceptions.<sup>96</sup> God causes Smith to perceive V1 via V3, modifying his mind a certain way, while He causes Smith to have a relevant sensation via some distinct volition, V4, modifying his mind presumably in some other way. As long as there is some meaningful way to relate both V3 and V4 to V1 then we may say that they cause perceivings and sensations of the same idea.

Just this point, however, and so accommodating the efficacy of ideas here, requires some care. If the idea of a circle (say) is identified with V2, yet it is V5 (say) which causes Smith to perceive the circle, then can we say that the idea of a circle causes Smith to perceive the circle? In at least one sense, no; the idea of the circle may (when executed) cause a material circle to exist, but it is, roughly, V5, or the idea of a certain modification

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93 There is debate over whether the perception of ideas, according to Malebranche, involves modification of the soul; I will assume that it does ('The perception I have of extension cannot exist without me. It is therefore a modification of my mind' (*DMR* 1.9, 16); an idea is 'that which affects and modifies the mind with the perception it has of an object' (*Search* 3.2.1, 217); 'for by the words ... *modification of the soul*, I generally understand all those things that cannot be in the soul without the soul being aware of them ... such as its ... pure intellections ...' (*Search* 3.2.1, 218)). With respect to sensation: '[God] can cause this modification ... because He sees in the idea He has of our soul that it is capable of it' (*Search* 3.2.6, 234).

94 'I have no idea of [my being], I do not see its archetype ... [Not] having an idea of my soul, and not seeing its archetype ... I can discover neither what it is nor what the modalities are of which it is capable ...' (*DMR* 3.7, 34-5).

95 '[You] see the same truth I see, but by a perception which is not mine.... You see a truth common to all minds, but by a perception which belongs to you alone; for our perceptions, our sensations, all our modalities, are particular' (*DMR* 8.12, 141).

96 '[The] same idea of extension can be known, imagined, or sensed, according to the way the divine substance containing it applies it diversely to our mind' (*DMR* 2.12, 30); Cf. *CDM*, 86.

of the soul, execution of which causes Smith to perceive-dr V2 and so to perceive-dd the circle. Various moves are available here:

(a) One might be to suggest that Malebranche speaks only loosely when he speaks of ideas causing our perceptions or sensations, so we needn't accommodate that causation literally on (P) (or any other interpretation). After all, he uses much metaphorical language, speaking of God 'touching' us with ideas, 'applying' them to us, willing that we 'see' them, 'revealing' them to us, etc.<sup>97</sup> Further, his major theological concern here is to defend our complete cognitive dependence on God. That defense is accomplished on the sketch just provided; it might just be enough for him if V5 causes Smith's perception of V2 without his also holding that, strictly and literally, V2 itself causes Smith's perception of it.

(b) Alternatively, ideas may be *generally* efficacious qua divine volitions, without requiring their *particular* efficacy in producing particular perceptions and sensations. If so, again, we need not literally accommodate V2's causing Smith's perception of a circle. This suggestion is reinforced when we recognize that, by divine simplicity, ultimately, all PDVs are identical (and identical to the divine substance), so it is not ultimately meaningful to map distinct effects onto distinct volitions.<sup>98</sup> True, Malebranche typically does ascribe the production of particular perceptions to particular ideas,<sup>99</sup> but this, too, might be loose speak that is rhetorically useful despite lacking philosophical rigor.

(c) Another move starts by noting that Malebranche's language, even if metaphorical, actually fits (P) perfectly and so should be taken seriously. For example: '[The] same idea of extension can be known, imagined, or sensed, according to the way the divine substance containing it applies it diversely to our mind': God touches Smith with (or applies or reveals to him, etc.) V1 in 'diverse' ways, by means of distinguishable volitions V3 and V4, resulting in pure perception or sensation respectively; ditto, *mutatis mutandis*, for Smith's pure perception and sensation of a particular circle. On this move, we may say that the idea of the circle causes Smith's perception of the circle insofar as it is that *by which* Smith is 'touched,' etc., even if the touching occurs *by means of* something else. To be 'touched by' (say) V2 'by means of' (say) V5 may then mean one or more of the following: (i) that V5 brings Smith into the perception-dr or illumination relation with V2; (ii) that V5 brings Smith into that state

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97 DMR 5.5, 77; DMR 2.12, 30; Search, 3.2.6, 230, 231 (OC I, 437, 438).

98 See III.ii and III.iv below for further implications of divine simplicity.

99 CDM, 86; DMR 5.5, 77.

of modification which is or is necessary for Smith's perceiving (or imagining, etc.) V2; or (iii) that the content of Smith's state of modification resulting from V5 is related to that of V2.<sup>100</sup> On all of these, V2 may be said to be at least some sort of cause of Smith's perceiving a circle — perhaps a formal or exemplary cause — even if it is not quite the efficient cause of his so perceiving.<sup>101</sup>

(d) Another move might be to cash out being 'touched' by an idea (or being 'illuminated' by it) as a primitive form of efficient causation, distinct from Malebranche's ordinary conception of efficient causation. Such a suggestion fits nicely, for example, with the view defended by Watson (2002), that Malebranche subscribes to a '*Logos*-epistemology,' one tenet of which is that 'Divine Reason [on (P), PDVs] possesses its own agency' (7). It also fits well with Malebranche's acknowledgment that he has little explicit to say about the illumination process.<sup>102</sup> But the best evidence for this suggestion is just that Malebranche speaks of the efficacy of ideas to cause our perceivings (or sensings) of them despite their efficacy not fitting his ordinary conception of efficient causation.

(e) Finally, consider this move. In Malebranche's occasionalism, God is, strictly speaking, the only true cause. But God causes by His will, and in particular by virtue of the content of His will: there is no necessary connection between God's will *simpliciter* and the effect, but rather between the volition-*cum*-content and the effect.<sup>103</sup> As such, the content of His will must share causal credit for the outcome. On (P), God wills V5, viz. that Smith perceives or senses V2. V2 is part of that content; thus V2 shares causal credit for Smith's perceiving of V2.<sup>104</sup>

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100 Jolley (1990) examines (and rejects) a similar account of the efficacy of ideas; cf. my discussion in II.ii above.

101 Cf. note 82 and the text to which it is attached. V2 is certainly not logically sufficient for either Smith's state of modification nor for that state's having its content. (That 'true' (efficient) causation requires necessary connections, see *Search* 6.2.3, 448; cf. *Méditations Chrétiennes*, IX.II, 96). More generally, it still looks like V5 *does* the touching, even if it is somehow V2 *by which* Smith is touched.

102 Cf. note 70.

103 '[I]t suffices that [God] wills in order that a thing be, because it is a contradiction that He should will and that *what* He wills should not happen' (*Search* 6.2.3, 450, my italics).

104 This move raises many hard questions: Can we grant content causal credit without ascribing it some ontological status? What is it to be a 'part' of content? Is V2 doing any causing here or merely a representation of V2? If V5 is the volition that Smith perceives V2, then isn't Smith just as much a 'component' of V5's content as V2? Should Smith also receive causal credit for his perceiving V2? Etc. Clearly, this move

I believe that (d) is the right move to make. For only (d) fits with all the Malebranchean pieces: on (d), ideas are truly efficacious, they are specifically efficient causes which produce results in the world (here, perceptions and sensations), particular ideas may be said to cause particular perceptions, we require no development of theories of content and of causation absent in Malebranche, and it even fits with a 'Logos-epistemology.' Moreover, by considering illumination to be a primitive form of efficient causation specifically with respect to PDVs, (P) preserves Malebranche's view that God's power is His will in a way that no alternative which grants the efficacy of ideas can.<sup>105</sup> True, treating this causal relation as a 'primitive' marks the end of investigation. But if it is reasonable for an interpretation of Malebranche to treat *anything* as primitive, then surely treating the efficient causal efficacy of PDVs as primitive is a prime candidate: (i) not only does he explicitly *admit* right here that he has nothing further to say (*Réponse*, 288), but (ii) if efficacious ideas are anything *other* than PDVs,<sup>106</sup> then the central tenet of Malebranchean occasionalism, that the only true efficient cause is God's will, must be lost. So efficacious ideas *must* be divine volitions, even if he has nothing further to say about the process.

ii.

Next: Ideas seem to be prior to volitions, hence not reducible to them.

With respect to human beings, at least, the point seems both exactly right and no problem. As we've seen, in his debate with Arnauld, Malebranche's point is just that: our representational contents must be grounded in something external to us, hence ideas are independent of us, and 'prior to' our representational states.

The question now is whether ideas are independent of and prior to divine representational states as well. If the claim suggests that ideas have an existence independent from God, that God, in willing, gets Himself in a relation to something distinct from Him, then it must be rejected immediately — Malebranche's God can never be motivated by

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requires careful development both of a theory of the nature and ontological status of content and of causation, both absent in Malebranche.

105 Cf. Part I, 'quick reasons' (ii) and (iii).

106 Such as abstract entities (Jolley [1990]), concepts (Nadler [1992]), 'pure possibles' if these are distinct from PDVs (anonymous reviewer, cf. note 36 above), divine thoughts (treated as distinct from PDVs, cf. Watson [2002]), etc.

anything other than Himself,<sup>107</sup> and indeed knows all things only through knowing Himself,<sup>108</sup> and anyway, Malebranche explicitly denies it in identifying ideas with the divine substance.<sup>109</sup> Further, note that all the properties which lead towards removing ideas from us (infinity, etc.), hence ground arguments that ideas are independent of and prior to our representational states, lead precisely towards placing ideas in God hence do not ground analogous arguments with respect to Him. But then once we identify ideas in any sense with God, there's no substance left to the claim that ideas are independent of Him, and not much left to the claim that they are independent of or prior to His volitions. Perhaps all that claim now means is that volitions always have some content, i.e. that having content is logically necessary for being a volition<sup>110</sup> — but that fact is consistent, I think, with its being merely a primitive that God has distinguishable volitions with contents.

To see why, recall that God is both simple and a unity.<sup>111</sup> God is a being, for example, in whom all conceptually distinguishable attributes, as well as volitions, in fact are identical. We might think of Him as a being who is eternally, immutably, in one single indivisible state.<sup>112</sup> What then allows us to distinguish, conceptually, a multiplicity of volitions in Him,

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107 *DMR* 9.3, 151.

108 'God sees in Himself not only the essence of things but also their existence' (*Search* 3.2.5, 229).

109 The view being rejected also faces a regress problem: to get Himself into relation with an idea He'd need to form a volition to do so, but that volition (itself involving a relation to independent ideas) would require a preceding volition, etc. (This point alone might raise difficulties for, say, Jolley's view that ideas are 3rd realm entities.) Note that Malebranche more or less makes this same regress argument against the view that our minds produce ideas (*Search* 3.2.3, 223; also 3.2.4, 227, and 3.2.6, 232, and *Elucidations* 10, 616), and exempts God from the same argument since God's eternity and infinity allow Him to contain all ideas in Himself.

110 See Jolley (1990), 77, discussed in II.ii above.

111 *Search* 3.2.6, 231, 235; *Elucidations* 10, 624; *DMR* 8.6, 8.7, 134, 135.

112 '[Whatever] He wills He wills without succession by a simple and invariable act' (*DMR* 8.2, 130); 'What kind of reality is God's operation as distinguished and separated from His substance?' (*DMR* 8.5, 133; a rhetorical question where context makes clear that God's operation, via volition, is identical to His substance). Cf. Descartes: 'We must rather suppose that there is always a single identical and perfectly simple act by means of which He simultaneously understands, wills, and accomplishes everything' (*Principles* I.23; *AT* VIII A, 14; *CSM* I, 201); 'In God, willing, understanding and creating are all the same thing without one being prior to the other even conceptually' (May 27, 1630 Letter to Mersenne, *AT* I 153; *CSM* 25-6). For useful discussion of Cartesian divine simplicity, see Kaufman, forthcoming.

both synchronically and diachronically? A common theological suggestion is that we distinguish divine volitions by their effects:<sup>113</sup> we observe a multiplicity of effects and so project backwards, as it were, to a multiplicity of corresponding volitions. On this picture the divine essence certainly ontologically and causally precedes its effects, but since divine volitions are only assigned (by us) their diverse contents by means of or in light of the effects, their ‘counting’ as volitions at all, or the particular volitions they are, is logically dependent on their effects. So while having content (being assignable to some effect) is logically necessary for being a divine volition, that volition is itself, along with its content, ontologically and causally prior to those effects.

What I’m suggesting, in effect, is that we distinguish what it is for God to be in a ‘state’ with content from our procedure for assigning God states with specific contents. The former, I believe, may be taken as an ontological primitive, hence does not presuppose ideas; the latter helps explain why we are led, wrongly, to think that divine representational states presuppose ideas: we think of content as being logically necessary for being a volition because it is only insofar as we can distinguish effects and so assign a content to PDVs that we can conceive of God as having any volitions at all.

Taking the content of PDVs (or other divine representational states) as a primitive again strikes me as overall a very plausible move.<sup>114</sup> Recall that all parties have the hard problem of explaining why or how certain states have representational content, and no one has a genuine theory of the relationship between states and their contents. As we’ve seen, Malebranche merely argues that one cannot treat the content of *human* states as a primitive, but no corresponding reasons suggest that divine intentionality cannot be taken as both intrinsic and primitive: for God to form a volition thus requires Him to develop no external relation whatever. If so, then, PDVs do not presuppose ideas, so ideas may be explicated in terms of PDVs.

A final point. A consequence of taking content as a primitive is that we need not think of contents as independently existing substances. We may thus think of content as simply an inexplicable aspect of the divine substance. As we saw in II.i above, the ontological grounding of ideas — which are often identified with contents — will just be the divine substance. Cartesian ontology is thus accommodated by identifying ideas with the PDVs and not with their contents.

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113 See Kaufman, forthcoming, for discussion of this point with respect to Suarez (19).

114 See note 9 above.

iii.

Turning, now, to some problematic specific ideas:

(a) General ideas. There exists the idea (say) of a circle in general,<sup>115</sup> yet God cannot create such a circle,<sup>116</sup> hence lacks a PDV to do so; but then the idea cannot be identified with a PDV. What shall we say here?

(a-i) One move might be to deny there really is, strictly, an idea of a circle in general, but Malebranche does not make this move.

(a-ii) Another might be to grant that there is such an idea, but to treat it as a different 'kind' of idea: while non-general ideas correspond to PDVs, general ones are formed by some cognitive or epistemic process (say, of abstraction) in humans, perhaps serving some pragmatic function, hence need not correspond to PDVs. But Malebranche would not likely go this route, either, as he explicitly rejects the possibility of abstracting general ideas from particulars (*Search* 3.2.6, 232; *DMR* 2.7ff., 25ff.), and there is no evidence he makes any ontological distinction between general and particular ideas.

(a-iii) A more interesting move begins by examining whether the impossibility of there existing a general circle entails that God lacks a PDV to create such a circle. After all, if there legitimately exists a representational content of 'general circle,' and divine beliefs may be formed with that content, then just why can't a divine volition be formed manifesting it? There might be important reasons, of course, why such a PDV may never be *executed*. For example, suppose God willed that a circular object be created without specifying its particular properties (diameter, etc.); that volition would suffice for some circular object to come into being. But since there cannot exist an actual general circle, that object would have some particular properties. But then there would exist a particular state of affairs which either lacked causal explanation, or the causes of which would be attributable to something other than God. Malebranche's occasionalism sanctions neither option. On this move, then, God may perfectly well *have* a PDV to create a general circle; He just cannot *execute* that PDV at the cost of giving up occasionalism.

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115 Malebranche's discusses the 'idea of a circle in general' briefly at *Search* 3.2.4, 227 and at length in *DMR* 2.9, 26ff.; 'Do you not grasp that a circle in general ... can be known?' (*Méditations Chrésiennes* 1.23, 17). Cf. *Recueil*, 72, *DMR* 7.6, 112, and *Search* 3.2.6, 232.

116 'Do you not grasp that a circle in general cannot be made ...?' (*Méditations Chrésiennes* 1.23, 17; Cf. *Recueil*, 72); 'For no created reality can be ... general ...' (*Search* 3.2.4, 227); 'every creature is a particular being' (*Search* 3.2.6, 232); cf. *Elucidations* 10, 614.

I do not say that this is the move Malebranche makes here. I merely note that he has the tools to make this move. Pessin (2000) argues, for example, that Malebranche does not take the doctrine of continuous creation itself to entail occasionalism precisely because that doctrine is consistent with God willing 'incompletely,' i.e. in a way which does not specify all aspects of created states of affairs. Further, in his theodicy Malebranche distinguishes between God's practical volitions and what he wills 'simply,' where the latter are what God wills *simpliciter* and the latter are the volitions which God actually executes.<sup>117</sup> For example, God wills to save all sinners, but does not execute that volition lest He violate the 'simple' mode of action befitting Him; more generally, He wills to avoid all created evil and imperfection, but does not execute those volitions lest He violate order or wisdom. The point is that Malebranche recognizes that God may have PDVs which may not be executed without violating some other principle.<sup>118</sup> If so, then there may exist a PDV to create a circle in general, grounding our idea of a circle in general, but it is a PDV which — given occasionalism, perhaps — it is not possible to execute.

(a-iv) Another move is inspired by Connell (1967a & b). Connell argues that general ideas for Malebranche are not abstract universals, so a general triangle (for example) is not properly construed as a triangle which is neither isosceles, nor scalene, nor equilateral, etc. Rather, Malebranche adopts the scholastic doctrine that general ideas in some sense *contain* all their particulars.<sup>119</sup> If so, then the idea of a triangle in general is, in some sense, something which contains an infinite number of ideas of particular types of triangles.<sup>120</sup> We cannot grasp all those particular

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117 See note 10.

118 I suspect some such move would be at play in reconciling the PDV to create infinite extension with the uncreatability of infinite extension. (See note 57.) Note that on this move we might distinguish between a given object or state of affairs being *intrinsically* possible and its being *extrinsically* possible, i.e. in relation to other objects or states of affairs. So, perhaps, to every object or state of affairs not intrinsically contradictory there corresponds a PDV, while it is not the case that it is possible that all PDVs be concurrently executed, as some, if executed, would create states of affairs inconsistent with the execution of others. We might then expect that Reason (consubstantial with God) dictates not only which PDVs there are, but also which subsets are concurrently executable. (See II.iv above.)

119 'It is a property of an infinite being to be simultaneously one and all things ...' *Elucidations* 10, 624.

120 Guérout concludes that universal ideas 'far from referring to general entities ... are reducible to an infinite number of particular ideas ...' (cited in Connell [1967a], 253).

triangles in the idea, but they are there nonetheless.<sup>121</sup> If that's correct, then we have a reply to our problem: there is no PDV to create a general triangle, there is merely an infinite number of PDVs to create various particular types of triangles. When we perceive-d'd a 'general triangle,' then, we are presumably in some perception-dr (i.e. illumination) relationship with all those PDVs.

I do not here defend the viability of this account of general ideas; no doubt there are important problems to be dealt with.<sup>122</sup> But these appear to be problems for Malebranche to work out, not problems specifically for (P).

(b) Can the idea of 'God' itself be equated with some PDV without entailing the absurd suggestion that God wills Himself into existence?

But does Malebranche even believe that there is (or we have) an idea of God?<sup>123</sup> Recall that 'ideas' taken in the strict sense 'represent things to

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Connell comments: 'There is much truth in M. Guéroult's view: Malebranche undoubtedly considers the universal idea as the equivalent of a collection of particular ideas.' Connell goes on to complicate the picture a bit: '... [But] the universal is not simply an infinite collection of particular ideas, but one idea that enables the mind to survey in a confused perception a multitude of particulars so vast that it would require an infinite number of particular ideas to perceive them all distinctly' (1967a, 254). (Note that this point is supported by Malebranche's view that 'we must at all times actually have in us the ideas of all things, since we can at all times will to think about anything — which we could not do unless we had already perceived them confusedly, i.e., unless an infinite number of ideas were present to the mind' (*Search* 3.2.4, 227; cf. *Search* 3.2.6, 232). See also the passage quoted in note 121.) Still, this complication does not harm the response we're currently exploring to the problem of general ideas. Nor does Malebranche's critique of the process of abstraction (*Search* 3.2.6, 232; *DMR* 2.7ff., 25ff.) — during which he denies that a general idea is just a collection of particular ideas — for he is merely denying there that we cognitively *obtain* the idea of the general via abstracting from the particular, not that the general may ultimately be reducible to the particular.

121 'Likewise, an infinite number of different kinds of triangles can be conceived ... the mind to some extent perceives this infinite number of triangles, although we can imagine very few of them and cannot simultaneously have particular and distinct ideas of many triangles of different kinds. But it should be especially noted that the mind's general idea of this infinite number of different kinds of triangles suffices to prove that if we do not conceive of all these different triangles by means of particular ideas, in short, if we do not comprehend the infinite, the fault does not lie with our ideas, and that our failure to grasp the infinite is only for lack of capacity ...' (*Search* 3.2.4, 226).

122 Jolley, for example, has argued that Connell's containment theory can't deal with the inconsistent properties of all the contained triangles.

123 Arnauld, for example, accuses Malebranche of waffling on the question (*True/False*, ch. 26).

the mind in a way so clear that we can discover by simple perception whether such and such modes belong to them' (*Elucidations* 3, 561). Even if, perhaps, we can grasp that God is incapable of modification, we still lack the clarity of grasp of God's nature necessary for our having an idea, strictly, of Him. Malebranche grants that we perceive the infinite, but denies that we 'comprehend' it (*Search* 3.2.6, 232), attributing our inability to our 'lack of capacity and extension of mind' (*Search* 3.2.4, 226).<sup>124</sup> Since one of the key epistemic function of ideas is to ground intelligibility, or to explain our ability to comprehend matters intellectually,<sup>125</sup> to say that we are incapable of comprehending a thing seems akin to denying we have an idea of it, strictly speaking.<sup>126</sup> If we lack an idea of God, then (P) is not committed to the suggestion that God wills Himself into existence.

Yet despite this Malebranche often speaks as if we have an idea of God. Immediately after denying that the mind comprehends the infinite he writes 'it has a very distinct idea of God' (*Search* 3.2.6, 232); he also reminds us to 'attribute to God only what you clearly conceive in the idea of the infinitely perfect being' (*Elucidations* 8, 587-8; cf. *DMR* 8.1, 128), writes that 'God is known through a pure idea without sensation ... His existence is contained in the idea of an infinite and necessary being' (*Elucidations* 10, 622), and argues that the 'mind has the idea of the infinite even before the finite' (*Search* 3.2.6, 232).<sup>127</sup>

Now one response that (P) might make here is to suggest that Malebranche in such passages is using 'idea' in one of its looser senses, either as 'anything that represents some object to the mind, whether clearly or confusedly; more generally ... anything that is the immediate object of the mind' (*Elucidations* 3, 561). So just as he sometimes speaks of ideas with respect to sensation (*Elucidations* 10, 621) without requiring that such ideas be ontologically grounded in anything external to us, so, too, perhaps, he speaks of ideas of God without requiring the external grounding. On this move, we may have the idea of God without the PDV to create God.

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124 On the general incomprehensibility of God, see note 8 above.

125 Cf.: 'When I say we have no idea of the mysteries of the faith I am speaking about clear ideas that produce enlightenment and evidence by which we have an understanding of the object' (*Elucidations* 3, 561).

126 Nadler (1992): 'Strictly speaking, for Malebranche we do not have an idea of God ...' (142, n. 92).

127 Cf. *Search* 4.11.2, 317.

A better response, however, is available. Let us grant that we do have an idea of God, in the strict sense, and ask whether we may justify denying, just in this case, the existence of a corresponding PDV. Malebranche writes:

God or the infinite is not visible by an idea that represents Him. The infinite is its own idea ... But the infinite can be seen only in itself. (*DMR* 2.5, 23)<sup>128</sup>

Only God do we perceive by a direct and immediate perception ... we know God through Himself ... (*Search* 3.2.7, 236-7)

The clear, intimate, and necessary presence of God ... to the mind of man acts upon it with greater force than the presence of all finite objects. The mind cannot entirely rid itself of this general idea of being ... (*Search* 3.2.8, 241)

God is present to mind just as ideas are, clearly and intimately. But when we speak of other ideas we make a firm distinction between idea and ideatum: the idea of matter is one thing, while matter is another. This distinction is mirrored by the distinction between the PDV to create matter and the matter created. But the 'infinite is its own idea': our idea of God just is God Himself. So while the idea of matter is the PDV to create matter, which is 'in' God, is an aspect of God, is 'the divine essence insofar as it is participable or imperfectly imitable',<sup>129</sup> the idea of God, in contrast, just is God. So the idea of God need not be identified with the PDV to create God.

Another way to make this point: To perceive-dd a circle requires perceiving-dr the PDV to create a circle, where perception-dr involves the illumination relation, which itself involves a union between our minds and God. To perceive-dd God also requires a union between our minds and God. But whereas in the first case what we perceive-dd ('a circle') is distinct from that with which we are united (a PDV, or the divine essence qua participable), in the latter case what we perceive-dd (God) is identical to that with which we are united ('The infinite can be seen only in itself'). Consequently our perception of God is both quite similar to, and quite different from, our perception of other things. That may be one reason why Malebranche appears to waffle on the question of whether we have an idea of God: insofar as perception of God is similar to other perception, then yes, but insofar as it is different, then no.

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128 Cf. '[We] shall never be deceived provided we attribute to God only what we ... discover not in an idea distinguished from God, but in His very substance' (*DMR* 8.1, 128).

129 *Elucidations* 10, 625; cf. *DMR* 2.2, 21.

Note that the full passage from *DMR* 2.5 above is this:

God or the infinite is not visible by an idea that represents Him. The infinite is its own idea. It has no archetype. It can be known, but it cannot be made. It is only creatures, only particular beings which can be created, which are visible by the ideas representing them.... We can see a circle, a house ... without there being any such thing.... But the infinite can be seen only in itself. For nothing finite can represent the infinite. If we think of God, He must exist. A particular being, although known, is able not to exist. Its essence can be seen without its existence, its idea without the thing itself. However, the essence of the infinite cannot be seen without its existence.... (*DMR* 2.5, 23)

(P) now fits this passage perfectly. 'God (the infinite) can be known': we perceive-dd the infinite via perceiving-dr it, i.e. we have an idea of it. But 'it cannot be made': there is no PDV to create God. 'Only particular beings which can be created are visible by ideas': we perceive-dd ordinary objects by perceiving-dr the corresponding PDVs. 'We can see a circle etc. without there being any such thing': we can perceive-dr the PDV without knowing whether it has been executed. 'The infinite can be seen only in itself. Nothing finite can represent the infinite': No finite mode of ourselves can ground a perception with an infinite content, hence our perception-dd of the infinite must be grounded in a relation to the infinite itself. 'If we think of God He must exist. A particular being's essence can be seen without its existence, its idea without the thing itself': since we can perceive-dr a PDV without knowing whether it has been executed, we can perceive-dd the essence of a particular being without knowing whether that being exists; but since our perception-dd of God requires perceiving-dr Him (and not a PDV), our perception of Him entails that He exists.

In sum, then: we can have the idea of God without requiring the corresponding PDV. Malebranche's idea of God does not threaten (P); to the contrary, (P) explicates it nicely.

*iv.*

Finally, why doesn't Malebranche ever simply say 'ideas are possible divine volitions'? Why instead does he sometimes speak of ideas being 'in God's wisdom' (*Elucidations* 10, 618)?

Here, many different factors may be relevant. For one thing, 'idea' is used very broadly by many early moderns, including Malebranche, so that it often encompasses much more (such as mental images and the contents of sensory awareness) than the PDVs with which (P) identifies 'ideas' in the strictest sense; as such, it would be false to identify 'ideas' generally with PDVs. Moreover, even concerning 'ideas' in the strict sense, Malebranche may simply be too firmly embedded in various

linguistic or conceptual traditions that reify ideas in a certain way to allow him to reach an explicit formulation of (P).<sup>130</sup>

More importantly, it is simply much easier to speak about representational content than about PDVs. For one thing, on (P), we have no cognitive access to PDVs except via their contents: we only recognize our illumination relationship to V1 via awareness of our perception-*dd* of extension. For another, we have no way conceptually even to distinguish PDVs except in terms of their contents: our only way to distinguish V1 from V2 is via their distinct contents. Moreover, since content is ultimately inexplicable — God primitively displays it, and we derivatively, but how either process works no one knows — we cannot understand the relationship between PDVs and their contents construed as distinct phenomena, so we easily conflate them. Put all these together, and we may expect to find Malebranche speaking in ways suggestive of identifying ideas with contents, and not with PDVs.<sup>131</sup>

Perhaps, too, Malebranche is kept from explicit assertion of (P) by philosophical or theological considerations. Given divine unity and simplicity, our process of distinguishing perfections or faculties or beliefs or volitions in God is a complicated affair constrained by our perspective and interests. Earlier I sketched how this might work in distinguishing volitions, viz. by their effects, but similar considerations apply to distinguishing faculties as well. Malebranche's God is a 'simple' being which contains all beings without division, and is such that each perfection contains all other perfections without real distinction between them.<sup>132</sup> Thus there is no real distinction between God's wisdom or power, for example; nor are there real distinctions between God's beliefs, or between God's volitions, or between His beliefs and volitions.<sup>133</sup> But just as we have no access to His volitions except via their contents, so too for His beliefs. Further, content is something shared by His conceptually distinguishable faculties, and it transcends their apparent distinction

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130 Nadler (1992), for example, notes that Malebranche 'belongs' to the Platonic-Augustinian tradition where ideas are construed as extramental entities (37ff.). Perhaps Malebranche, steeped in that tradition, inherits their patterns of thinking and speaking to the extent that he cannot state (P), even where (P) is what's driving him.

131 Hence we find Malebranche saying things such as 'Descartes says that *ideas* are modes of the soul. That is true: but that is because he does not take the word *idea* as I do, to signify uniquely *the objective reality...*' (*Recueil*, 217).

132 *Dialogue*, 73 (OC 15, 10); *Search* 3.2.6, 231, 235; *Elucidations* 10, 624.

133 See notes 8 and 112.

(God may both believe and will the same content), and so stress on it best reflects divine simplicity. For these reasons, again, then, Malebranche may well speak in ways identifying ideas with contents, not with PDVs.

Given the simplicity and unity, in fact, nothing rides *ultimately* on treating ideas as identical specifically to divine volitions, since these are themselves identical to divine beliefs (or thoughts, or loves, etc.).<sup>134</sup> Malebranche in fact is free to 'assign' ideas to God's will or to wisdom as context dictates. There may be contexts in which assigning them to wisdom works well, for example when referring to God's contemplation of possible actions. But even there, as we saw in II.iii, (P) fares perfectly well; and more generally, there are many contexts in which assigning ideas to God's will, and so adopting (P), works best, as we've seen starting with 'quick reasons' (ii)-(v) in Part I and continuing throughout the paper. So while we *could* identify ideas with divine thoughts, say, overall it makes sense to go with (P).

Finally, recall from Part I that Malebranche defines ideas via their role in perception. Ideas, for him, are whatever plays the role specified; their exact nature he largely leaves open. Again, his main concern is to argue that we require relation to something divine in nature in order to manifest representational content. He says a lot about ideas — they are the divine essence insofar as it is participable or imitable, they are models or archetypes, they are or represent essences or possible beings, they are efficacious, they are infinite in number and nature, immutable, etc. — and all these constitute a powerful argument in support of his main concern. But no part of that concern actually requires the extra step of identifying ideas specifically with PDVs; indeed, divine simplicity and unity even mitigate the incentive for doing so.

So, no, Malebranche never just says 'ideas are possible divine volitions.' But what I've been arguing is that interpreting him this way is reasonable, that this view is just beneath the surface of what he does say, and that if we so interpret him then we can make sense of many of his doctrines, and even clear up some of the problems raised against him. We can explain why he says all those things about ideas, do so in a way consistent with Cartesian ontology, and even understand why he doesn't explicitly assert the view!<sup>135</sup>

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134 So, if you did not like the idea of unexecuted volitions, you may identify the corresponding ideas (i.e. of non-existent things) with (say) divine thoughts or loves instead. (Cf. n. 12 above.)

135 If you remain unpersuaded, let me remind you of the other option: construe this paper not as an interpretation of the 'actual' Malebranche but of the 'virtual' Malebranche.

#### IV How (P) Affords Malebranche a response to Iorio's questions.

Suppose, then, that Malebranche holds that ideas are PDVs. Consider how this view would now afford Malebranche a response to Iorio's two 'serious' questions 'without equivocation': (1) What is the relation of intelligible extension to God? and (2) How are intelligible extension and material (created) extension related? The answers are quite simple:

(1) Intelligible extension is the idea of extension,<sup>136</sup> as such it is equivalent to God's possible volition to create actual extension. As such, it is related to God as a volition is related to God. It no more entails that God be extended Himself than any volition would so entail.<sup>137</sup>

(2) Intelligible extension and material (created) extension are related as executed volition to the effect of that volition.

It seems to me that these are straightforward claims — at least as straightforward as any philosophical claims — and that they would seem so to Malebranche. As such, his evident frustration at being misunderstood or misinterpreted, for example by Arnauld and later De Mairan, is quite understandable.<sup>138</sup> It is also understandable, given (2), that Malebranche would diagnose Spinoza's problem as failure to distinguish the idea from the ideatum.<sup>139</sup> For that distinction is precisely what (2) is all about.

In conclusion, then, I have proposed an interpretation of Malebranche's conception of ideas, defended it by showing its relationship to various Malebranchian themes and responding to possible problems,

136 *Recueil*, 117; *CDM*, 87.

137 Even Arnauld would grant that a human mind can, without being extended, be in a mental state with a content related to extension. The same is true for Malebranche's God.

138 Just one example, to Arnauld's 'critique' of intelligible extension: 'Is there any sense, Sir, in these words of Mr. Arnauld? Does he understand my meaning? Or if he understands it, is he sincere?' (*Recueil*, 117). To Mairan: 'I do not understand, Sir, how you can find difficulty in understanding ... the difference between the idea of a thing and the thing itself, between created extension ... and the idea that God has of it ... an idea that I call intelligible' (*CDM*, 85-6).

139 'The chief cause of the errors of that author comes, it appears to me, from the fact that he takes the ideas of creatures for the creatures themselves, the ideas of bodies for bodies ... For, being inwardly convinced that the idea of extension is eternal, necessary, and infinite ... he takes for the world or created extension the intelligible world that is the immediate object of mind' (*CDM*, 70). 'But [Spinoza] confuses the idea of extension with the world' (*CDM*, 87).

and then shown, finally, how it both responds to one very specific charge of Spinozism and explains his frustration at being so charged.<sup>140</sup>

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Where translations exist, I use them; otherwise any translations are mine.

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