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LOCKE AND LEIBNIZ ON DELIBERATION

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I compare Locke's and Leibniz's views on deliberation. It is not too difficult to motivate this comparison: the point-by-point comments of the *New Essays* on Locke's theory offer a unique dialogue between two great thinkers with differing mindsets and basic commitments, which result in rather different views of what deliberation and human agency are all about.

2. Locke

a. Innate inclinations and basic powers

For all his criticism of innatism, Locke does not deny that we are endowed with *innate inclinations*, namely "a desire of Happiness, and an aversion to Misery" (I.III.3), the first of which is the ultimate Lockean motive for action. Locke defines good and evil as follows: "That we call *Good*, which *is apt to cause or increase Pleasure, or diminish Pain in us;* [...] we name that *Evil*, which *is apt to produce or increase any Pain, or diminish any Pleasure in us*[.]" (*E* II.XX.2). Moreover, he endorses the traditional model of two main powers of the mind:[1] it is endowed with the power of perception, or *understanding*, and power of volition, or *will* (II.VI.2, II.XXI.5). These powers can result in two types of *action*: thinking and bodily motion (II.XXI.4).

The Lockean will is a *bidirectional* or *two-way power* "to begin or forbear, continue or put an end to several actions" (II.XXI.7; cf. II.XXI.46[1st]).[2] The initial Lockean sense of

[1] Locke is of course highly critical of traditional faculty theories; but he does not condemn all talk of faculties – he himself sometimes refers to them – provided that we keep in mind that they are not distinct (substantial) agents in us (II.XXI.6, XXI.19). See also Harris 2005, 24.

[2] Vere Chappell (2007, 137–44) offers an informative discussion of the Lockean will and contends: "On Locke's view, then, freedom is a two-way power belonging to an agent, both a power to φ and a power not

freedom is *freedom of action*: to be free is to be able to act according to one's volitions (II.xxi.8, xxi.10).[3, 4] Then again, Locke's original reaction to the question concerning the *freedom of the will* looks like an evasive maneuver. He claims that the question is altogether inappropriate because it rests on a category mistake: both will and freedom are, according to Locke, powers, and powers cannot, he argues, attributed to powers (but to substances or agents) (II.xxi.14–16). Whether there is more to Lockean freedom than this is a hotly debated issue. Fortunately, there is a way of pressing the question concerning human freedom that is not only widely acknowledged in Locke scholarship but also connects Locke to Leibniz, and that is the question concerning the *determination of our volitions*. For Locke, the question is, *what determines the will (as a two-way power)?* Here Locke's theory of deliberation plays a key role. It should be noted that I will focus on the theory Locke presents from the second edition of the *Essay* onwards, as it is that version with which Leibniz was familiar.

b. From apparent good to uneasiness

Locke's account of agency builds on the notion of *uneasiness*, which can be physical or mental: "All pain of the body, of what sort soever, and disquiet of the mind, is *uneasiness*." (II.xxi.31.) The crucial point is that it is precisely uneasiness that determines the will:

> [T]he meaning of the Question, *what determines the Will?* is this, What moves the mind, in every particular instance, to determine its general power of directing, to this or that particular Motion or Rest? And to this I answer, The motive for continuing in the same State or Action, is only the present satisfaction in it; The motive to

to φ, whichever way the agent wills" (p. 142). John Carriero (2009, 256) calls the Cartesian will a bidirectional power, which is "a power for doing or not doing something"; for Carriero's very helpful analysis of this power, see Carriero 2009, 256–64.

[3] Here Hobbes's influence is rather evident; see e.g. Chappell 1994, 104; Jolley 1999, 129–30; Yaffe 2000, 13–14.

[4] As Chappell (1994, 103; 2007, 142), Jolley (1999, 130), and Stuart (2013, 408) point out, voluntariness is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of freedom. Jolley (1999, 130) notes: "[T]he Lockean definition of freedom imposes the requirement that a person be physically able to satisfy non-actual preferences."

> change is always some *uneasiness*: nothing setting us upon the change of State, or upon any new Action, but some *uneasiness*. This is the great motive that works on the Mind to put it upon Action, which for shortness sake we will call *determining of the Will*[.] (II.XXI.29.)

So, until we feel mental or physical uneasiness, we are not prompted – there is no ground for volition – to any new action and so we rest content with our prevailing condition.

According to Locke, we desire to remove things that cause uneasiness in us, which results in determinations of the will.[5] The will is thereby engaged in an *uneasiness-removal project*: it is through uneasiness that things considered good gain traction on our minds. Even things that we recognize as the greatest good fail to determine our wills and thus motivate us to action *if* they do not involve uneasiness (II.XXI.35, II.XXI.45–6).

However, there is hardly a moment in a human being's life without several things causing (at least mild) uneasiness. According to Locke, the will is directed to actions that in a sense *maximize* uneasiness-removal: "The most pressing uneasiness naturally determines the will." (II.XXI.40.) By *the most pressing* uneasiness he means *the greatest* (evidently *most intense*) of those *present* uneasinesses the removal of which we judge to be within our reach (II.XXI.40). In general, pains are more pressing than absent goods, for they inevitably cause uneasiness in us whereas absent goods do not (II.XXI.44, II.XXI.46). The ultimate goal is happiness, which consists of "utmost pleasure we are capable of" (II.XXI.42) or at least of absence of pain to the extent that we can be content (II.XXI.42).

c. From uneasiness to deliberation

Thus far Locke's account, given that according to it the most pressing uneasiness determines the will, seems quite deterministic. However, in II.XXI.47 Locke introduces a completely new dimension to his view. He begins by restating the position presented thus far: "There being in us a great many *uneasinesses* always solliciting, and ready to determine the *will*, it is natural, as I have said, that the greatest, and most pressing should

[5] As Stuart (2013, 452) points out, Locke "wavers on whether to identify uneasiness with desire or to portray them as necessary concomitants. [...] [W]e are told that uneasiness *is* desire, that it is scarcely distinguishable from desire, and that it is joined with desire." See also Schouls 1992, 128n22; Yaffe 2000, 147n26; Harris 2005, 29n18; Garrett 2016, 265; Weinberg 2016, 186–7.

determine the *will* to the next action"; but then comes the all-important qualification, "and so it does for the most part, but not always" (II.XXI.47). What follows breaks new ground:

> For the mind having in most cases, as is evident in Experience, a power to *suspend* the execution and satisfaction of any of its desires, and so all, one after another, is at liberty to consider the objects of them; examine them on all sides, and weigh them with others. In this lies the liberty Man has; and from not using of it right come all that variety of mistakes, errors, and faults which we run into, in the conduct of our lives, and our endeavours after happiness; whilst we precipitate the determination of our *wills*, and engage too soon before due *Examination*. To prevent this we have a power to *suspend* the prosecution of this or that desire, as every one daily may Experiment in himself. This seems to me the source of all liberty; in this seems to consist that, which is (as I think improperly) call'd *Free will*. For during this *suspension* of any desire, before the *will* be determined to action, and the action (which follows that determination) done, we have the opportunity to examine, view, and judge, of the good or evil of what we are going to do; and when, upon due *Examination*, we have judg'd, we have done our duty, all that we can, or ought to do, in pursuit of our happiness; and 'tis not a fault, but a perfection of our nature to desire, will, and act according to the last result of a fair *Examination*. (II.XXI.47.)

In other words, Locke takes it as *a fact of experience* that *in most cases* we can suspend acting on our desires;[6] and this establishes nothing less than a completely new domain of practical deliberation in which "lies the liberty Man has." I think it would be difficult to overemphasize how dramatically suspension and the domain it opens alter Locke's theory of freedom and moral motivation. To begin with, somewhat surprisingly but still quite clearly, Locke thereby introduces, in addition to freedom of action, a freedom that concerns willing that is *not* nonsensical (even though Locke still finds the expression "free

[6] Understandably, suspension and deliberation would seem to require at least some time, that is, that we are not required to act immediately: "[T]here is a case wherein a Man is at Liberty in respect of *willing*, and that is *the chusing of a remote Good* as an end to be pursued. Here a Man may suspend the act of his choice[.]" (II.XXI.56, the latter emphasis added.) On the historical context of the notion of suspension, see Harris 2005, 31n20.

will" strictly speaking inaccurate): to will according to "the last result of our Minds" (II.XXI.48), which is a judgment concerning the good formed after we have suspended our desires to properly examine the available options.

Most importantly, the suspension theory transfers us into what has come to be called *the space of practical reasons* of which only rudiments can be found in the first edition view of moral judgment (and probably not even that in any progressive seventeenth-century thinker)[7] it is designed to revise. By suspending her desires, a moral agent enters a domain of deliberation in which she can freely and rationally examine her desires to find out the ones that lead to true happiness. The decisive point is that on the present interpretation, operating in the space of reasons is, to borrow Yaffe's memorable expression, "the Elusive Something": the element in addition to freedom of action a full-fledged free Lockean agent possesses.[8] Indeed, acknowledging this allows us to see that it is here that lies the fabled liberty worth the name:

> Is it worth the Name of *Freedom* to be at liberty play the Fool, and draw Shame and Misery upon a Man's self? If to break loose from the conduct of Reason, and to want that restraint of Examination and Judgment, which keeps us from chusing or doing the worse, be *Liberty*, true Liberty, mad Men and Fools are the only Freemen[.] [...] That [...] we short-sighted Creatures might not mistake true felicity, we are endowed with a power to suspend any particular desire, and keep it from determining the *will*, and engaging us in action. This is *standing still*, where we are not sufficiently assured of the way: Examination is *consulting a guide*. The determination of the *will* upon

[7] As Thomas Pink persuasively argues, it was part of Scholastic orthodoxy to endorse some variant of what Pink calls a "practical reason-based conception of agency" that "characterizes human agency as [...] the exercise of a capacity to be moved or directed by a specifically practical or action-guiding reason" (Pink 2004, 128). I find it highly likely that Locke became acquainted with this conception, as well as with the notion of suspending one's will, (at least) through Bramhall's contribution to the well-known Bramhall–Hobbes controversy; see e.g. Bramhall's *A Defence of True Liberty*, §§ 7–8, 11, 20, 28, 30. However, even though the idea of freedom as rational deliberation is hardly a novelty in Western thought, Locke develops the idea into an ingeniously original and elaborate theory of what moral agency is all about – moreover, a theory expressed in his groundbreaking "experimental" style unencumbered with Scholastic distinctions.

[8] Yaffe (2000, 55, 58) famously does *not* think that the Elusive Something lies in deliberation but in being tied to the good, regardless of how that happens.

> enquiry is *following the direction of that Guide*: And he that has a power to act, or not to act according as such determination directs, is a *free Agent*[.] (II.XXI.50.)

Precisely examination as consulting a guide, in other words deliberation taking place in the space of reasons, forms the very core of true human freedom; the fundamental layer of free agency is thus rational not causal, for it has to do with forming a *judgment* concerning the best course of action. The undeniable fact, which I will shortly discuss, that getting one's will to be determined according to that judgment and acting accordingly involve causal components is certainly extremely important but still quite another matter. Locke's deliberative move means that moral action comes to be viewed as something always *mediated* by free and rational judgments, made in the state of suspense, that latch onto what is truly good. It is thus quite consistent of Locke to explicitly state that in examination lies the locus and source of moral responsibility (II.XXI.56).[9]

d. From judgment to desire

We have seen that, for Locke, we are naturally set to remove the most pressing of the uneasinesses we feel, and one may wonder, what kind of effect, if any, can rational deliberation have on that. Now we should remember that the greatest apparent good often fails to motivate us: "For good, though appearing, and allowed never so great, yet till it has raised desires in our Minds, and thereby made us *uneasie* in its want, it reaches not our *wills*[.]" (II.XXI.46.) One might think that judgment adds little to this picture: even if we judge something to be the greater (or greatest) good, the judgment fails to motivate

[9] We should take into account an element that figures prominently in Lockean practical deliberation: moral laws (or rules). They not only offer criteria for our judgments of right and wrong to the extent that Locke states that "*[m]orally Good and Evil* [...] is only the Conformity or Disagreement of our voluntary Actions to some Law" (II.XXVIII.5) but also – given that they always come with their own kinds of rewards and punishments – have a key role to play in motivating us to act morally. There are three basic types of moral laws: the divine law, the civil law, and the law of opinion or reputation. There is of course nothing odd in invoking moral rules; however, we should bear in mind that here the theological aspect of Locke's moral thought makes its presence felt: precisely the *divine* law "is the only true touchstone of *moral Rectitude*; and by comparing them [our Actions] to this Law, it is, that Men judge of the most considerable *Moral Good* or *Evil* of their Actions" (II.XXVIII.8). Thus, in the space of practical deliberation, the divine law is the element with which our judgments must ultimately accord and actions comply to count as morally good.

us *if* the (absent) good does not make us uneasy. But, and this is crucial, rational practical agent *does* have resources to motivate herself appropriately (that is, rationally):

> Here a Man may suspend the act of his choice from being determined for or against the thing proposed, till he has examined, whether it be really of a nature in it self and consequences to make him happy, or no. For when he has once chosen it, and thereby it is become a part of his Happiness, it raises desire, and that proportionably gives him *uneasiness,* which determines his *will,* and sets him at work in pursuit of his choice on all occasions that offer. (II.XXI.56.)

We are thus not operating with a pregiven set of desires alone: upon examination, if necessary, we can *raise in ourselves desires* involving uneasiness for the absence of the good we judge the greatest; this is how rational inspection of our lives in the space of practical deliberation can gain all-important causal traction on our will so that it comes to be determined precisely by what we judge to be the greatest good. Locke says that "repeated Contemplation" can bring an "absent good" "nearer to our Mind," give "some relish of it," and raise "in us some desire" strong enough overcome other desires (II.XXI.45); this can be seen as, as Yaffe (2000, 47) suggests, "an imaginative process through which we translate our beliefs about the greatest good into feelings." This is an ingenious and groundbreaking move; it outlines something that decidedly differs from just trying to remove what at first sight feels as the most pressing uneasiness, which we are prone to do from blind impulse (see II.XXI.67).

There is a dominant tendency in the literature to understand Locke's theory of deliberation in *causal* terms. But it should be clear by now that uneasiness does *not* determine the last judgment – if anything, the last judgment determines, or raises, uneasiness – and that Locke *never* says that the determination of our judgment is a *causal* affair. To reiterate, this is *not* to deny that uneasinesses as causal entities have a crucial role to play in the new theory: according to it, determining the will requires a *causally potent* entity, which also means that judgments reached by rational deliberation cannot become effective so that they would determine the will without corresponding uneasinesses; but it also seems clear that the primary element of the process, *deliberation*, does not take place in the space of causes but that of reasons. Then, after having reached what we judge the

best course of action, we are to take measures, if need be, that this cognitive achievement raises the corresponding conative element: an uneasiness that determines our will so that we really do act according to the right judgment. In other words, to have an effect on our conduct, our cognitive efforts must become conatively efficacious. But still, this is something fundamentally different from action determined in the space of causes by the relative intensity of the uneasiness of the desires we happen to experience.[10]

Much of Locke scholarship has focused on the question of whether we are free to choose *whether and when to suspend* desire. I do not want to take a stand on this issue, partly because the textual evidence is limited and mixed, partly because it does not affect my main thesis concerning the nature of Lockean deliberation. As noted, Locke seems to see our ability to suspend our desires as a fact of experience; as something everyone knows one is – at least often – capable of doing. I only want to point out that what some scholars have called Locke's libertarianism is not – unlike E.J. Lowe (2004, 692) claims – really about the undetermined power to *suspend* one's desires but about *deliberation* that takes place in the space of reasons opened up by suspension. In fact, even if suspension were something *passively* triggered by contrary desires,[11] this would *not* take away the freedom involved in deliberation to find the best course of action.[12]

[10] If the present interpretation is on the right track, Locke's position amounts to a precursor of the Kantian view that moral agency is about incorporating desires (or inclinations) into (universal) maxims and acting accordingly. Of course, there are many differences between Locke and Kant; but still, suspension and deliberation ensures that moral action is *mediated* by our rational judgment in a way that shares crucial elements with the Kantian account. For both thinkers, what is nowadays called the space of reasons is the proper domain of human freedom.

[11] As Julie Walsh (2014) has argued.

[12] If the resulting view does not seem easy to place within the framework constituted by the distinction between compatibilism and incompatibilism, this only resonates with the recently growing tendency to consider Locke to be – deliberately or not – agnostic with regard to question concerning freedom and determinism. Stuart (2013, 472) ends his discussion with the general assessment that "[a]ll told, there is little evidence that Locke took himself to have offered a solution to the problem of freedom and determinism," whereas Antonia LoLordo (2012, 60) points out that it is possible to see Locke "as agnostic about whether the actions of the will in general are necessitated." Here she seems to be influenced by James Harris (2005, 21) who argues that "Locke intended his account of liberty to be entirely neutral with respect to the grand questions surrounding human volition and action." Also Don Garrett (2016, 277) concludes his discussion in a notably cautious fashion, stating that Locke cannot be said to either deny or defend causal determinism. My own sense is that the second edition Locke was well aware of the Bramhall–Hobbes debate and wanted to offer a reconciliatory view that incorporates both practical-

3. Leibniz

a. Preliminary observations

Leibniz agrees with Locke on a number of important points; I would like to draw attention to the following three. First, and most importantly, Leibniz states that "[*g*]*ood* is what provides or conduces to pleasure, [...] *evil* is what conduces to pain" (*NE*, 195), which is very close to Locke's definition. Second, both are suspicious of traditional doctrines of faculties despite the fact that both occasionally opt for faculty terminology. Third, Leibniz criticizes just as ardently as Locke does the idea that human freedom would be about the indeterminatess or indifference of the will; also for Leibniz, volitional determination is consistent with – indeed necessary for – freedom. After all, he is famous for declaring that "*the understanding can determine the will*, in accordance with which perceptions and reasons prevail, in a manner which, although it is certain and infallible, inclines without necessitating" (*NE*, 175, emphasis added).

But of course, Leibniz's robust and elaborate ontology of substances is something for which there is no Lockean counterpart, and that ontology crucially shapes the way in which Leibniz thinks about human agency. Now it is a central starting point for Leibniz – and here he is trading on a traditional idea – that "[*a*] *substance* is a being capable of action" (AG, 207), and as "there can be no action without a force for acting" (AG, 160), it is unsurprising that Leibniz claims that "the very substance of things consists in a force for acting and being acted upon" (AG, 159). Like all corporeal things, also human beings are thus endowed with a causally efficacious principle, and "[w]hether we call this principle form or entelechy or force does not matter, as long as we remember that it can only be explained through the notion of forces" (AG, 125). Force is thus the fundamental causal concept, and we should note two features relevant to it that find their way to the *New Essays*. First, force is "endowed with *conatus* or *nisus,* attaining its full effect unless it is impeded by a contrary *conatus*" (AG, 118); second, substances act "without interruption" (AG, 160). In line with this, the theory of agency and deliberation of the *New Essays* –

rational ("libertarian") and conative-causal ("necessitarian") elements to combine the insights of both approaches.

unlike that of Locke's *Essay* – operates on the basic premise that human beings are *constant strivers*.

As for human freedom, Leibniz points out that it can either mean both freedom of action – which is something Locke initially focuses on – and freedom to will (NE, 175); Leibniz quite rightly points out "when people contrast freedom with necessity they mean to talk not about outer actions but about the very act of willing" (*NE*, 176); "[i]t is not a question about whether his [a man's] legs are free and whether he has room to move about, but whether he has a free mind and what that consists in" (*NE*, 181). In other words, he does not accept Locke's attempt to restrict the question concerning freedom to that of action; fortunately, as we have already seen, also Locke eventually opts for a wider conception of freedom, which concerns precisely our volitions.

b. Volitions and appetitions

It is within the conativist framework explained above that we are to understand Leibniz's claim that passions are "modifications of *endeavour* [...] which arise from beliefs or opinions and are accompanied by pleasure and displeasure" (*NE*, 167); in other words, passions are modifications of our basic striving. Leibniz's definition of volition is in line with this:

> [V]olition is the effort or endeavour (*conatus*) to move towards what one finds good and away from what one finds bad, the endeavour arising immediately out of one's awareness of those things. This definition has as a corollary the famous axiom that from will and power together, action follows; since any endeavour results in action unless it is prevented. So it is not only the voluntary inner acts of our minds which follow from this *conatus*, but outer ones as well, i.e. voluntary movements of our bodies[.] (*NE*, 172.)

So, based on pleasurable and displeasurable perceptions of which we are aware, volitions result in thoughts and bodily movements, if nothing impedes. However, as is well known and as Leibniz is keen to emphasize, we are definitely *not* consciously aware of all the things affecting us:

> There are other efforts, arising from insensible perceptions, which we are not aware of; I prefer to call these 'appetitions' rather than volitions, for one describes as 'voluntary' only actions one can be aware of and can reflect upon when they arise from some consideration of good and bad; though there are also appetitions of which one can be aware. (*NE*, 173.)

That much of what determines what we do is opaque to us is something Leibniz succeeds in describing more elaborately than any other early modern thinker, and despite the fact that we do have volitions the sources of which we are aware, Leibniz often describes our behavior as something that takes place as it were automatically: "These impulses are like so many little springs trying to unwind and so driving our machine along." (*NE*, 166.) Moreover:

> [T]here is just as much connection or determination amongst thoughts as amongst motions (since being determined is not at all the same as being forced or pushed in a constraining way). If we do not always notice the reason which determines us, or rather by which we determine ourselves, it is because we are as little able to be aware of all the workings of our mind and of its usually confused and imperceptible thoughts as we are to sort out all the mechanisms which nature puts to work in bodies. (*NE*, 178.)

The emerging picture of human behavior is thus that it is about our striving being modified in a determined but not necessitated fashion by the pleasurable and displeasurable perceptions, some of which we are aware but many of which we are not.

c. Determiners of human action

The picture just presented may seem to leave little role for reason, and hence deliberation, in determining what we do. But of course, Leibniz is a rationalist who believes that we can, and often do, act quite rationally – there is thus more to human agency than presented thus far. The following passage lists the kind of entities that can be involved in determining our actions:

> I believe that fundamentally pleasure is a sense of perfection, and pain a sense of imperfection, each being notable enough for one to become aware of it. [1] For the minute insensible perceptions of some perfection or imperfection, which I have spoken of several times and which are as it were components of pleasure and of pain, constitute inclinations and propensities but not outright passions. So there are insensible inclinations of which we are not aware. [2] There are sensible ones: we are acquainted with their existence and their objects, but have no sense of how they are constituted; these are confused inclinations which we attribute to our bodies although there is always something corresponding to them in the mind. [3] Finally there are distinct inclinations which reason gives us: we have a sense both of their strength and of their constitution. Pleasures of this kind, which occur in the knowledge and production of order and harmony, are the most valuable. (*NE*, 194, numbers in brackets added.)

We have already encountered items of the first two types; Leibniz calls the former not only insensible perceptions or inclinations but also semi-sufferings and semi-pleasures (*NE*, 165, 188), whereas the latter he dubs sometimes passions, sometimes pleasures and pains (*NE*, 166). Items of the third type are something else: they are distinct and rational inclinations, connected to knowledge and apparently only pleasurable, never painful. Discussing Leibniz's theory of knowledge would take us too far afield, and in any case I believe it suffices for the present purposes to note something Leibniz says about reason that will shortly prove to be important: "reason is a chain of truths" (*NE*, 199).

In keeping with the aforementioned opacity thesis, Leibniz writes that

> what usually drives us are those minute insensible perceptions which could be called sufferings that we cannot become aware of, if the notion of suffering did not involve awareness. These minute impulses consist in our continually overcoming small obstacles – our nature labours at this without our thinking about it. This is the true character of that disquiet which we sense without taking cognizance of it; it makes us act not only when we are impassioned but also when we appear most calm – for we are never without some activity and motion, simply because nature continually la-

> bours to be more completely at ease. And it is what determines us also, without any question being raised, in those cases which appear to us the most indifferent; because we are never completely in equilibrium and can never be evenly balanced between two options. (*NE*, 188.)

In other words, our constant striving is *usually* determined by the insensible perceptions, especially against minute semi-sufferings. But in many cases also other types of determiners are involved, and Leibniz offers a relatively well-known account of how in such cases our striving comes to be modified so that we act in a specific way. Here is a particularly clear expression of the main idea:

> Various perceptions and inclinations combine to produce a complete volition: *it is the result of the conflict amongst them*. There are some, imperceptible in themselves, which add up to a disquiet which impels us without our seeing why. There are some which join forces to carry us towards or away from some object, in which case there is desire or fear, also accompanied by a disquiet but not always one amounting to pleasure or displeasure. Finally, there are some impulses which are accompanied by actual pleasure or suffering. (*NE*, 192, emphasis added.)

Accordingly, Leibniz has been seen to endorse what has been termed *the conflict-of-forces conception of human action*. The following passages sheds light on the nature of the conflict:

> [I]n the struggle between flesh and spirit, spirit so often loses, because it fails to make good use of its advantages. This struggle is nothing but the conflict between different endeavours – those that come from confused thoughts and those that come from distinct ones. (*NE*, 186.)

So the endeavours arising from confused thoughts most often hold the upper hand because of their intensity. Against Locke's claim that the most pressing uneasiness determines our will, Leibniz famously opts for a more combinative approach:

> Since the final result is determined by how things weigh against one another, I should think it could happen that the most pressing disquiet did not prevail; for *even if it prevailed over each of the contrary endeavours taken singly, it may be outweighed by all of them taken together*. The mind can even avail itself of the trick of 'dichotomies', to make first one prevail and then another; just as in a meeting one can ensure that one faction prevails by getting a majority of votes, through the order in which one puts the questions to the vote. The mind should make provision for this from a distance, for *once battle has been engaged there is no time left to make use of such artifices: everything which then impinges on us weighs in the balance and contributes to determining a resultant direction, almost as in mechanics*; so that without some prompt diversion we will be unable to stop it. (*NE*, 193, emphases added.)

It is hence no surprise that Leibniz states not only that "the prevailing effort" is "[t]he eventual result of all these impulses" (*NE*, 192) – which gestures toward the combinative aspect of inclinations – and that "everyone acts only according to his present perceptions" (*NE*, 204) – which refers to the inevitability of the resultant direction. Indeed, it is unclear what if anything there is left for us to do when the "battle" has started that determines the "resultant direction [...] almost as in mechanics." It seems that when the different types of determiners are in place, the resulting modification of our striving, and hence our action, takes place as dictated by the respective intensities of the determiners involved.

d. Leibnizian deliberation

Given the Leibnizian conflict-of-forces conception, it is evident that Leibniz's view of deliberation cannot but be quite different from the one Locke endorses: Leibniz's thoroughgoing and ceaseless conativism implies that there is no way our striving could ever be simply suspended – there is no "pause button" for our striving. Accordingly, we find him declaring that "the mind has no complete and direct power to block its desires at any time" (*NE*, 197). Given this and his basic commitments, chances for offering a Leibnizian account of deliberation might appear rather slim; indeed, in the chapter on power Leibniz rarely mentions deliberation (once when he explains the Stoic position,

another time when he criticizes Locke). Fortunately, he writes in many places, and quite consistently, about the way in which we can promote rational action. His view of deliberation cannot be based on direct suspension of the desires; but he has a lot to say about the dynamics of the different type of determiners and about the way in which we can promote our rational – one could say deliberative – side. Here is an early description of what is at stake:

> [I]nvoluntary thoughts come to us partly from without, through objects' affecting our senses, and partly from within, as a result of the (often undetectable) traces left behind by earlier perceptions, which continue to operate and mingle with new ones. We are passive in this respect; and even when we are awake we are visited by images [...] which come to us unbidden, as in dreams. [...] But our mind on becoming aware of some image which occurs in it can say Stop! and bring it to a halt, so to speak. What is more, the mind embarks as it sees fit on certain trains of thought which lead it to others. But that applies when neither kind of impression prevails – those from within or those from without. (*NE*, 177.)

So the rational and distinct inclinations *can* stop the confused ones if they are strong enough, and Leibniz encourages us to educate or train ourselves so that, when the battle begins, the rational and distinct inclinations prevail over the confused ones. He thus endorses and recommends what may be called *the training model of deliberative action*. A number of passages describes it in fairly great detail:

> [W]e must recognize that by our voluntary actions *we often indirectly prepare* the way for other voluntary actions; and that although we cannot will what we want to, just as we cannot judge what we want to, *we can nevertheless act ahead of time* in such a way that we shall eventually judge or will what we would like to be able to judge or will today. (*NE*, 182, emphases added.)

> [I]f the mind made good use of its advantages it would triumph nobly. The first step would have to be in education, which should be conducted in such a way that *true goods and evils are made as thoroughly sensible as they can be*[.] [...] Thus *when a man*

> *is in a good frame of mind* he ought to make himself laws and rules for the future, and then carry them out strictly[.] [...][W]e must make this rule for ourselves once and for all: wait till you have the findings of reason and from then on follow them, *even if they are ordinarily retained only as 'blind thoughts' devoid of sensible charms*. (*NE*, 187–8, emphases added.)

> [R]eason opposes appetition with images of greater goods or evils to come, and with *a firm policy and practice of thinking before acting and then standing by whatever is found to be best, even when the sensible grounds which lead to it are no longer present to the mind*, and consist in little but faint images or even in the 'blind thoughts' which are generated by words or signs which have no concrete interpretation. So it is all a matter of 'Think about it carefully' and 'Remember' – by the first to make laws, and by the second to follow them even when we do not remember the reasons from which they sprang. (*NE*, 189–90, emphasis added.)

> [A]s these contrary inclinations, propensities and desires must already exist in the soul, it does not have them within its power; and consequently *it could not resist them in any free and voluntary way in which reason could play a part, if it did not have another method, namely to turn the mind in a different direction*. But how can we ensure that it occurs to us to do this whenever the need arises? – that is the problem, especially when one is in the grip of a strong passion. Hence *what is required is that the mind be prepared in advance*, and be already stepping from thought to thought so that it will not be too much held up when the path becomes slippery and treacherous. [...] [W]e should become accustomed to *proceeding methodically and sticking to sequences of thoughts for which reason*, rather than chance (i.e. insensible and fortuitous impressions), *provides the thread*. (*NE*, 195–6, emphases added.)

I would like to highlight the following four points about the emerging account of deliberation. First, when we find ourselves under the influence of passive affections – in the heat of the battle as it were – the different possible determiners inevitably modify our striving according to the strongest combination of inclinations, and deliberative reason can usually prevail only if it, as Leibniz also puts it, opposes desires "*indirectly*, by preparing weapons in advance with which to combat" the confused desires "when necessary"

(*NE*, 197). But second, and fortunately, the battle is not always as intense, and there are situations in which we are at relative ease – "in a good frame of mind" – and thus in a position to deliberate, choose principles, and commit ourselves to them so that they are operative in a conflict with confused inclinations. But, and third, much of our rational thought is what Leibniz calls "blind": "empty of perception and sensibility, and consist in the wholly unaided use of symbols" (*NE*, 185–6). The problem with blind thoughts is not that they would not be true; the problem is that they are largely if not completely motivationally inert: "[T]his sort of knowledge influence us – something livelier is needed if we are to be moved" (*NE*, 186). He puts the issue also as follows:

> Confused thoughts often make themselves vividly sensed, whereas distinct ones are usually only potentially vivid: they could be actually so, if we would only apply ourselves to getting through to the senses of the words or symbols; but since we do not do that, through lack of care or lack of time, what we oppose lively sentiments with are bare words or at best images which are too faint. (*NE*, 186–7.)

Given this, we need "methods and stratagems" to "become masters of ourselves" and to "bring it about that we have certain thoughts and that when the time comes we shall will according to our [...] reason's decrees" (*NE*, 196). In other words, we need a kind of *psycho education* to make rational and distinct inclinations stronger than the confused ones. Finally, and in keeping with his idea that we are spiritual automata (AG, 144, 215) and that reason is a chain of truths, Leibniz has a specific view of the nature of deliberation, quite different from that depicted by Locke. Our psycho education and self-training should make us "accustomed to proceeding methodically and sticking to sequences of thoughts for which reason, rather than chance (i.e. insensible and fortuitous impressions), provides the thread" (*NE*, 196). This might not be as intellectual or esoteric as one might be tempted to think: Leibniz says that we are to oppose "dangerous interests" with "innocent ones like farming or gardening," and to "avoid idleness, [...] correct curiosities, [...] carry out experiments and inquiries" (*NE*, 187). In other words, we are to make ourselves accustomed to a way of life that in a way automatically keeps us on the rational track even when confused inclinations affect us.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would say that although both thinkers offer accounts of rational and deliberative human agency with some important common features, Leibniz's conativism is something for which there is no Lockean counterpart. That conativism, in turn, means that we are always acting in a specifically determined way, that the determination process can never be halted, and that the fate of our actions comes to be determined in a conflict between different types of determines. Given this, the Lockean suspension doctrine is not an option for Leibniz; rationality and causality cannot be separated, perhaps not in any way but certainly not in the Lockean fashion. Thus it is quite understandable that Leibniz recommends that when passive affections do not forcefully work on us, we train ourselves to make rational sequences of thoughts as lively as possible and to commit ourselves to them in such a way that, when the battle over our agency takes place, they are in a sense automatically stronger than the passionate inclinations, both sensible and insensible.