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'QUID SIT ESSENTIA CREATURAE,
PRIUSQUAM A DEO PRODUCATUR': LEIBNIZ'S VIEW *

The question, "Quid sit essentia creaturae, ..." is raised by Suarez in his *Disputationes Metaphysicae*,¹ and is answered by him as follows:

Principio statuendum est, essentiam creaturae, seu creaturam de se, et priusquam a Deo fiat, nullum habere in se verum esse reale, et in hoc sensu, praeciso esse existentiae, essentiam non esse rem aliquam, sed omnino esse nihil (*Disp. Met.* 31, 2, 1).

The qualification "in hoc sensu" is crucial here: for it clearly implies that for an essence – generally: a *possibile*² – to be "omnino ... nihil" is *just* for it to be devoid of a "verum esse reale", either in, or else "outside", the divine intellect, and (hence) that, unlike Plato's Forms or Ideas, *possibilia* do not make up a realm of self-subsistent entities.³ In other words, before their actualization *possibilia* are devoid of a "verum esse reale", or, equivalently, they lack an *esse existentiae*, and, in this sense, they qualify as

* I wish to thank Calvin Normore for many helpful conversations on some of the topics discussed here.

¹ Cf. also, "Utrum causabile, antequam causetur in actu, habeat verum esse reale a causa sua?" (Duns Scotus, *Rep. Par.* II, d. 1., q. 2); "Utrum esse essentiae creabilium quidditatum fuit aeternum" (Franciscus de Mayronis, *Quodlibeta*, q. 8); "An essentiae rerum fuerint ab aeterno, antequam a Deo producantur?" (Franciscus Zumel, *In Primam D. Thomae Partem Commentarium*, Venetiis 1597, q. 10, a. 3, q.u.).

² The set of *possibilia* contains at least all possible essences (natures, quiddities), and all possible individuals. As we shall see in the main text, the question raised by Suarez strictly concerns the ontological status of such *possibilia* as (possible) essences, and must be distinguished from the quite different question of what makes e.g. a possible essence *possible*.

³ This view – Suarez's and virtually all the schoolmen's – goes back to St. Augustine: "Singula [...] propriis sunt creata rationibus. Has autem rationes ubi esse arbitrandum est nisi in ipsa mente creatoris? Non enim extra se quidquam positum intuebatur, ut secundum id constitueret quod constituebat; nam hoc opinari sacrilegum est" (*De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 46, n. 2).

"omnino ... nihil".⁴ The claim that a *possibile* is "omnino ... nihil", however, is ambiguous. It may mean that (a) no *possibile* has an *esse existentiae* (i.e., the "verum esse reale" Suarez speaks of); or it may mean that (b) *possibilia* lack any mode of being whatever – be it an *esse existentiae*, or an *esse secundum quid* such as e.g. an *esse cognitum*. And, plainly, (b) implies (a): but not conversely.⁵

The question accordingly arises whether or not *possibilia*, devoid though they are of a *verum esse reale*, have any other kind of *esse*, and, if so, what such an *esse* consists in. This question, it should be noted, strictly concerns what we might call the 'reality' (the ontological status) of *possibilia*: not their possibility. We are asking, in effect, whether or not *possibilia* are real (in some sense of "real"), and, if so, what their reality consists in. We are *not* asking what makes a given *possibile* possible, i.e., what are the grounds of its possibility. To see this more clearly, let us suppose that *possibilia* are ascribed a mode of being; that the latter is grounded in the divine intellect; and, finally, that it consists in (say) the being-of-being-objects-of-the-divine-intellect. We are still left with the question of what makes a(ny) given *possibile*, not so much an object of the divine intellect, as a *possible* object thereof. It need not be the divine intellect; nor need it be the divine will; nor need it be the divine power. It may just qualify as such (viz. as possible) in and of itself, quite independently of God. *Possibilia*, accordingly, although they may depend on God for their possible *being*, need not at all depend on him for their being *possible*.

Further, it should be clear that, even if it be conceded that the second of our two questions can intelligibly be asked only provided an affirmative answer to the first question is given, we are still dealing with two quite different questions, and with two quite different traits (the possibility *vis-à-vis* the reality) of *possibilia*. Even though, that is, it be conceded that (the possibility of) an answer to the second question requires that the first question be given an affirmative answer, the fact that a(ny) given *possibile* has a possible being does not have to be appealed to – and plays no role whatsoever – in the answer to the question of what makes that *possibile* possible.

⁴ This is also true of never-to-be-realized *possibilia* (in the case of which the qualification, "before their actualization", makes, plainly, no sense).

⁵ I take it that Suarez has in mind something like the distinction between (a) and (b) when he asserts both that an assence, before its production, lacks a "verum esse reale" and that a "possible essence" "est ens revera possibile et capax realis existentiae, ideoque [...] sub ente reali aliquo modo comprehendi[tur]" (*Disp. Met.* 31, 2, 10). Suarez partly relies here on Cajetan's view whereby "... ens reale dupliciter assumitur: uno modo ut distinguitur contra ens ab intellectu fabricatum; alio modo, ut distinguitur contra non existens actu" (commentary on St. Thomas' *De ente et essentia*, c. IV, q. 6).

We should, in effect, be putting forward a perfectly consistent view, were we to hold *both* that that question can be answered without assuming that there are such things as *possibilia*, and that, if no such things "exist", there would be nothing to which "(intrinsically) possible" could truly apply. On the other hand, we can answer the question of what grounds the reality (if any) of *possibilia* without making any reference to the notion of possibility – even though only that which qualifies as possible to begin with can intelligibly be said to be endowed with reality.

1. *St. Thomas*. In what follows, I will mostly be concerned with the question of the reality of *possibilia*: and will now proceed to expound and discuss the answers to that question which not only provide the historical and conceptual background for, but, also, are directly or indirectly relevant to our understanding of, Leibniz's views on the reality of the inhabitants of the so-called "pays des possibles".⁶ The first such answer, which originates with St. Anselm, and has also been given by (among others) St. Thomas, Zumel, and William of Alnwick, is uncompromisingly negative. According to it, before their production *possibilia* (in particular, essences) are wholly devoid of *esse*, so that talk of the reality (the *esse*) of essences can only be understood in terms of talk of the (absolute) reality of the divine essence. On this view, it is not to be said that essences depend on God for their reality; it is to be said, rather, that reference to their reality is really and ultimately reference to the reality of the *ens realissimum*, God: thus, according to St. Anselm,

...antequam [omnia] fierent, et cum iam facta sunt... semper in ipso sunt, non quod sunt in seipsis, sed quod est idem ipse. ... in ipso ... sunt ipsa

⁶ LR, 109 (cf. also LR, 121: "pays des réalités possibles"). In GP VII, 305, reference is made to a "regio idearum"; in GP VI, 614, to a "Region des verités éternelles, ou des idées dont elles dependent"; in T, § 21, to a "Region immense des Verités [qui] contient toutes les possibilités"; in T, § 335, to a "region ideale des possibles"; in D II, 223, Leibniz remarks, "...pulcherrima sunt multa Platonis dogmata [...]: ...esse in divina mente mundum intelligibilem, quem ego quoque vocare soleo regionem idearum". Leibniz tends to identify the "pays des possibles" – the "regio idearum" – with the divine intellect (see e.g. LR, 121; T, § 335; GP VI, 614). We should not take such an identification at face value. We should, rather, take it to be a (misleading) way of saying that the collection of *possibilia* is not a collection of self-subsistent entities: *possibilia* only have reality "in" God. Alternatively, we could take Leibniz to be identifying the "pays des possibles" with the "result" of the exercise, on God's part, of his infinite faculty of thinking: such a "result" being of course the set of all that can be thought (or conceived) by an infinite intellect. Both alternatives are textually justified: the first by the contention that "...lorsque Dieu agit suivant sa sagesse, il se règle sur les idées des possibles qui sont ses objets, mais qui n'ont aucune réalité hors de luy avant leur creation actuelle" (GP VI, 422); the second by the contention that "...Deus haec [= ideae rerum] non volendo fecit, sed intelligendo, intellexit existendo" (A 6, 3, 122: a more complex view along the same lines is put forth by Leibniz in T, § 189; cf. also, "Cum Deus calculat et cogitationem exercet fit mundus", VE, 62).

prima essentia ... (*Monologion*, c. 34; cf. also: "...omnis creata substantia tanto verius est in verbo, id est in intelligentia creatoris, quam in seipsa, quanto verius existit creatrix quam creata essentia", *Monol.*, c. 36; "Hoc igitur modo ... intelligi potest, si dicitur creatrix essentia universa fecisse de nihilo, ...; id est: quae prius nihil erant, nunc sunt aliquid", *Monol.*, c. 8).

On St. Anselm's view, then, before they are produced by God the essences of creatures (or the creatures themselves) are nothing other than the divine "creatrix essentia": so that reference to any mode of being which those essences – or those creatures – may be claimed to possess before their production must be explained away in terms of reference to (the mode of being of) the divine *creatrix essentia*.⁷ St. Thomas put forward a very similar view: according to him,

... ex hoc ipso quod quidditati esse attribuitur, non solum esse sed ipsa quid ditas creari dicitur: quia antequam esse habeat, nihil est, nisi forte in intellectu creantis, ubi non est creatura, sed creatrix essentia (*Quaestiones disp. de potentia* q. 3, a. 5 ad 2^{um}; cf. also, "Creatura in creatore est creatrix essentia, ut Anselmus dicit", *Quaestiones disp. de veritate* q. 4, a. 7 ad 1^{um}).

The important claim here, I suggest, is not so much that a quiddity, before its "creation", i.e., before it is endowed with an *esse existentiae*, is "nihil", as that, before its "creation", it is nothing other than the divine *creatrix essentia*: from which it follows that it is devoid of any *esse* and (therefore) that it is indeed "nihil". To say, in other words, that, before its "creation", a quiddity "nihil est, nisi forte in intellectu creantis" (which appears to suggest that it is something after all, albeit only "in intellectu creantis") is just a misleading way of saying that talk of its reality is actually and ultimately talk of the (absolute) reality of the divine "creatrix essentia".⁸ On

⁷ I should point out, in this connexion, that William of Alnwick (among others) has taken St. Augustine to put forth a similar view with respect to divine ideas. According to St. Augustine, "Sunt [...] ideae principales quaedam formae vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, [...] quae divina intelligentia continentur" (*De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 46, n. 2). William of Alnwick's interpretation is as follows: "...sola essentia divina est stabilis et incommutabilis; [...]. Idea ergo, secundum Augustinum, sunt sola essentia divina, quae omnia continet intelligentia" (*Quaestione disputatae de esse intelligibili et de Quodlibet*, ed. by A. Ledoux, Florence 1937, p. 439). We should probably look askance at such an interpretation.

⁸ According to J. Benes ("Valor 'possibilium' apud S. Thomam, Henricum Gandavensem, B. Iacobum de Viterbio", *Divus Thomas* (Piac.) 29 (1926), p. 624), "nihil", in St. Thomas' passage I have cited in the main text, should be understood in a quite different way: "Essentiae (naturae) absolute consideratae abstrahunt ab omni esse, tum esse existentiae tum esse in intellectu. Ergo nullum habent esse actuale, sunt nihil, in quantum nihil opponitur omni actualitati. Non sunt au-

St. Thomas' view, then, before their "creation" quiddities (essences) have no *esse* whatsoever: the assertion that they have e.g. an *esse obiectivum* is only intelligible provided it is taken to be an assertion about the *esse* of the divine *creatrix essentia*.⁹

The same view is also put forth by St. Thomas in the following passage (a reply to the objection whereby "...Anselmus dicit... quod creatura in Deo est creatrix essentia. Sed creatrix essentia est tantum una. Ergo creatura in Deo est tantum una. Sed hoc modo creatur creatura a Deo secundum quod in ipso praexistit. Ergo a Deo non est nisi una tantum creatura..."):

...dicendum, quod creatura dicitur esse in Deo dupliciter. Uno modo sicut in causa gubernante et conservante esse creaturae; et sic praesupponitur esse creaturae distinctum a creatore ad hoc quod creatura in Deo esse dicatur. ...creatura hoc modo in Deo existens, non est creatrix essentia. Alio modo dicitur creatura esse in Deo sicut in virtute causae agentis, vel si-

tem nihil, sed dicunt quamdam realitatem in quantum ipsis attribuimus diversas perfectiones, utique non in actuali ordine existentiae, sed in ordine ad esse, quatenus ipsae sunt natae ad esse, scilicet quatenus sunt possibiles". A similar interpretation had been put forward by Capreolus (who, we shall see, also put forth the interpretation I suggest in the main text): "Talis [...] natura [= natura secundum absolutam considerationem], antequam habeat esse in rerum natura, [...] est omnino nihil, prout nihil opponitur enti quod dicit actum existendi extra causam suam; sed non erat nihil, prout opponitur enti quod dicit quidditatem vel naturam in se, vel dicit actum essendi in intellectu divino, vel in potentia productiva Dei" (*Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*, Paban and Pègues eds., Turonibus 1900, t. 2, p. 74b). Both Capreolus and Benes rely on St. Thomas' claim that "...hoc quod aliquid competit naturae secundum absolutam considerationem [i.e., a nature considered in and of itself, "prout abstrahit ab omni esse"], est ratio quare competit naturae alicui secundum esse quod habet in singulari, et non e converso. [...] unde dato quod Socrates et Plato non essent, adhuc humanae naturae rationalitas competeret" (*Quodlibet* 8, q. 1, a. 1). The claim just cited cannot, however, be taken to suggest that a nature – "absolute considerata" – is endowed with reality: for, St. Thomas adds, "Similiter etiam intellectus divinus est ratio naturae absolute consideratae". This suggests, rather, that the "absolute consideration" of a nature is made possible by the latter's "existence" in the divine intellect, wherein, we know, it is nothing other than the divine *creatrix essentia*: all the more so, in fact given St. Thomas' contention that "...uniuscuiusque naturae creatae prima consideratio est secundum quod est in intellectu divino; secunda vero consideratio est ipsius naturae absolute; [...]" (*Quodl.* 8, q. 1, a. 1). At play here, then, is not so much the question whether or not a nature – "absolute considerata" – has a reality, as the question of what makes it possible for a nature to be "considered" *absolute*.

⁹ Thus, according to St. Thomas (according to Cajetan), "...quoniam esse divinum est tantae excellentiae, ut omnes essendi modos [...] eminenter praebeat, oportet ut esse naturale ipsius divinae essentiae sit non solum ordinis intelligibilis, [...] sed sit etiam esse obiectivum eiusdem respectu intellectus sui: [...] per hoc, nec essentia divina ut obiecta intellectui habet esse diminutum; nec aliqua res, ut obiecta divino intellectui, habet esse diminutum. Et de essentia divina [...] manifeste sequitur: quia eius esse obiectivum est esse naturale ipsius Dei, propter eius eminentiam. De aliis vero sequitur ex eo, quod alia non aliter possunt obici Deo, quam in obiecta essentia divina [...] consequenter esse obiectivum rerum respectu intellectus divini, non est esse relativum, sed absolutum realissimum, scilicet esse Dei" (*In Summam Theologiae* I, q. 15, a. 1, n. VIII).

cut in cognoscente; *et sic creatura in Deo est ipsa essentia divina*, ... Quamvis autem hoc modo creatura in Deo existens sit divina essentia, non tamen per istum modum est ibi una tantum creatura, sed multae. Nam essentia Dei est sufficiens medium ad cognoscendum diversas creaturas, et sufficiens virtus ad eas producendas (*Quaest. disp. de potentia* q. 3, a. 16 ad 24^{um} – italics mine; see also q. 3, a. 15 in corp., as well as, “... in Deo nihil est diversum ab ipso; unde et creaturae, secundum hoc quod in Deo sunt, non sunt aliud a Deo: quia creaturae in Deo sunt causatrix essentia, ut dicit Anselmus, ...”, *In Sent.* I, d. 36, q. 1, a. 3 ad 1^{um}).

The claim, accordingly, that creatures (*qua* possible), or essences (*qua* exemplifiable), are endowed with a mode of being is to be explained away in terms of the (misleading) claim that they “exist” in God, which claim, in turn, is to be understood in terms of the (correct) claim that the alleged *esse* of possible creatures (or of exemplifiable essences) in nothing other than the *esse* of the divine *creatrix essentia*. To put forward a view of this sort is, in effect, to maintain that for possible creatures – or for exemplifiable essences – to have an *esse* is, first, for the divine essence to be imitable in such-and-such ways, and, second, for God to have the power to bring it about that his essence is actually imitated in those ways (some, if not quite all, of them). Talk of the *esse*, or the reality, of possible creatures and essences accordingly gives way to talk of the (absolute) reality of the divine essence, and of its imitability as well. The conclusion plainly follows that possible creatures and essences cannot be ascribed any ontological status at all: or – equivalently – that possible creatures and essences are endowed with no more than the reality which divine ideas are endowed with.

Now, according to St. Thomas, reference to the reality of a divine idea is ultimately reference to the reality of the divine essence (thought of as imitable): reference to the reality of possible creatures and essences will, therefore, also be reference to the reality of God’s essence.¹⁰ Talk of possible

¹⁰ Cf., “... inquantum Deus cognoscit suam essentiam ut sic imitabilem a tali creatura, cognoscit eam ut propriam rationem et ideam huius creaturae” (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 15, a. 2); “... Deus secundum essentiam suam est similitudo omnium rerum. Unde idea in Deo nihil aliud est quam Dei essentia” (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 15, a. 3 ad 3^{um}; see also *Summa contra gentiles* I, 54); “... essentia [divina] ... est idea rerum; non quidem ut est essentia, sed ut est intellecta” (*Quaestiones disp. de veritate* q. 3, a. 2); “... rationes ideales rerum, quae sunt in Deo ab aeterno, non sunt aliud secundum rem ab ipso intellectu et essentia divina” (*In Sent.* I, d. 19, q. 5, a. 3); “... idea non nominat tantum essentiam, sed essentiam imitabilem: unde secundum quod est multiplex imitabilitas in essentia divina [...], est pluralitas idearum” (*In Sent.* I, d. 36, q. 2, a. 2 ad 1^{um}). The passages I have just cited should be taken to mean not only that nothing can be in God which is really distinct from him, but, also (and more significantly), that ideas and *possibilia* are devoid of any *esse* or reality. St. Thomas appears to put forth a similar view with respect to eternal truths: “... quia solus intellectus divinus est aeternus, in ipso solo veritas aeternitatem habet. Nec propter

creatures, in other words, just is talk of respects in which the divine essence is *imitable*: to say that "there are" such things as *possibilia* is only a misleading way of saying that the divine essence *can* be imitated in such-and-such respects, and that God has the power to turn (as it were) that "can" into an "is". St. Thomas is very explicit about this: he contends, for example, that

Ea ... quae non sunt nec erunt nec fuerunt a Deo sciuntur quasi eius virtuti *possibilia*. Unde non cognoscit ea ut aliquo modo existentia in seipsis, sed ut existentia *solum* in potentia divina (*Summa contra gentiles* I, 66 – italics mine: it may be of some interest to consider here Arnauld's remark to Leibniz, to which I shall return later, that "... tout ce que nous appelons substances possibles, purement possibles, ne peut être autre chose que la toute-puissance de Dieu", LR, 98).

For God to know a pure possible,¹¹ then, is not so much for him to know an object of sorts which has a reality (an *esse*) of sorts, as for him to know how far his power extends – and each of the ways in which he could have exercised his power corresponds, as it were, to a way in which his essence is imitable. In particular, St. Thomas' claim that pure possibles "*sunt aliquo modo existentia*" (*Quaest. disp. de veritate* q. 1, a. 8 ad 1^{um}) is not meant to suggest that pure possibles are somehow endowed with a mode of being: it means, rather, that for them to be "*aliquo modo*" is nothing other than for them to be in the divine power – and for them so to be is nothing other than for God to be such that he could have exercised his power in such-and-such ways. Ascriptions of reality to *possibilia* must accordingly be explained away in terms of assertions concerning the extent of God's power: to say that pure possibles "*sunt in potentia... Dei*" (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 19, a. 9) is not to say that they have the mode of being

hoc sequitur quod aliquid aliud sit aeternum quam Deus: quia veritas intellectus divini est ipse Deus" (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 16, a. 7). Talk of the reality of eternal truths, in other words, just is talk of the reality of God himself. As I have remarked earlier in the main text, St. Thomas' view concerning the reality of essences has also been put forward by (among others) Zumel and William of Alnwick. According to Zumel, "... creatis rebus creatae sunt rerum essentiae [...] solum ergo rerum essentiae et quidditates in intellectu Dei, vel in potentia activa Dei, fuerunt ab aeterno" (*In Primam*, cit., p. 157a: the surrounding context makes it quite clear that to contend that essences "are" *ab aeterno* in the divine intellect is really to contend that they are nothing other than the divine *creatrix essentia*). According to William of Alnwick, "... sicut [...] res creata aut creabilis prout continetur in essentia divina perfectionaliter et eminenter non est aliud ab essentia divina, et prout continetur virtualiter in Deo non est aliud quam potentia Dei, sicut prout habet esse repraesentatum in essentia divina non est aliud quam essentia divina repraesentans et prout habet esse scitum sive cognitum in scientia Dei non est aliud quam scientia Dei" (*Quaestiones disputatae*, cit., p. 16; see also pp. 67, 114).

¹¹ Pure possibles are never-to-be-realized possibles: "Ea [...] quae non sunt nec erunt nec fuerunt" (see the passage cited in the main text).

which consists (for example) in the being-of-being-objects-of-the-divine-power; it is, rather, to say something about the way(s) in which God could have exercised his power.

A view of this sort should not, of course, be taken to provide an answer to the question of what grounds the possibility of the possible; nor should it be taken to suggest that talk of (the notion of) possibility is to be understood in terms of talk of (the notion of) producibility. It should instead be taken to provide an answer to the quite different question of whether or not so-called *possibilia* have reality, and, if so, what grounds that reality. We have just seen how St. Thomas answer the latter question. Like all the schoolmen, he denies that *possibilia* make up a realm of entities whose existence is independent of that of God. Such a denial, however, is consistent with two rather different views: (1) the view whereby *possibilia* have a reality which is bestowed on them by (and is formally distinct from the reality of) God; (2) the view whereby talk of the reality of *possibilia* reduces without remainder to talk of the reality of God (so that only God, i.e., the divine *creatrix essentia*, can correctly be said to have reality). St. Thomas, I have attempted to show, put forward (2).

2. *Capreolus*. He has also been taken, however, for instance by Capreolus (see fn. 8), to put forth both (2) *and* a version of (1). Of these two views, Capreolus remarks, "secunda [= (2) above] ...est securior"; but, he adds,

Non tamen alia via est erronea, ..., nisi pro quanto videtur ponere quod essentia habeat aliquod esse, et non a Deo. Sed hoc non debet movere. Quia, sicut dicit Henricus, et bene, meo iudicio, essentia habet duplex esse, scilicet esse essentiae, et esse existentiae; et quodlibet istorum habet a Deo; sed primum habet a Deo ut est causa exemplaris, dans per suum intelligere esse intelligibile et quidditativum cuilibet essentiae; ... esse intelligibile, esse quidditativum, cum non sit esse nisi secundum quid, non est per creationem, ... (*Defensiones Theologiae* ..., cit., t. 2, p. 76a).

I doubt very much that St. Thomas would have accepted Capreolus' view whereby an uncreated essence has an "esse intelligibile et quidditativum" which is bestowed on it by God, and is distinct from the divine *esse*. Capreolus does not, of course, have in mind a real distinction here: he has in mind, however, a kind of distinction which makes it impossible to explain away any reference to the reality of essences in terms of reference to the (absolute) reality of the divine *creatrix essentia*. The very notion of an eternal uncreated essence which is somehow distinct from the divine essence is quite foreign, I believe, to St. Thomas' metaphysical theology. But it plays a fundamental role in Capreolus' passage I have just cited, as

well as in a passage where Capreolus takes up, and answers, the question of whether or not, before its creation, something (say a stone) has any kind of *esse* (this question is really a question concerning the meaning of "nihil" in "creatio ex nihilo"):

... lapis erat omnino nihil in genere existentium; nec erat ibi aliquid ultra tale nihil, existens in actu, et de quo posset dici, hoc est actu. Erat autem ultra nihilitatem, quae est carentia actualis existentiae, essentia in esse essentiae; quae, absolute considerata, ut natura vel quidditas, est substrahibilis nihilitati existentiae et aliquidditati existentiae, ... Et ipsa, secundum se, semper est aliquid in genere essentiarum, et in esse intelligibili, et in potentia activa Creatoris, licet non in esse reali actuali, ... Et cum dicitur quod tunc lapis non est factus ex puro nihilo; dico quod non est factus ex puro nihilo in genere entium vel essentiarum, sed ex puro nihilo in genere existentium actu vel in potentia passiva extra Deum (*Defensiones Theologiae* ..., cit., t. 2, p. 73a; see also pp. 73b, 74b).

Three points are worthy of notice here. First, unlike St. Thomas, Capreolus makes reference not just to an essence, "absolute considerata", but also (and more significantly) to an essence in *esse essentiae*: so that, when it comes to essences, it is not just a question of *consideratio*, but also (and more significantly) of *esse* – a so-called *esse essentiae*. Second, Capreolus draws a distinction between, on the one hand, a "pulum nihil" "in genere ... essentiarum", and, on the other, a "pulum nihil" "in genere existentium", and contends that e.g. a stone, before its creation, only qualifies as a "pulum nihil" in the second of the two ways just described. In a word: before its creation a stone is an essence in *esse essentiae*. Finally, third, to claim that an essence is "substrahibilis nihilitati existentiae" is, I suggest, to claim that its being devoid of an *esse existentiae* is perfectly consistent with its being endowed with an (uncreated) *esse essentiae*. It plainly follows from these three points that, on Capreolus' view, the answer to the question, "Quid sit essentia creaturae...", cannot quite be that the "essentia creaturae" is nothing other than the divine *creatrix essentia*. The correct answer, according to Capreolus, is that an essence, before its creation, is endowed with an *esse essentiae*, and only counts as "nihil" in the sense that it lacks an *esse existentiae*: this, of course, we have seen, implies neither that the *esse essentiae* of an essence is a "verum esse reale" (it is, in fact, an *esse secundum quid*), nor that it is independent of God (it is, in fact, dependent on the divine intellect).

A view of this sort could hardly be taken to capture the spirit (and the letter) of St. Thomas' answer to the question, "Quid sit essentia creaturae...". It can, however, plausibly be taken to capture the letter – if not

quite the spirit – of Henry of Ghent's answer to that question (the notion of *esse essentiae* is, after all, Henry of Ghent's). And it can also plausibly be taken to capture the spirit – if not quite the letter – of Duns Scotus' answer to that question. Like Scotus, Capreolus ascribes to essences an *esse intelligibile*, and takes the latter to be an *esse* purely *secundum quid*. Like Henry of Ghent, and unlike Scotus, he contends that essences are endowed with an *esse essentiae*: unlike Henry of Ghent, however, he does not regard such as *esse* as an *esse reale*. Like Scotus and Henry of Ghent, and unlike St. Thomas, he has no qualms with the idea of an eternal uncreated essence. Like Scotus, and unlike Henry of Ghent, he distinguishes (albeit only implicitly) between the notion of production, and that of creation, of essences: on his view, however, unlike on Scotus', that distinction goes hand-in-hand with (and, in all likelihood, it is founded on) the distinction – Henry of Ghent's – between *esse essentiae* and *esse existentiae*. Now Henry of Ghent's answer to the question, "Quid sit essentia creaturae ...", although it has little or no bearing on our understanding of Leibniz's own answer to it, is definitely relevant to an understanding of Scotus' views on the reality of essences: let us turn, then, to a discussion of Henry's views on that topic.

3. *Henry of Ghent*. In *Ord. I* (d. 36, q.u.) Scotus raises – and gives a negative answer to – the question, "Utrum fundamentum relationis aeternae ad Deum ut cognoscentem habeat vere esse essentiae ex hoc quod est sub tali respectu". The context in which the question is raised is this: God knows creatures (or their essences) *ab aeterno*; hence, *qua* known by him *ab aeterno*, creatures (or their essences) bear an eternal relation to God. They are, also, the "fundamentum" of that relation.¹² Now the negative answer given by Scotus, as well as the arguments he puts forward in its favour, are meant by him to be in direct opposition to Henry of Ghent's affirmative answer and (in particular) to Henry of Ghent's contention that the "fundamentum relationis aeternae ad Deum" possesses a so-called *esse essentiae*. Two questions arise here. First: why should such a "fundamentum" be ascribed such an *esse*? Second: what kind of *esse* is the *esse essentiae*?

In order to answer both questions we should distinguish, to begin with, between two senses of the notion of a *res*: "*res a reor reris*", on the one hand, and "*res a ratitudine*", on the other.¹³ Anything can be a *res a reor*

¹² Cf., "... creatura secundum suum 'esse intelligibile' est fundamentum respectus idealis" (*Lectura I*, d. 35, q.u., n. 40); "... res [...] fundat relationem idealem secundum esse deminutum quod habuit ab aeterno" (*Lectura I*, d. 36, q.u., n. 26). See also *Ord. I*, d. 36, q.u., n. 36, 54.

¹³ Cf., "Primus [...] conceptus communissimus [...], est conceptus quo concipitur res a reor reris dicta, quae continet sub se rem imaginariam quae est purum non ens, [...] et continet sub se

reris: never mind whether it is a "res imaginaria" or a "res vera" (cf. fn. 13). Thus impossible or fictitious "things" such as chimeras, and possible ones as well, are correctly deemed to be *res a reor reris*. Only a proper subset of the set of *res a reor reris*, however, qualifies as the set of *res a ratitudine*: these are essences, and, according to Henry, what sets apart a "res vera" from a "res imaginaria" (which is a "purum non ens")¹⁴ is not so much the fact that it is (or has) an essence, as the fact that it is endowed with an "esse proprium"¹⁵ or, in Henry's own terminology, an *esse essentiae*. Now such an *esse* – rather than, say, an *esse cognitum* or an *esse intelligibile* – is, we shall presently see, precisely what makes an essence (be it exemplified or not) the object of a *scientia realis*, properly so-called: otherwise put, on Henry's view a *scientia* only qualifies as *realis* provided its objects have an *esse proprium*, i.e., an *esse essentiae*.¹⁶ Further, according to Henry an essence has – or may have – three kinds of *esse*: an *esse rationis*; an *esse naturae*; and an *esse essentiae*.¹⁷

rem veram quae est natura et essentia alicuius vel rei increatae vel creatae habentis ideam in mente divina et natae existere extra, in quo non consideratur ratio eius quod est esse aliquid per essentiam nisi ex respectu quodam ad rationem exemplarem in Deo. Res enim quaecunque sive existens sive non existens, si habet esse in Deo secundum exemplarem rationem, non solum dicitur quod est res dicta a reor reris, sed etiam quod sit natura et essentia aliqua. Et ideo dicitur res a ratitudine. Et haec res [...] est in sua essentia participatio quaedam divini esse, quod nondum est esse existentiae, sed quiditativum, ..." (*Aurea Quodlibeta*, Venetiis 1613, *Quodl.* 5, q. 2, t. 1, p. 229 col. 1; note, incidentally, that the "esse ... quiditativum" Henry of Ghent refers to here is what he usually calls *esse essentiae*).

¹⁴ There can be no knowledge of a "res imaginaria": "... illud non ens, quod non habet exemplar in Deo et propterea non est natum esse extra aliquid in rerum natura, quale [...] intendimus hoc nomine chimaera vel hircocervus, illud omnino non potest dici natura vel essentia aut res vel certitudo aliqua nata capi ab intellectu [...]. Unde et de tali non ente non potest esse scientia" (*Aurea Quodlibeta*, cit., *Quodl.* 3, q. 9, t. 1, p. 99 col. 2).

¹⁵ The notion of *esse proprium* is Avicenna's: "Unaquaeque [...] res habet certitudinem, qua est id quod est, sicut triangulus habet certitudinem qua est triangulus [...], et hoc est quod fortasse appellamus esse proprium" (*Liber de philosophia prima* I, c. 6). Thus characterized, an *esse proprium* need not at all be a mode of being: it was, however, so regarded by Henry, who took it to be an *esse essentiae* (see e.g. *Summae questionum ordinariorum*, Parisius 1520, a. 21, q. 4, fo. 127v). As we shall see later, on Henry's view the divine essence, thought of as imitable, is the formal or exemplary cause of the *esse essentiae* of essences: this view he traces back to Avicenna's contention that "Animal [...] acceptum [...] per se est natura, de qua dicitur quod esse eius prius est quam esse naturale, [...] et hoc est cuius esse proprie dicitur divinum esse, quoniam causa sui esse ex hoc quod est animal est Dei intentione" (*Liber de philosophia prima* V, c. 1: see e.g. *Aurea Quodlibeta*, cit., *Quodl.* 3, q. 9, t. 1, p. 99 col. 2).

¹⁶ See *Summae*, cit., a. 24, q. 3, fo. 138v (cf. in particular, "... dubitatio de re quacunque an sit in esse essentiae natura aliqua an non, debet determinari in principio cuiuslibet cognitionis scientialis"). Cf. also Scotus, *Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 2.

¹⁷ Cf., "... [quidditas et natura cuiuscunque rei] triplicem [...] habet intellectum verum, sicut et tres modos habet in esse. Unum enim habet esse naturae extra in rebus; alterum vero habet esse rationis; tertium vero habet esse essentiae. Animal enim acceptum cum accidentibus suis in singu-

In order to qualify as the object of a *scientia realis*, it must, evidently, have some type of *esse*: else it would be a "purum non ens". Now the *esse* in question cannot be an *esse naturae*: for an essence can be known quite independently of whether or not it is actually exemplified. Nor can it be an *esse rationis*: for the latter could hardly count as the *esse* of an essence purely *qua* essence, i.e., of an essence conceived of "absque omni conditione quam nata est habere in esse naturae vel rationis".¹⁸ It must, therefore, be an *esse essentiae*.¹⁹ We have now the answer to the first of the questions I have raised above: only essences which are endowed with an *esse essentiae* can, first, provide the divine *scientia* with its proper objects (each such object being an essence purely *qua* essence, not an *essentia diminuta*: see fn. 19); and, second, qualify as the proper "fundamentum" of the eternal relation which, as known by God, they bear to God. This is not to say, of course, that essences in *esse essentiae* make up a realm of self-subsistent entities.

In order to see why, we must now turn to a discussion of Henry's conception of the divine *scientia*. The latter's primary object is the divine essence purely *sub ratione essentiae*: this means that, in the first (as it were) and most fundamental stage God can only be said to know himself, and things other than himself only insofar as they are identical with the divine essence (as Henry puts it, "...Deus cognoscit alia a se ut sunt in sua essentia idem quod ipsa, et sic non ut alia", *Quodl.* 9, q. 2, p. 27). God, however, also knows his essence *sub ratione imitabilitatis*, i.e., as imitable (by possible essences) in infinitely many respects. Now each respect of imitability – or, more generally, the divine essence *sub ratione imitabilitatis* – is not only an idea or exemplar, but, *qua* idea or exemplar, it plays, also, the role of a for-

laribus est res naturalis; acceptum vero cum accidentibus suis in anima est res rationis; acceptum vero secundum se est esse essentiae, de qua dicitur quod esse eius est prius, quam esse eius naturae vel rationis" (*Aurea Quodlibeta*, cit., *Quodl.* 3, q. 9, t. 1, p. 99 col. 1-2).

¹⁸ *Aurea Quodlibeta*, cit., *Quodl.* 3, q. 9, t. 1, col. 2.

¹⁹ This is the line of argument Duns Scotus ascribes to Henry: "Contra istud [i.e., Scotus' view whereby the "fundamentum relationis aeternae ad Deum ut cognoscentem" need not at all have an *esse essentiae*] obicitur quod fundamentum relationis, quando fundat relationem, est secundum illud esse secundum quod fundat, – aliter secundum illud esse non fundaret; sed lapis secundum verum esse essentiae fundat illam relationem aeternam ad Deum ut scientem, et hoc in aeternitate; ergo lapis est in aeternitate secundum illud esse. Probatio minoris: secundum illud esse fundat relationem ad Deum ut scientem, secundum quod esse eius ut obiectum cognoscitur a Deo; cognoscitur autem a Deo sub ratione essentiae verae [= sub ratione essentiae in esse essentiae], non sub ratione essentiae diminutae, ..." (*Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 30; cf. also *Rep. Par.* II, d. 1., q. 2, n. 12, as well as the following passages: "...essentiae [in esse essentiae] non videntur propter aliquid poni, nisi ut sint termini relationum idealium, quae aeternaliter sunt in Deo. [...] ponuntur istae entitates [= essentiae in esse essentiae] propter cognitionem Dei aeternam", *Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 20, 22).

mal cause, whose effect (so to speak) is an *ideatum/exemplatum*: a possible essence, endowed with an *esse essentiae*, by which the divine essence is imitable (there will of course be as many such essences as there are ideas). Otherwise put, God can only be said perfectly to know his own essence *sub ratione imitabilitatis* provided he also knows, at the same time, the objects, i.e., the essences, by which it is imitable: and it is precisely by thus knowing his essence – or by thinking of it as imitable – that he endows those objects with an *esse essentiae* (see fn. 20). For our present purposes, the most important point in this account is Henry's contention that the *esse essentiae* of essences is bestowed on them by God, or, more precisely, by his essence *qua* "forma exemplaris": it follows from this, evidently, that such an *esse* must be deemed to be dependent on God.²⁰ For, we have just seen, an essence in *esse essentiae* is an *ideatum*; an *ideatum*, in turn, is a *productum*;²¹ as such, the *ideatum* can only owe its *esse* (viz. its *esse essentiae*) to its *producing*, viz. God – or the divine essence – thought of as a formal cause. It would be quite wrong, therefore, to ascribe to Henry the view whereby essences possess their *esse essentiae* independently of God:²² what kind of

²⁰ Cf., "...ex perfectione divina provenit quod a ratione ideali in Deo fluit in esse essentiae [...] essentia creaturae ..." (*Summae*, cit., a. 68, q. 5, fo. 230v); "Est ... autem participatio divini esse in essentia, esse essentiae, inquantum essentia illa exemplatum est divini esse secundum rationem causae formalis, quia per ipsum esse essentiae, ut per actum sibi proprium essentialem habet id quod res est ex ratione sui generis, quod sit ens, et natura, et essentia proprie dicta, non solum figmentum, ..." (*Aurea Quodlibeta*, cit., *Quodl.* 10, q. 8, t. 2, p. 160, col. 4); "Illa [...] ratio in divina essentia, secundum quam sua essentia est ratio qua cognoscit alia a se, nihil aliud est quam imitabilitas qua ab aliis imitetur, quam vocamus ideam. Quae est talis ratio sive respectus in divina essentia, non ex se ut essentia est secundum se et absolute [= essentia sub ratione essentiae], [...], set ut est iam cognita et obiectum primum divini intellectus [...] Et quia, [...] scientia de rebus ex parte Dei est causa exemplaris rerum ut sint ad se aliquid per essentiam, ideo [...] propter creaturas plures specie differentes, ut sint aliquid per essentiam, necesse est ponere ideas plures in Deo, quibus in notitia sua habet praesentialiter, ut in mundo archetypo, singula praesentia ab aeterno, [...] et hoc in esse suo quidditativo quod sunt per suam essentiam per divinam scientiam constitutam" (*Quodlibet* 9, q. 2, Macken ed., Leiden 1983, pp. 28-29, 34).

²¹ Cf., "Quia [...] ideae in Deo causalitatem omnimodam habent super res quarum sunt formae in constituendo illas in esse essentiae [...], et hoc secundum rationem causae formalis exemplaris, idcirco respectus ideae ad ideata [...] est penes genus relationis [...] quod est inter producentem et productum ..." (*Summae*, cit., a. 68, q. 5, fo. 230v).

²² According to Suarez, "...Scotus [...] impugnatur Henricum, eo quod variis locis asseruit essentias rerum ex se habere quoddam esse essentiae, quod vocat esse reale, aeternum et improdudum, conveniens creaturis indipendenter a Deo, quodque in eis supponitur, non solum ante efficientiam, sed etiam ante scientiam Dei" (*Disp. Met.* 31, 2, 2). Actually, Scotus does not quite put things this way: he only ascribes to Henry the view whereby the *esse essentiae* of essences is an *esse reale aeternum*. Further, Henry holds neither that the *esse essentiae* of essences is independent of God, nor that it is "improductum", nor that it pertains to essences "ante scientiam Dei" (see the passages cited in fn. 20 and fn. 21, as well as *Aurea Quodlibeta*, cit., *Quodl.* 3, q. 9, t. 1, p. 99 col. 2, and *Quodl.* 8, q. 9, t. 2, p. 25 col. 3).

esse, however, is the *esse essentiae*? (I come now to the second of the two questions raised earlier).

As I have remarked above, it is neither an *esse naturae* – or an *esse existentiae* – nor an *esse rationis* (or an *esse cognitum*, or an *esse intelligibile*, each of which qualifies as an *esse rationis*). Should we characterize it as an *esse reale*? We probably should, for the following three reasons. First, essences in their *esse essentiae* are really distinct from God:²³ and this certainly suggests that such an *esse*, unlike the *esse rationis* of essences, is an *esse reale*. Second, the *esse essentiae* of an essence, unlike its *esse rationis*, could hardly be said entirely to consist in e.g. the being-of-being-known: Henry sharply distinguishes between “*esse aliquid per essentiam*”, on the one hand, and “*esse cognitum*”, on the other (see fn. 23). The former, unlike the latter, is not an *esse secundum quid*: it can, therefore, only be (something like) an *esse reale*. Finally, third, on Henry’s view essences in their *esse essentiae* bear a *real* relation to God,²⁴ and, in this sense at least, their *esse essentiae* counts as an *esse reale* (it could hardly be deemed to be an *esse secundum quid*).

What is meant, however, by the claim that the *esse essentiae* of an essence is an *esse reale*? In order to answer this question, a distinction must be drawn between two different (but complementary) points of view from which an essence can be considered: that of the divine intellect, and that of the essence taken in and of itself, i.e., not as an *essentia intellecta*, but as an *essentia absoluta*.²⁵ In the former case, it is endowed with at most an *esse rationis*, or an *esse secundum quid*: and, thus considered, it only has the (kind of) *esse* which consists in the being-of-being-known. In the latter case, on the other hand, an essence possesses the being-of-being-an-essence, i.e., the

²³ Cf., “...Deus potest cognoscere creaturam dupliciter: uno modo [...] alio modo cognoscendo de ipsa id quod ipsa habet esse in se ipsa, aliud a Deo, ...” (*Quodl.* 9, q. 2, cit., p. 27 – italics mine). Note, also, that the *ideata* of ideas, i.e., of the “respectus [...] imitabilitatis in divina essentia” (*Quodl.* 9, q. 2, cit., p. 36), are also referred to by Henry as ideas (*ibid.*, pp. 36–37), and are characterized by him as “rerum essentiae[e] in divina notitia ut quaedam obiecta cognita comprehensa[e], quae secundum rem sunt aliae a divina natura, ...” (*Summae*, cit., a. 68, q. 5, fo. 231r – italics mine). Further, according to Henry “...huiusmodi rationes [= rationes ideales = ideae] in Deo non sunt nisi respectus quidam, quibus ipse ut forma exemplaris relative se habet ad essentias rerum extra, sicut ad quaedam exemplata relative se habentia ad Deum, in eo quod id quod sunt aliquid per essentiam, exemplata quaedam sunt. Cognoscens enim distincte unum relativorum, necessario simul cognoscit et aliud. Et est talis haec Dei cognitio in cognoscendo se secundum rationem formae exemplaris, a quo secundum rationem causae formalis habent esse aliquid per essentiam ipsa exemplata in esse suo cognito” (*Quodl.* 9, q. 2, cit., pp. 30–31).

²⁴ Cf., “...rationes ideales [...] sunt relationes ex hoc in Deo secundum rationem ad ipsas essentias creaturarum, quae ex hoc sunt aliquid secundum essentiam, quod respondent rationibus idealibus existentibus in Deo et ratione ipsius essentiae habent relationem realem ad Deum” (*Quodlibet* 9, q. 1, Macken ed., Leiden 1983, p. 8 – italics mine).

²⁵ For the notion of an *essentia absoluta* see *Quodl.* 2, q. 1, cit., t. 1, p. 46, col. 2, 3.

(kind of) being which pertains to it purely *qua* essence, rather than the being which pertains to it *qua intellecta*.²⁶ Such an *esse* intelligibly qualifies as an *esse reale* at least in this sense, that it is possessed by an *essentia intellecta*,²⁷ not insofar as it is *intellecta* (this would make it an *ens secundum quid*), but insofar as it is an essence.²⁸

It plainly follows from this that, on Henry's view, a possible essence cannot be identified with the divine *creatrix essentia*: for, we have seen, although it only "exists" in the divine intellect, it is really distinct from God. Further, we have also seen, it is endowed with an *esse proprium* which is really distinct from (the *esse* of) God. And, if ascription to an essence of an *esse rationis* is ascription to it of a reality *secundum quid*, ascription to it of an *esse reale* is ascription to it of an unqualified reality: never mind the fact that it possesses the latter entirely on account of its being the *ideatum* of the "corresponding" divine idea (the same is true of actually existing things: they are real *tout court*, although their reality *tout court* is bestowed on them by God).

4. *Duns Scotus*. As I have remarked earlier, Scotus rejects the view – Henry of Ghent's – whereby essences, before they are actually exemplified, are endowed with (in particular) an *esse essentiae*. In fact, according to him "...lapis ab aeterno intellectus non est aliquid, sed nihil".²⁹ This does not

²⁶ Thus Henry contends, for example, that "...quoddam est esse rei quod habet essentialiter de se, et hoc appellatur esse essentiae, quoddam vero quod recipit ab alio, [...]. Primum esse habet essentia creaturae essentialiter [i.e., purely *qua* essence], sed tamen participative, in quantum habet formale exemplar in Deo" (*Quodlibet* 1, q. 9, Macken ed., Leiden 1979, p. 53 – italics mine). The italicized material clearly suggests that the *esse essentiae* of an essence is an *esse reale*.

²⁷ Recall here Scotus' view whereby "Idea est quidditas intellecta" (*Lectura* I, d. 35, q.u., n. 33): according to Henry, on the other hand, an idea – conceived of as an *ideatum* (cf. fn. 23) – is rather a *quidditas* taken in and of itself, than a "quidditas intellecta". Note, however, that the notion of an *essentia intellecta* is ambiguous (see fn. 31 below).

²⁸ I am just restating here Jean Paulus' claim that the *esse essentiae* of an essence is "un être propre de l'objet connu, non point en tant que connu, mais en tant qu'il est un objet" (*Henri de Gand: Essai sur les tendances de sa métaphysique* Paris 1938, p. 102 – cf. also p. 42). This is precisely what Henry has in mind in the passage I have cited in fn. 26.

²⁹ *Rep. Par.* I, d. 36, q. 1, n. 29. Cf. also, "Aliter [...] inest ista negatio 'nihileitas' homini in aeternitate, et chimaerae, et tamen non propter hoc est unum magis nihil altero" (*Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 62). Now the claim that, before they are exemplified, essences (or the things whereof they are essences) are "nihil" implies no more than that, before they are exemplified, they lack both an *esse existentiae* and an *esse essentiae*. Thus, Scotus contends, "...de nihilo (id est non de aliquo) secundum esse existentiae potest Deus creare, et per consequens de nihilo (id est non de aliquo) secundum esse essentiae, [...] Et tamen non potest aliquid creari, id est produci ad 'esse' simpliciter de nihilo, id est nullo modo ente (nec simpliciter nec secundum quid)" (*Ord.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 82, 83). Note, on the other hand, that the production of essences in *esse intelligibile* is a production "de simpliciter nihilo, id est non de aliquo secundum esse essentiae nec esse existentiae, nec secundum aliquod esse secundum quid" (*Ord.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 84).

mean that e.g. a stone (or the quiddity thereof) which is known by God *ab aeterno* is devoid of any *esse*, or any reality, whatsoever. On the contrary: although it lacks an *esse essentiae* (or an *esse reale*), it has what Scotus calls an *esse intelligibile* or an *esse cognitum* – the kind of *esse* he typically refers to as an *esse deminutum*. Further, on his view, unlike on the view of e.g. St. Thomas and Henry of Ghent, God has a “direct” knowledge of (the essences of) creatures: he knows them, that is, rather *in seipso in seipsis*, than *in seipso* by means of respects – or relations – of imitability (thus Scotus points out that “... potest concedi quod sunt relationes aeternae in Deo ad cognita, sed non priores naturaliter ipsis cognitis in ratione obiectorum”, *Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 31).

More precisely, according to Scotus the “instant of eternity” in which God knows creatures (or essences, or quiddities) can be subdivided into at least three different so-called instants of nature, the first naturally (but not: temporally) prior to the second, the second naturally (but not: temporally) prior to the third. In the first instant of nature, God – Scotus holds – understands (knows) his own essence “sub ratione mere absoluta”. In the second instant, “[Deus] ... producit lapidem in esse intelligibili et intelligit lapidem” (we are actually dealing with one and the same “act” here),³⁰ and such a production is also the production of a relation which goes in one direction only, viz. from the stone (or its quiddity) to God. And, in the third instant, “... intellectus divinus ... comparando se ad lapidem intellectum, potest causare in se relationem rationis” (*Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 32; see also *Ord.* I, d. 3 pars 2, q.u., n. 326). It follows from this, clearly, that the relation which God bears to that which is known by him is “naturally” posterior to his knowledge of it, and (hence) that, contrary to what St. Thomas and Henry of Ghent had contended, such a knowledge is a *direct* knowledge of things (quiddities, creatures). For God to know them, we have just seen, is for God to produce them in *esse intelligibile* – and conversely. A certain amount of care must be exercised here, however. For the view whereby one and the same “act” is at play just is the view whereby it is precisely *by* knowing things – quiddities, creatures – in themselves (and not, of course: in *esse intelligibile*), or *by* exercising all at once his infinite power of thinking, that God produces things – quiddities, creatures – in *esse intelligibile*. Thus Scotus contends (for example) that

³⁰ Cf., “... si esse quidditativum intelligibile non est esse in re, sed tantum est intelligibile, igitur intelligere rem est ipsam producere in esse intelligibili” (*Rep. Par.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 12). See also *Lectura* I, d. 35, q.u., n. 22; and Mastrius, *Disputationes in XII Aristotelis Libros Metaphysicorum*, Venetiis 1647, disp. 8, q. 1, a. 2, n. 258).

... Deus ... in secundo [instanti] ... intelligit omnia alia a se ut constituta naturaliter in quodam esse intelligibili per actum intelligendi divinum: et respectu rerum aliarum a se, ut habent esse intelligibile, est Deus causa naturalis per actum suum intelligendi (*Lectura I*, d. 3 pars 1, q. 3, n. 191; cf. also, "... intellectus divinus primo intelligit essentiam suam, et secundo lapidem, et sic producit lapidem in esse intelligibili", *Lectura I*, d. 35, q.u., n. 36 – italics mine; see also *Rep. Par. I*, d. 36, q. 2, n. 34).

Scotus is not saying here that what God knows is a known quiddity, or an *essentia intellecta*.³¹ Rather, his view is, first, that what God knows is an essence "absolute" (cf. *Lectura I*, d. 36, q.u., n. 30), and, second, that, by knowing an essence *absolute*, he produces it in *esse intelligibile*.³² In other words, the essence which is known by him as something "absolute" acquires, by the very fact of being known by him (and at the same instant in which it is known by him), an *esse intelligibile*. It may well be wondered, however, why Scotus takes essences to be produced in *esse intelligibile* by the divine intellect, and, in particular, why he ascribes to them such an *esse*. The answer, I suggest, is to be found in Avicenna's idea of a "duplex fluxus rerum a Deo",³³ as well as in Avicenna's contention that "Omne ... quod incipit esse, antequam sit, necesse est ut sit possibile in se".³⁴ As Scotus points out (in *Ord. II*, d. 1, q. 2, n. 77), such a contention may be taken to imply, and had in fact been taken by Henry of Ghent to imply, that creation cannot be creation *ex nihilo* with respect both to the *esse existentiae* and to

³¹ The notion of an *essentia intellecta* is ambiguous, though: talk of such an essence may just be talk of an essence which is known by God and (hence) of an essence *simpliciter*; or it may be talk of an essence-*qua*-known, i.e., *qua* falling under the *relatio deminuens* which is expressed by "intellecta". Only in the second case is the *essentia intellecta* an *ens deminutum*. (This is the distinction Scotus describes when he contends that "... ex hoc quod quidditas lapidis habet esse sub scientia Dei, habet esse suum deminutum, licet in comparatione ad scientiam Dei non deminuitur [that is: what God knows is a quiddity *simpliciter*, which – *qua* known by him: cf., "sub scientia Dei" – has an *esse deminutum*]" ; *Lectura I*, d. 36, q.u., n. 30).

³² As we shall see later, this is precisely the point of Scotus' contention that "... deminutum respectu deminuentis non est deminutum" (*Ord. I*, d. 36, q.u., n. 33).

³³ *Ord. I*, d. 36, q.u., n. 11. Avicenna says: "... [Deus] intelligit suam essentiam esse principium fluxus omnis intellecti in quantum est intellectum et causatum, sicut intellexit suam essentiam esse principium fluxus omnis entis in quantum est ens causatum" (*Liber de philosophia prima VIII*, c. 7). Scotus agrees: he points out, however, that "Non ... dicit Avicenna illum fluxum 'in esse intellecto' esse fluxum in esse quiditativo, quia 'esse intellectum' est esse distinctum contra totum esse reale, tam quiditativum quam existentiae" (*Ord. I*, d. 36, q.u., n. 66). In other words, the "fluxus", i.e., the production, of essences is a "fluxus" (production) of essences in *esse intelligibile*, not in *esse essentiae* (or *quiditativum*).

³⁴ *Liber de philosophia prima IV*, c. 2.

the *esse essentiae*. Scotus accepts Avicenna's contention, but takes it to imply something quite different:

Concedo... quod omne creabile prius erat possibile ex parte sui, sed ista possibilitas... non fundatur in aliquo esse simpliciter [= an *esse essentiae* or an *esse existentiae*] sed in esse cognito (*Ord.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 93; cf. also, "Ideo dico quod in creando Deus producit aliquid de nihilo simpliciter [= non de aliquo secundum esse existentiae et esse essentiae], et tamen praesupponitur illud esse possibile et habere esse secundum quid", *Lectura* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 81).

Note "et" in the second of the two passages just cited: it suggests, first, that nothing can be endowed with an *esse existentiae* – or be created – unless it is possible in and of itself to begin with (or, in Scotus' terminology, unless it is possible *formaliter* to begin with); and, second, that possession, on the part of e.g. an essence, of an *esse secundum quid* – for example, an *esse cognitum* – provides the ontological (but not the "formal") foundation of its possibility. The question whether or not something qualifies as (logically) possible – i.e., whether or not its constituents are mutually compossible, i.e., whether or not they jointly involve a *repugnantia* – can only arise, that is, after those constituents have been produced in *esse intelligibile* – or in *esse cognitum* – by the divine intellect ("after" expresses here a natural, not a temporal, relation).³⁵ Hence, I submit, Scotus' claim that "...lapis, productus in esse intelligibili per intellectum divinum, ..., est ex se formaliter possibilis, et quasi principiative per intellectum divinum" (*Ord.* I, d. 43, q.u., n. 7). I take it that for a *possibile* to be possible, *principiative*, is for it to be endowed with an *esse intelligibile* by the divine intellect, and for it to be possible, *formaliter*, is for its "constituents" to be mutually compossible in and of themselves, quite independently of God: the point of the distinction is, of course, that, if *possibilia* had no *esse intelligibile*, "possible,

³⁵ This implies in no way, of course, that the (logical) possibility of a *possibile* depends on the latter's being produced in *esse intelligibile* by the divine intellect: it implies, at most, that, if no intellect (not even God's) existed, *possibilia* would be devoid of any *esse*, so that "possible" could not intelligibly apply to anything. This is not to say, plainly, that (part of) what makes a *possibile* possible is the fact that it is endowed with an *esse intelligibile*. Nicolaus de Orbellis' remark is especially relevant here, that (on Scotus' view) "Est [...] contradictio reducenda ad intellectum divinum tamquam ad causam non contradictionis, sed partium possibilium" (*Super Sententias compendium perutile* I, d. 43). With obvious and minor modifications, the same applies to (the notion of) logical possibility: thus Frassen points out that "...cum [...] non repugnantia sit alicujus rei non repugnantia, necessario supponit conceptum rei, in quo illa non repugnantia fundetur: ergo ut creaturae posibles dicantur habere non repugnantiam ad existendum, prius supponi debent habere aliquod esse: illud autem esse non possunt habere ab alio quam ab intellectu divino, ..." (*Scotus Academicus* I, Romae 1900, p. 37).

formaliter" would not be true of anything. This is precisely why an *esse intelligibile* is needed (see fn. 35). What kind of *esse*, however, is the *esse intelligibile* of e.g. essences?

It is not an *esse reale*: specifically, from the claim that essences are produced in *esse intelligibile* by the divine intellect, it follows neither that they are endowed with an *esse reale* (such as, for example, an *esse essentiae*), nor that they exist "outside" God. According to Scotus,

... intellectum [divinum] esse necessario respectu alicuius obiecti *non ponit illud obiectum esse aliquid in entitate reali aliud a primo obiecto*, quia 'esse cognitum ab intellectu divino' *non ponit illud esse in se*, sed intellectui praesentatum vel in intellectu praesentialiter; ... intellectus [divinus] potest esse necessario aliorum intelligibilium ... *absque hoc quod habeant esse aliud ab esse divino* (quatenus sunt sibi praesentia), ... (*Ord. I, d. 8 pars 2, q.u., n. 274* – italics mine).

Four points here. First, we have seen earlier, it is *by* knowing a creature (or its essence) that the divine intellect bestows an *esse intelligibile* on it. Second, such an *esse* is not really distinct from the *esse* of God: but it is formally non-identical with it. Third, such an *esse* is not an *esse reale*,³⁶ and (hence) not an *esse essentiae*. Fourth, such a production is not a production of "things" *ad extra*: creatures, or their essences, before they are endowed with an *esse simpliciter* only "exist" as objects of, and in, the divine intellect, and they only possess therein an *esse intelligibile*, which is an *esse* merely *secundum quid*. Although it is only implicitly made in the passage I have just cited, the second point is explicitly made by Scotus when he asserts that

... istud 'esse secundum quid' reducitur ad aliquod esse simpliciter, quod est esse ipsius intellectionis; sed istud 'esse simpliciter' *non est formaliter* esse eius quod dicitur 'esse secundum quid', sed est eius terminative vel principiative, ... (*Ord. I, d. 36, q.u., n. 46* – italics mine; see also *Ord. I, d. 30, q. 1-2, n. 50; Rep. Par. I, d. 36, q. 2, n. 31*).

Now to contend that the *esse simpliciter* of a divine intellection is not "formaliter" – but only "terminative vel principiative" – the *esse* of that

³⁶ Cf., "... istud esse [= esse secundum quid] non est esse reale, sed reducitur ad esse reale alicuius per se necessarii, ..." (Appendix A to Scotus, *Opera Omnia*, Vatican City 1950-, vol. VI, p. 439); "... dico quod productio ista [= productio in esse intelligibili] est in esse alterius rationis ab omni esse simpliciter, ..." (*Ord. I, d. 36, q.u., n. 44*); "... ens [...] deminutum, quod scilicet est ens cognitum, non habet esse realis existentiae" (*Ord. I, d. 13, q.u., n. 34*); "... obiectum in quantum habet 'esse' in intellectu, non habet 'esse' reale sed tantum intentionale" (*Ord. I, d. 3 pars 1, q. 4, n. 260*).

which has an *esse secundum quid* is to contend not only that the former and the latter (kind of) *esse* are formally non-identical, but, also, that the latter (kind of) *esse* is bestowed on essences by an act of the divine intellect. The divine intellect, that is, being the principle whereby essences are produced in *esse intelligibile* (hence, plainly, "principiative"), is also, from the perspective – as it were – of the essences themselves, the "terminus" to which their *esse intelligibile* "reduces" – hence, plainly, "terminative". (Scotus' claim is relevant here that, in the instant of nature in which the divine intellect produces e.g. a stone, or its essence, in *esse intelligibile*, "...intellectio divina terminat relationem 'lapidis ut intellecti' ad ipsam", *Ord.* I, d. 35, q.u., n. 32).

Since it is formally non-identical with the *esse* of the "corresponding" divine intellection, the *esse intelligibile* of an essence qualifies, indeed, as an *esse* of sorts: think of it as the kind of *esse* which entirely consists in the being-of-being-an-object-of-the-divine-intellect (more simply: the being-of-being-known). Such an *esse* cannot, of course, be an *esse reale*, or an *esse essentiae*. It is, in fact, an *esse deminutum*: this is just to say that an essence-*qua*-known (see fn. 31) is devoid of *esse simpliciter*, but endowed with the being-of-being-known. An essence-*qua*-known is, accordingly, as *ens rationis*:³⁷ but not quite the same kind of *ens rationis* a so-called *intentio secunda* is. For one thing, an *intentio secunda* is no more than a relation of reason:³⁸ what God produces in *esse intelligibile* in the second instant of nature, on the other hand, is not simply a relation, but its foundation as well. For another, unlike an *intentio secunda* an essence-*qua*-known can (*qua* essence) also "exist" outside the divine intellect. Not, of course, that the *esse deminutum* of an essence-*qua*-known can "formally" be an *esse reale*: but, rather, that an essence, which, *qua* known, is an *ens deminutum* in the divine intellect, can also have an *esse reale* outside it.

In order to see more clearly what is meant by the claim that an essence-*qua*-known is an *ens deminutum*, we must now turn to a brief discussion of Scotus' objections to Henry of Ghent's notion of *esse essentiae*. Two of

³⁷ Cf., "...ens rationis non est in aliquo, nisi ut tantum habens esse in intellectu, sicut cognitum in cognoscente, hoc autem esse est diminutum respectu esse existentiae realis" (*In Sent.* III, d. 8, n. 19).

³⁸ Cf., "...communiter [...] dicimus intentiones Logicas esse res rationis, et relationes rationis esse res rationis, et tamen ista non possunt esse extra intellectum" (*Quodl.* q. 3, n. 2); "...omnis intentio secunda est relatio rationis, non quaecumque, sed pertinens ad extremum actus intellectus componentis et dividendis, vel saltem conferentis unum ad alterum" (*Ord.* I, d. 23, q.u., n. 10). An essence-*qua*-known is, of course, a *res rationis*: this implies in no way, however, that it is, therefore, an *intentio secunda* ("...omnis intentio secunda est ens rationis, et non e contra", M. Hibernicus, commentary on Scotus' *Quaestiones Super Universalia Porphyrij*, III, n. 18).

them are especially relevant to our present purposes: and both of them are raised by Scotus in the course of answering the question, "Utrum fundamentum relationis aeternae ad Deum ..." (*Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u.).³⁹ According to Scotus, I have remarked earlier, creatures, or their essences, since they are known *ab aeterno* by God, bear to him an eternal relation: and, in order to qualify as the foundation of such a relation, they need to possess no more than an *esse secundum quid* – an *esse intelligibile* or an *esse cognitum* (i.e., an *esse deminutum*: see fn. 12). Now the first of the two objections I have alluded to is put forth by Scotus in his reply to an objection he raises against the view I have just briefly described. It goes as follows:

Dices, quomodo potest lapis ab aeterno intelligi, nisi habeat esse aeternum? Videtur quod nullo modo, quia secundum illud esse, secundum quod est fundamentum relationis, si relatio est aeterna, et fundamentum eius: sed intelligitur lapis ab aeterno a Deo; igitur lapis fundat relationem intellecti a Deo ad intelligentem aeternaliter; igitur illud esse, secundum quod fundat relationem intellecti a Deo, est aeterna (*Rep. Par.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 12).

The "esse aeternum" Scotus speaks of here is, clearly, Henry of Ghent's *esse essentiae*:⁴⁰ and, equally clearly, the objection is raised from the point of view of Henry's own views. Scotus replies,⁴¹

... concedo quod lapis secundum verissimum esse est intellectus aeternaliter, ita quod respectu intellectionis accipitur secundum esse simpliciter, sed totum ut lapis intellectus est esse diminutum (*Rep. Par.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 13).

Scotus' point is this: from the fact that (1) "... lapis secundum verissimum esse est intellectus aeternaliter", or, equivalently, that "[lapis] cognoscitur a Deo sub ratione essentiae verae, non sub ratione essentiae diminutae" (see fn. 41), it follows in no wise that (2) the stone – or its

³⁹ The same objections are raised by Scotus in his answer to the question, "Utrum causabile, antequam causetur in actu, habeat verum esse reale a causa sua?" (*Rep. Par.* II, d. 1, q. 2).

⁴⁰ See *Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 30; *Lectura* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 28.

⁴¹ Scotus' reply is also easily seen to be – and more easily understood if it is taken to be – a reply to the following argument in favour of the view that what founds the relation to God "ut cognoscens" is an *ens* which possesses an *esse essentiae*: "... secundum illud esse [lapis] fundat relationem ad Deum scientem, secundum quod esse eius ut obiectum cognoscitur a Deo; cognoscitur autem a Deo sub ratione essentiae verae [= sub ratione essentiae in esse essentiae], non sub ratione essentiae diminutae" (*Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 30; see also *Lectura* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 28, where Scotus raises against his own view the objection whereby "... Deus novit lapidem non secundum aliquam intentionem secundam et secundum aliquod esse intentionale, sed novit creaturam secundum esse suum essentiae; igitur cum fundat relationem idealem ab aeterno, ab aeterno lapis habuit esse essentiae").

essence – has thereby an *esse aeternum*, i.e., an *esse essentiae*. (Nor does it follow that the stone, or its essence, *qua* foundation of the relation it bears to God *ab aeterno*, has such an *esse*). For, in spite of its being endowed with an *esse deminutum* (so that (2) is false), it can be known *ab aeterno* by God “secundum verissimum esse” (so that (1) is true), because – Scotus remarks – “...deminutum respectu deminuentis non est deminutum, sed respectu tertii, ad quod comparatur sub determinatione deminuyente” (*Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 33). Now e.g. “cognitum” – in “esse cognitum” – is said to express a so-called “determinatio deminuens”, since an object, *qua* known (that is: as it falls under the “determinatio” expressed by “known”), has an *esse* – the being-of-being-known – which is as it were diminished with respect to its *esse simpliciter*. It is indeed an *esse*: but it falls short of being an *esse simpliciter*, so that, compared to the latter, it can only qualify as an *esse deminutum*.⁴² Not, of course, that what God knows when he knows e.g. a stone or its essence is an *ens deminutum* (or a “diminished” stone) – although, *qua* known by him, it is indeed an *ens deminutum*.

Rather, what God knows is the “quiditas [lapidis] absolute” (*Lectura* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 30); the object of his knowledge, in other words, is an *ens simpliciter*, not an *ens deminutum*: but the *esse* of the stone-*qua*-known, compared to the *esse simpliciter* of the stone, counts as an *esse deminutum*, i.e., as an *esse* merely *secundum quid*.⁴³ The contrast at play here is a contrast between that which is known – for example, a stone *simpliciter* – and its ontological status: that which is known (for example, a stone *simpliciter*) has, *qua* known, an *esse deminutum*; and it is precisely *qua* known that it founds its eternal relation to God. It does not follow, plainly, that that which is known is an *ens deminutum*: it follows, however, that the foundation of the eternal relation to God is indeed an *ens deminutum* (this implies in no way, of course, that that which God knows is an *ens deminutum*).

The conclusion seems evident: in order to qualify as the foundation of the eternal relation it bears to God, an essence need not at all possess any-

⁴² Note that talk of e.g. *esse cognitum* is ambiguous: it may be talk of a mode of being; or it may be talk of the fact that the relevant object falls under the “determinatio deminuens” which is expressed by “cognitum”. The distinction is very clearly drawn by Poncius: “...advertendum est duplex posse considerari esse cognitum in re quae cognoscitur; unum, cuius ratio formalis habetur ab ipsa cognitione, [...] et potest vocari esse cognitum reduplicative, hoc est esse affectum cognitione; [...]. Alterum esse cognitum est esse intentionale, quod habet res, quae cognoscitur, [...] et hoc esse cognitum vocatur a Scotistis esse diminutum” (*Philosophiae ad mentem Scoti cursus integer*, Lugduni 1662, p. 36a).

⁴³ Or, as Scotus puts it: “...esse lapidis ut comparatur ad intellectum, accipitur pro vero esse, tamen lapis intellectus comparatus ad esse, verum habet esse diminutum, ita quod esse lapidis in cognitione est esse diminutum lapidis” (*Rep. Par.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 13).

thing like an *esse essentiae*. An *esse deminutum* will do: it is not to be objected here (we have just seen) that, since what God knows is an essence "sub ratione essentiae verae, non sub ratione essentiae deminutae" (cf. fn. 41), an *esse deminutum* cannot be – or provide – the required foundation. For (we have also seen) the fact that such an *esse* is – or provides – such a foundation implies in no way that the objects of God's knowledge are therefore *entia deminuta*, or essences "sub ratione essentiae deminutae". On the contrary: the objects of God's knowledge are essences "sub ratione essentiae verae", and they only count as *entia deminuta* as a result (as it were) of their being known by God – i.e., as a result (as it were) of the fact that they fall under a "determinatio deminuens".⁴⁴ In a word: the *lapis intellectus*, and hence an *ens deminutum* (cf. fn. 31), founds its (eternal) relation to God, but it is the *lapis simpliciter*, not an *ens deminutum*, which is the object of God's knowledge. This, I suggest, is what Scotus means when he asserts that the divine production of an essence in *esse intelligibile* is the production, not just of a relation, but also of its foundation "secundum esse deminutum ... quod est esse secundum quid etiam entis absoluti" (*Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 44: such an "ens absolutum" is, clearly, the "quiditas ... absolute" of *Lectura* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 30).

So much, then, for the first of the two objections I have alluded to earlier. The second objection, to a discussion of which I now turn, has the same moral as the first, viz. that it is perfectly pointless (or unnecessary) to ascribe to essences an *esse essentiae*. It essentially consists in the claim, first, that God knows *ab aeterno* both essences and existences; and, second, that, just as his eternal knowledge of existences does not require – in order to be possible – that things exist *ab aeterno*, so his eternal knowledge of essences does not require – in order to be possible – that essences be endowed *ab aeterno* with an *esse essentiae*.⁴⁵ It might still be insisted that essences, which

⁴⁴ Cf., "Sic in proposito intelligo quiditatem rosae, quando non est nec sua quiditas ponitur: quiditas rosae absolute est obiectum respectu cognitionis meae, et – ut comparatur ad relationem quam fundat – non deminuitur [this just means that what is known by me is the quiddity of the rose "absolute", not a "diminished" rose]; sed tamen ut comparatur ad tertium sub deminvente [read: sub determinatione deminvente], est secundum quid" (*Lectura* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 30). With obvious and minor modifications, the same applies to the divine intellect and the "objects" of its intellections.

⁴⁵ Cf., "...nunquam pluraliter est ponenda sine necessitate: sed nulla necessitas est ponere [...] esse quiditativum [= esse essentiae] praecedens esse in effectu: quia ita determinate, et distincte novit Deus existentiam rerum, sicut essentias rerum, et ita ab aeterno existentiam huius pro tali terminatione, sicut essentiam sub esse quiditativo. Si igitur non sit necesse ponere existentiam ab aeterno, igitur nec propter hoc erit necesse ponere essentias ab aeterno" (*Rep. Par.* II, d. 1, q. 2, n. 11; see also *Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 20 – "...frustra ponitur res in isto esse [= esse essentiae] ..." – and n. 22 – "...frustra ponuntur istae entitates [= essentiae in esse essentiae] ..."). The same objection is put forward by Scotus in *Lectura* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 24.

are known by God *ab aeterno*, can only be – or provide – a proper foundation of the (eternal) relation they bear to God if they are ascribed an eternal *esse essentiae* – short of which they could hardly qualify as objects of (divine) knowledge. We have now come full circle: for this is precisely the view, or the objection, which Scotus disposes of by asserting that “...deminutum respectu deminuentis...”.

Scotus has several other objections to Henry of Ghent's contention that essences possess *ab aeterno* an *esse reale* – specifically, an *esse essentiae*.⁴⁶ They are not relevant to our present purposes, however: and, quite apart from that, the two objections I have discussed above are, I believe, the really crucial ones. It should be noted, on the other hand, that, their differences on the issue of *esse essentiae* notwithstanding, Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus agree on two fairly important points. First, both of them maintain that essences, before they acquire an *esse existens*, are endowed with an *esse* (*deminutum*, according to Scotus; *essentiae*, according to Henry). Second, both of them reject St. Thomas' contention that essences, before they acquire an *esse existens*, are nothing other than the divine *creatrix essentia*: for (we have seen) on Henry's view the *esse essentiae* of essences is really distinct from the *esse* of God, and on Scotus' view the *esse deminutum* of essences is formally non-identical with the *esse* of the divine essence.

5. *Leibniz*. This, then, is the context in which Leibniz's views concerning the reality of the inhabitants of the “pays des possibles” can best be understood and discussed: we may, in fact, not implausibly take Leibniz to have meant those views to provide an answer to the question, “Quid sit essentia creaturae...”. We have seen above how St. Anselm, St. Thomas, Capreolus, Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus answer that question: which of those answers would Leibniz have accepted? Scotus', I believe, rather than Capreolus' or Henry of Ghent's: definitely not St. Anselm's and St. Thomas'; definitely not the view, that is, whereby talk of never-to-be-exemplified essences (as well as of essences before they are actually exemplified) is just talk of the divine *creatrix essentia*; and talk of *possibilia* and their (alleged) reality is to be understood, and explained away, in terms of talk of the divine power and its (absolute) reality.

There is no doubt, I submit, and will presently attempt to show, that

⁴⁶ See e.g. *Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 13, 18 (creation and annihilation become impossible if essences are ascribed an *esse essentiae*); n. 17 (the divine production of essences in *esse essentiae* is not only eternal, but also a creation, properly so-called: hence creation is eternal, contrary to what Henry holds).

Leibniz ascribed a reality – specifically, a reality *secundum quid*: an *esse cognitum* – to *possibilia* (i.e., complete individual concepts or individual essences or complete divine ideas, as well as specific concepts or specific essences or specific divine ideas).⁴⁷ There is no doubt, either, that he was well aware of the distinction, which I have drawn earlier, between the question of the reality, and the question of the possibility, of *possibilia*; and that he took the reality (but not the possibility) of *possibilia* to depend on the divine intellect. There is a considerable amount of textual evidence in favour of the two claims I have just made: let us consider, to begin with, the textual evidence in favour of the first of them.

Leibniz contends, for example, that "... c'est ... l'entendement divin qui fait la réalité des vérités éternelles" (T, § 184: the surrounding context makes it quite clear that the same applies, on his view, to *possibilia* as well). He should be taken to assert, first, that *possibilia* are endowed with reality, and, second, that the source of that reality is the divine intellect. This is not the (kind of) reality which is involved in Leibniz's reference to "... *possibilia*, seu essentiam vel realitatem possibilem exprimentia" (GP VII, 303: Leibniz may well have in mind here something like Suarez's idea of an *essentia realis*); or to "... *quantitas realitatis*" (VE, 239; cf. also GP I, 225); or to "*realitas obiectiva*" (VE, 1107, 1108); or in his claim that "*Perfectio ... est realitas pura*" (Grua, 324). It is, rather, a mode of being:

Dans la région des vérités éternelles se trouvent tous les possibles ... ces vérités mêmes ne sont pas sans qu'il y ait un entendement qui en prenne

⁴⁷ A complete divine idea is an idea which, if exemplified at all, can only be exemplified by an individual substance: a specific divine idea, on the other hand, is an idea which, if exemplified at all, can only be exemplified by all, and only, the members of a given species. Note, also, that Leibniz took a complete individual concept to be an individual essence (see e.g. VE, 186, 417, 1709; GP, 345; and the claim that "... chaque substance exprime l'univers tout entier, et toute son essence individuelle ne consiste que dans cette expression de l'univers", LBr 16 B1 78); and a specific – or "abstract" – concept, to be a specific essence: according to him, "... la notion d'une espèce n'enferme que des vérités éternelles ou nécessaires, [...] Ainsi la notion de la sphère en générale est incomplète ou abstraite, c'est-à-dire qu'on n'y considère que l'essence de la sphère en général" (LR, 105, 106; see also LR, 129). In other words, the "abstract" concept of the "sphere in general" is nothing other than the concept of such an *abstractum* – or, as Leibniz sometimes says, *formalitas* (see e.g. VE, 1059) – as sphericity: and, plainly, the abstract concept of an *F* in general (where "*F*" ranges over natural kinds, or species) will be the concept of such an *abstractum*, or of such a *natura communis*, as e.g. humanity, or equinity, or ... As constituents of the "regio idearum", such concepts, or the *abstracta* whereof they are concepts, cannot of course be thought of as the "result" of a process of abstraction on God's part: for God's knowledge is exclusively "intuitive" (NE IV.xvii.16). The following passage is also relevant here: "... in regione aeternarum veritatum sive in campo idearum a parte rei existente subsistunt Unitas, Circulus, Potentia, aequalitas, calor, rosa, aliaeque realitates vel formae vel perfectiones, etiamsi nulla existerent entia singularia, nec cogitaretur de istis universalibus" (A 2, 1, 392).

connaissance; car elles ne subsisteroient point, s'il n'y avoit un entendement Divin, où elles se trouvent *réalisées*, ... (T, § 189 – italics mine: the same clearly applies to the “possibles” themselves, i.e., specific essences – to which eternal truths owe their truth: see GP VI, 614; VE, 484 – and individual essences).

That is: eternal truths, and their constituent essences, as well as individual essences, have an *esse* (or a reality), which they acquire from the divine intellect: and for the latter to bestow on the former an *esse* (or a reality) is for it to take “cognizance” of them, that is, more precisely, it is for it to confer on them the being-of-being-cognized. (A similar view, it will be recalled, had been put forth by Scotus: the passage just cited also makes it quite clear that Leibniz would have rejected William of Alnwick’s view whereby “*esse scitum sive cognitum in scientia Dei non est aliud quam scientia Dei*” – see fn. 10).

That eternal truths, and therefore their constituent essences, exist (in some sense of “exist”), Leibniz regarded as unquestionable:⁴⁸ thus, in *De rerum originatione radicali*, the claim is made (among others) that

... oportet aeternas veritates existentiam habere in quodam subjecto ... absolute necessario, id est in Deo, per quem haec, quae alioqui imaginaria forent ... *realiscentur* (GP VII, 305 – italics mine; cf. also GP VI, 614; VE, 65–66).⁴⁹

The contrast which Leibniz draws here is not just a contrast between existing *simpliciter*, on the one hand, and being purely imaginary (i.e., not existing at all), on the other: for, on his view, eternal truths and their constituent essences exist in a different sense (or way) than the sense (or way) in which actual individual substances (are said to) exist. The latter exist *simpliciter*: not the former. The former are “realized” (i.e., endowed with a reality *secundum quid*) by the divine intellect without any intervention, as it were, of the divine will: not the latter, which should be deemed rather to be created, than to be realized, by God.⁵⁰ (As Leibniz puts it, “... neque enim

⁴⁸ And not just on metaphysical, but also on theological, grounds: the existence of eternal truths is the starting point of one of Leibniz’s “proofs” of the existence of God (see e.g. VE, 66, 484; GP VI, 614).

⁴⁹ Cf. also, “Duo igitur *realiscentur* per solum divinum intellectum veritates aeternae omnes, et ex contingentibus respectivae” (VE, 1083 – italics mine); “Divina essentia est [...] regio aeternarum veritatum, ita ut per existentiam Dei veritates circa possibilia non-existentia *realiscentur*, ...” (GM III, 586 – italics mine); and Leibniz’s reference to “... Dieu, en qui seul ces vérités éternelles sont *réalisées*” (GP VI, 582).

⁵⁰ True, Leibniz holds that “... habemus ultimam rationem, realitatis tam essentiarum quam existentiarum in uno, [...] cum per ipsum non tantum existentia, [...] sed et possibilia habeant realitatem” (GP VII, 305): this implies in no way, however, that (possible) essences and existences

essentiae sed res creantur", GP IV, 259).³¹ The contrast I have just alluded to, then, is more properly characterized as a contrast between, on the one hand, the purely imaginary and the real *secundum quid*, and, on the other, the real *secundum quid* and the real *simpliciter*, i.e., the result, so to say, of God's production of "things" *ad extra* (so that we have yet another contrast here: between the divine intellect considered in and on itself, on the one hand, and the divine intellect taken together with the divine will, on the other – see the passages cited in fn. 51).

The first of these two contrasts is explicitly drawn by Leibniz in a number of texts: thus, for example, in *De rerum originatione radicali* he first asserts that "... ut possibilitas est principium Essentiae, ita perfectio seu Essentiae gradus ... principium Existentiae" (GP VII, 304). He raises, next, an objection to the claim just cited: "... possibilitates seu essentiae ante vel praeter existentiam sunt imaginariae seu fictitiae, nulla ergo in ipsis quaeri potest ratio existendi" (GP VII, 304). That is: before they are actualized/exemplified possibilities/essences have no *esse* whatsoever (recall St. Thomas's contention, cited earlier, that "... ipsa quidditas creari dicitur; quia antequam esse habeat nihil est", i.e., it is devoid of any *esse* whatever). Not according to Leibniz: who may now plausibly be taken to proceed to answer the question, "Quid sit essentia creaturae...":

Respondeo neque essentias istas, neque aeternas de ipsis veritates ..., esse fictitias, sed *existere* in quadam ... regione idearum, nempe in ipso Deo, es-

have the same (kind of) reality. The "realitas" Leibniz alludes to in the passage just cited is both the *realitas simpliciter* of existences and the *realitas secundum quid* of (possible) essences: and, on his view, God is the source – the "ratio" – of both kinds of reality (see also fn. 51).

³¹ Same view in VE, 237. The distinction implicitly at play here is a distinction between "*existentificare*" (C, 534), on the one hand, and "*realisare*" / "*realiser*", on the other; or, equivalently, between "*productio*", on the one hand, and "*realitas*", on the other (cf., "... in Deo et per Deum Essentiae sibi viam faciunt ad existendum, ita ut in Deo sit realitas essentiarum, seu aeternarum veritatum, et productio existentiarum, seu contingentium veritatum" (VE, 1142; earlier in the same text God is said to be the "fundus essentiarum, fons existentiarum"). Leibniz unequivocally denies that essences are created by God: according to him, "Dieu n'est point auteur des essences, entant qu'elles ne sont que des possibilités" (T, § 335); he is, on the other hand, their "author" insofar as they are exemplified by actually existing individuals. More precisely, he brings it about that some essences are exemplified and, in this sense, he can intelligibly be said to be their "author". The following passages are also relevant here: "Omnia originem habent a Deo, essentiae ab ejus intellectu, existentiae ab ejus voluntate" (VE, 2544; I take it that for an essence to have its "origin" from God is for it to be endowed with an *esse secundum quid* by the divine intellect); "... la nature ideale de la creature [...] est renfermée dans les vérités éternelles qui sont dans l'entendement de Dieu, indépendamment de sa volonté" (T, § 20; cf. also GP IV, 259, 285); "Son entendement est la source des *essences*, et sa volonté est l'origine des *existences*" (T, § 7); "... Theologicae veritati satisfacere licebit, dummodo pro rebus actualibus ipsis assumamus integras [= completas] rerum possibilitium notiones, sive ideas, quas in Divina mente esse ante omne decretum voluntatis ... negari non potest" (VE, 46).

sentiae omnis existentiaeque caeterorum fonte ... cum per ipsum non tantum existentia, quae Mundus complectitur, sed et *possibilia habeant realitatem* (GP VII, 305 – italics mine; cf. also, “... existituritionis essentiarum oportet esse radicem existentem a parte rei; alioqui nihil prorsus erit in Essentiis nisi animi figmentum”, VE, 1141; “Possibilitas metaphysica seu essentiarum foret figmentum si non fundaretur in aliquo realiter existente, ... nempe Deo”, G, 392-393; “Ipsa rerum possibilitas, cum actu non existunt, *realitatem* habet fundatam in divina existentia”, GP VI, 440 – italics mine).

The passages just cited unequivocally show that, on Leibniz's view, essences (*possibilia*) – whether or not they are ever exemplified (actualized) – are endowed with an *esse* (a reality) of sorts: they could, therefore, hardly be regarded as purely imaginary or “fictitious”. They also unequivocally show that, on his view, for a non-exemplified essence to “exist” is for God to bestow on it a reality which the essence possesses purely as an object of the divine intellect (and *in* the divine intellect: “... la nature essentielle des choses, sera l'objet de l'entendement, ... Mais cet objet est interne, et se trouve dans l'entendement divin”).⁵² There are at least two other passages

⁵² T, § 20. The qualification “interne” is meant to rule out the view whereby essences exist (or have a reality) “outside” God. Cf. St. Augustine here: “... restat ut omnia ratione sint condita, nec eadem ratione homo quam equus; [...]. Has autem rationes ubi esse arbitrandum est nisi in ipsa mente creatoris? Non enim extra se quidquam positum intuebatur, ut secundum id constitueret quod constituerebat” (*De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 46, n. 2). St. Augustine also held that God has *rationes* – i.e., ideas – not just of species/kinds, but also of each of their members, i.e., of individuals: “... quilibet homo una ratione, qua homo intelligitur, factus est. At ut populus fiat, quamvis et ipsa una ratio, non tamen hominis ratio, sed hominum. Si igitur pars huius universi est Nebridius, sicut est, et omne universum partibus confit, non potuit universi conditor Deus rationem partium non habere” (*Ep.* 14, in Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*, t. 33, col. 80). This – and, more generally, the question, raised by the schoolmen, whether or not God has ideas of individuals, and, if so, what kinds of ideas they are – may very well be the source of Leibniz's theory of complete concepts (complete divine ideas): I have in mind, in particular, Leibniz's claim that “[Deus] non po[te]st constituere de individuo condendo nisi perspecta tota individui ejus conditione, seu, ut ego soleo loqui, notione completa prius considerata. Et vero alioqui de nondum perspecta judicaret. Si decrevit condere aliquem hominem certis quibusdam praeditum qualitatibus, non ideo decrevit condere Adamum, nam opus est restringentibus ad naturam individualement” (*Grua*, 345). Now plainly, the claim, “... alioqui de nondum perspecta judicaret”, is meant to explain why “[Deus] non po[te]st constituere...”, i.e., more precisely, why God must be said to have (complete) *ideas* of individuals: and, I believe, the context in which such an explanation is best understood is provided by St. Augustine's view whereby “... quis audeat dicere Deum irrationabiliter omnia condidisse? Quod si recte dici [...] non potest, restat ut omnia ratione sint condita” (*De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 46, n. 2; cf. also Scotus' view whereby “... Deus omnia causat vel causare potest, – non irrationabiliter, ergo rationabiliter; ergo habet rationem secundum quam format. Non autem eandem omnium, – ergo singula propriis rationibus format; [...] ergo omne formabile potest formare secundum rationem propriam sibi, [...] tale ponitur idea”, *Ord.* I, d. 36, q.u., n. 39). I take it that the (impossible) case in which “Deus de nondum perspecta judicaret” is a case in which he would (be said to) act “irrationabiliter”.

in which Leibniz explicitly puts forward the view whereby *possibilia* – whether they are ever actualized or not – must be deemed to be real. In the first of them, he also puts forward the view whereby divine ideas are the exemplars which God looks at (so to say) in creating the world:

Lorsque Dieu agit suivant sa sagesse, il se règle sur les idées des possibles qui sont ses objets, mais qui n'ont aucune réalité hors de luy avant leur creation actuelle (GP VI, 422; cf. also, "...toute idée distincte est par là même conforme avec son objet; et il n'y en a que de distinctes en Dieu: outre que d'abord l'objet n'existe nulle part, et quand il existera, il sera formé sur cette idée", T, § 192).

Three points here. First, I take it that to claim that the "ideas of the possibles" – or the "possibles" themselves – have no reality "outside" God is not so much to claim that they have no reality at all, as to deny that they are self-subsistent entities and assert that they are indeed endowed with a reality – but only in God. Second, talk of the idea of a possible is just talk of the idea of what would (and, hence, could) be the case, if the idea itself were exemplified.³³ Now, if the ideas we are dealing with are complete and specific divine ideas, the truth of "If such-and-such an idea were exemplified, it would be the case that ..." requires in no way that a *possibile* (a possible individual, a possible species) "exist" which "corresponds" to that idea: all that is required is that the antecedent contain, or entail, the consequent, or – equivalently – that what the consequent describes be contained in, or entailed by, the content of the relevant idea (this is just an application to counterfactuals of the *inesse* conception of truth). That counterfactual is true, then, iff what its consequent describes is indeed contained in – or does indeed follow from – the relevant idea: a divine idea, accordingly, may well be the idea of (say) a possible individual, without there being (in any sense of "be") a possible individual which the idea is an idea of. Otherwise put, "of", in "idea of a possible", expresses a relation, not so much between a given idea and its (possible) *ideatum*, as between two sets of exemplifiable properties: the set whose constituents make up the original idea, and the set whose constituents are "consequences" of that idea – and, as such, are "contained" in it.

Finally, third, to contend, as Leibniz does, that God, when he "acts according to his wisdom" (i.e., I take it, when he chooses a world to actualize

³³ Cf., "...in notione perfecta substantiae individualis in puro possibilitatis statu a Deo consideratae, ante omne existendum decreti actuale, jam inest quicquid ei eventurum est si existat" (VE, 485: "si existat" should be taken to mean "if it – i.e., the concept – were exemplified").

and then actualizes it), "se regle sur les idées des possibles", or, equivalently, that any given object (any given individual substance) is "formed according to the idea" God has of it, is to contend that a complete divine idea plays the role of an *exemplar* (the same applies, at a more abstract level, to specific divine ideas). More precisely, it is to contend that a proper subset of the set of all complete divine ideas – the latter set making up a so-called *mundus intelligibilis* – is the exemplary model God has employed in creating our world. Each of the members of that set, then, is an exemplar whose *exemplatum* would be an individual substance, if that exemplar were actually exemplified. Unlike on Henry of Ghent's view, on this view there is no need for such things as possible *exemplata*. Exemplars – complete divine ideas – will do, since they are, or provide, "perfect" representations (see LR, 88) of what would be the case if they were exemplified: hence, I submit, Leibniz's claim that, in the "regio idearum", "Il y a des représentations, non seulement de ce qui arrive, mais encor de tout ce qui est possible" (T, § 414: cf. also, "Ces mondes sont tous icy, c'est à dire en idées", T, § 414; and, "...possibilia ab aeterno sunt in ideis Divini Intellectus" GP VI, 440).

Further, Leibniz contends that "all possible essences" (i.e., all possible complete and specific divine ideas) must be regarded as "eternal and necessary" (T, § 335):³⁴ "eternal", since they "exist" *ab aeterno* in the divine intellect, or equivalently, since they "exist" in something (the divine intellect) which is itself eternal and which endows them *ab aeterno* with an *esse* or a reality; and "necessary", since, first, they are independent of the divine will, and, second, the divine intellect only bestows reality on them – it does not make them what they are (see e.g. VE, 237), it merely represents them "comme elles sont dans les vérités éternelles" (T, § 149). These "eternal and necessary" essences, Leibniz – like St. Augustine – also refers to as "*rationes aeternae*":

... Kestnerus ... mihi objicit, si Deus rationes aeternas sequitur, aliquid datum iri prius Deo. Sed respondendum est, *rationes aeternas esse in divino intellectu*, nec ideo quicquam esse prius Deo, sed tantummodo divinam intellectionem esse natura priorem divina volitione (GP VII, 507 – italics mine).

³⁴ So is, he contends in a letter to Burnett of 1707, the idea of this world thought of as possible (GP III, 315). Both contentions should be understood in the context of Leibniz's assertion, "Je ne voudrois pas dire [...] avec Monsieur Poiret et quelques Cartesiens que les idées des choses viennent de la volonté de Dieu. Elles viennent de son entendement, autant qu'elles ne referment que la possibilité" (Grua, 502-503): and, "insofar as they only involve possibility", they should be deemed to be necessary (since, we shall see, according to Leibniz the possibility of the possible – and, in particular, of an idea – is independent of the divine will and of the divine intellect).

Now a view of this sort, whereby divine ideas (or the so-called "rationes aeternae") only "exist" in the divine intellect, and play therein the role of exemplars, should be traced back to St. Augustine: according to whom

Sunt... ideae principales quaedam formae vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quae ipsae formatae non sunt ac per hoc aeternae..., quae divina intelligentia continentur... secundum eas... formari dicitur omne quod oriri et interire potest et omne quod oritur et interit (*De diversis quaestionibus* 83, q. 46, n. 2; cf. also St. Augustine reference to "...divinis incommutabilibus aeternisque rationibus...", *De Genesi ad litteram* V, 113).⁵⁵

St. Augustine's claim that ideas "divina intelligentia continentur" in no way implies, of course, although it may well be taken to suggest, that ideas have reality in the "divine intelligence": it is essentially (if not, perhaps, exclusively) meant to rule out the view whereby ideas are self-subsistent entities. Whether or not they should be ascribed a reality in the "divine intelligence" – and, if so, what kind of reality – St. Augustine does not explicitly say (but cf. fn. 7). Leibniz, on the other hand, I have attempted to show, was quite explicit about this: such *possibilia* as divine ideas (or possible essences) do have a reality, albeit purely *secundum quid*, in the divine intellect. So do, according to him, such *possibilia* as possible individuals (I come now to the second of the two passages I have alluded to earlier). As we have already seen, *possibilia* of the latter kind are really not needed: the fact, however, that Leibniz was willing to ascribe to them a reality of sorts provides fairly conclusive (if only indirect) evidence for the claim that, in the texts I have cited above, Leibniz should be taken to ascribe a reality of sorts to *possibilia* of the former kind as well. For, plainly, the contention that possible *individuals* have reality in the divine intellect is likely to be regarded as stronger and more questionable, from a purely ontological point of view, than the contention that divine *ideas* have reality therein: and, if the former are indeed ascribed a reality, it is not at all unlikely that the latter should be ascribed a reality as well.

The passage now. In a letter to Leibniz of 1686, Arnauld remarks that

... je n'ai aucune idée de ces substance purement possibles, c'est-à-dire que Dieu ne créera jamais. Et je suis fort porté à croire que ce sont de chi-

⁵⁵ Note that, according to Leibniz, God is no more the "cause" of ideas (or of essences) than he is the "cause" of his own intellect (see *VE*, 238; *T*, § 380): ideas, therefore, could hardly be said to have been "formed". Further, we have seen in the main text, on Leibniz's view ideas only have reality in the divine intellect and can, therefore, correctly be said to be "contained" in it (as its "objects").

mères que nous nous formons, et que tout ce que nous appelons substances possibles, purement possibles, ne peut être autre chose que la toute-puissance de Dieu (LR, 98).

Arnauld's view here is, first, that for "purely possible substances" to be "chiméras" is for them to be wholly devoid of reality; and, second, that if talk of such substances is to be intelligible at all, it must be reduced to, or be understood in terms of, talk of God's omnipotence. Talk of a possible substance, then, is no more than a mere *compendium loquendi*: a concise (if misleading) way of saying that God could have exercised his power differently than he actually has. Leibniz's reply is as follows:

Quant à la réalité des substances purement possibles, ..., vous dites, Monsieur, d'être fort porté à croire que ce sont des chimères, à quoi je ne m'oppose pas, *si* vous l'entendez, comme je crois, qu'ils n'ont point d'autre réalité que *celle* qu'ils ont dans l'entendement divin et dans la puissance active de Dieu (LR, 120 – italics mine).

Should we take Leibniz to agree with Arnauld that purely possible substances are, indeed, "chiméras"? Not quite: for the sense in which they are chiméras according to him is not the sense in which they are chiméras according to Arnauld (one is slightly taken aback by Leibniz's "comme je crois": but let that pass). Two very different senses of the notion of a chimera are in fact at play here: for to assert that purely possible substances are chiméras may be to assert either that (1) they are devoid of *esse simpliciter* (which is perfectly consistent with their having an *esse* purely *secundum quid*); or that (2) they are devoid of any *esse* whatever. Leibniz accepts (1) but rejects (2): Arnauld, on the other hand, accepts (2) – hence his claim that "... tout ce que nous appelons substances possibles, ..., ne peut être autre chose que la toute-puissance de Dieu".

This is precisely what Leibniz denies. For one thing, his assertion that purely possible substances are chiméras is a *conditional* assertion (cf. "si" in the passage just cited): accept the condition – as Leibniz evidently does – and the resulting view is that *possibilia* are chiméras only in sense (1) above – as the remark, "... n'ont point d'autre réalité que *celle* qu'ils ont ..." clearly shows. (It would evidently make little or no sense to make that remark, and then proceed to assert that *possibilia* have no reality whatsoever). For another, unlike Arnauld Leibniz makes reference both to the divine power *and* to the divine intellect. He means to deny, plainly, that a reduction without remainder of *possibilia* and their reality to God's omnipotence is in fact possible – since *possibilia* also have reality in (i.e., acquire their reality from) the divine intellect. Far from being chiméras in Arnauld's sense of "chime-

ra", then, *possibilia* must be conceded to "exist" in the divine intellect, and to have therein the reality which consists in the being-of-being-objects-of-God's-intellect.³⁶

To put forth a view of this sort is, plainly, to reject both St. Thomas' view whereby God knows never-to-be-realized *possibilia* "ut existentia solum in potentia divina" (*Summa contra gentiles* I, 66 – italics mine); and the view – St. Anselm's and St. Thomas' – whereby talk of essences before they are exemplified, and of never-to-be-exemplified essences, is just talk of the divine *creatrix essentia*. It is, of course, also to contend that *possibilia* depend, for their reality, on the divine intellect. The question naturally arises at this point whether or not, according to Leibniz, the *possibility* of *possibilia*, and the *truth* (as contrasted with the reality) of eternal truths, depend on God – be it God's will, or God's power, or God's intellect.³⁷ His answer, we shall now see, was uncompromisingly negative: the possibility of *possibilia* and the truth of eternal truths depend neither on God's will, nor on God's power, nor on God's intellect. Here is why: let us suppose, to begin with, that they indeed depend on the divine will and power. Then – Leibniz argues – the divine intellect, since it is not only "formally" distinct from (see *GP* I, 257), but, also, "naturally" prior to, the divine will and power, cannot be said to have the possible and the true as its "objects": which means that it cannot be said to conceive of either of them – which means, in turn, that God could hardly be said to possess anything like an intellect. (This is plainly absurd: so is, therefore, the original supposition). Now, on Leibniz's view the "natural" priority of the intellect comes of this, that God can only will, and exercise his power upon, that which his intellect "already" knows to be possible and true:³⁸ the latter, then, must qualify as such *independently* of the divine will and power.

³⁶ To claim, on the other hand, that *possibilia* have reality in the "active power of God" is to claim that they have the being-of-being-objects-of-the-divine-power (the distinction between the mode of being I have just described and the mode of being I have described in the passage footnoted parallels the distinction between "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" possibility).

³⁷ As I have already pointed out, Leibniz was well aware of the distinction between the question of the possibility (truth), and the question of the reality, of *possibilia* (eternal truths): thus, as concerns eternal truths, in the *Monadologie* he first raises (and answers) the question of their reality (see §§ 43–45), and then raises (and answers) the question of their truth (see § 46).

³⁸ Cf., "... si la vérité même ne dépend que de la volonté de Dieu et non pas de la nature des choses, et l'entendement étant nécessairement *avant* la volonté (je parle de *prioritate naturae*, non *temporis*), l'entendement de Dieu sera avant la vérité des choses et par conséquent n'aura pas la vérité pour objet" (*GP* IV, 285 – with obvious and minor modifications, the same line of argument applies to the possibility of the possible); "... les objets de l'entendement ne sauroient aller au-delà du possible, qui en un sens est seul intelligible" (*T*, § 225); "... la puissance de Dieu [...] s'étend [...] à tout ce qui n'implique aucune contradiction" (*T*, § 227: this clearly suggests that the

They also qualify as such independently of the divine intellect: for, according to Leibniz, the exercise, on God's part, of his infinite power of thinking must be deemed to take place according (and only according) to the principle of Contradiction, which (we shall presently see) is definitive both of the absolutely possible and of the absolutely necessary. It follows, clearly, that the possibility of the absolutely possible, and the truth of eternal truths (which are absolutely necessary truths), are independent of the divine intellect. This, I submit, is precisely the view Leibniz has in mind when he points out that

... les vérités d'intelligence sont universelles, et ... ce qui est vrai là dessus à l'égard de nous l'est aussi pour les anges et pour Dieu. Ces vérités éternelles sont le point fixe et immuable sur lequel tout roule (*Grue*, 379).

The truths Leibniz refers to here as "vérités d'intelligence" are, plainly, eternal truths: the latter are absolutely necessary truths,⁵⁹ and, as such, their denial involves – explicitly or implicitly – a flouting of the principle of Contradiction.⁶⁰ The conclusion seems evident: if God cannot but abide by those truths, it is most unlikely that he should be in a position *not* to abide by the principle of Contradiction. In fact, more precisely, since, on Leibniz's view, he cannot but abide by that principle,⁶¹ he cannot but abide by

possibility of the possible is independent of – and in some sense precedes – the divine power): "... voluntas Dei supponit rei volendae intellectum; intellectus hic involvit rei intellectae possibilitatem. Ergo voluntas supponit rei volendae possibilitatem" (*GP* I, 256); "Possible est [...] existeret, etiam illud quod Deus non vult existeret, quia posset existeret sua natura, si Deus id existeret vellet. At Deus non potest velle ut existat. Fateor, manet tamen possibile sua natura, etsi non sit possibile respectu divinae voluntatis. Quia sua natura possibile definivimus, quod in se non implicat contradictionem" (*VE*, 277: note "in se" here). See also *GP* VI, 559; *VE*, 2545.

⁵⁹ Note that "eternal", in "eternal truths", is ambiguous: it may mean (1) (absolutely) necessary (see e.g. *A* 2, 1, 246; *VE*, 65, 457, 482, 1173; *GP* VI, 61; *T*, disc. § 2 – "... les vérités éternelles [...] sont absolument nécessaires"); or it may mean (2) "known by God *ab aeterno*". A truth which is eternal in sense (1) of "eternal" is, of course, also eternal in sense (2) of "eternal": but not conversely. (The fact, then, that eternal truths "exist" in an eternal intellect could hardly be taken to explain why an eternal truth qualifies as eternal in sense (1) of "eternal": see Suarez here, *Disp. Met.* 31, 12, 40).

⁶⁰ Cf., "Manifestum [...] est omnes propositiones necessarias sive aeternae veritatis esse virtualiter identicas, quippe quae ex solis ideis sive definitionibus [...] demonstrari [...] possunt, ita ut appareat oppositum implicare contradictionem, ..." (*VE*, 1173-1174; see also *GP* I, 253; *VE*, 455, 456, 1969, 1972).

⁶¹ Cf., "cela ne me satisfait pas. Ce qui implique contradiction est impossible, car ce n'est rien dire" (*A* 6, 3, 236): "cela" is Descartes' view whereby "je n'ose pas dire, que Dieu ne peut faire une montagne sans vallée, ou que 1. et 2. ne fassent pas 3. mais qu'il m'a donné une âme, faite en sorte, que je ne puis pas le concevoir autrement" (Leibniz cites Clerselier's translation of the original Latin, for which see Adam and Tannery, eds., *Oeuvres de Descartes*, V, 224). Cf. also, "... principia logica et metaphysica sunt communia divinis et humanis, [...]. Tale principium meta-

those truths. If this is so, however, God must also abide by the absolutely possible, since the latter is characterized in terms of the principle of Contradiction (according to Leibniz, "...idem [est] possibilitas quam non implicancia contradictionis" AA 6, 1, 514; "Possibile est quod non continet contradictorium seu *A non-A*", VE, 1962). The possibility of the absolutely possible, then, does not – and cannot – depend on the divine intellect. We have already seen that it is independent of the divine will and power: but to say that it is independent of the divine will, power, *and* intellect is to say, more simply, that it is independent of God, and (hence) that the question of what grounds it can (indeed, must) be answered without making any reference to God.

A certain amount of care must be exercised at this point: for, according to Leibniz (and, I believe, according to Scotus as well), the (kind of) independence at play here is an independence with respect to God's actual existence, not with respect to his *possible* existence (true, if God did not exist, he would be impossible: this implies in no way, however, that the supposition that God does not exist and the supposition that he is impossible are equivalent). In other, and clearer, words: while it makes perfectly good sense to claim that e.g. a non-actual state of affairs *s* qualifies as absolutely possible quite independently of whether or not God exists, i.e., quite independently of whether or not *s* will ever obtain, it is by no means clear that it makes any sense to claim that *s* qualifies as (absolutely) possible quite independently of whether or not God is possible, i.e., quite independently of whether or not possible conditions exist which, had they been actual, would have brought *s* about. (The reason for making the latter claim is, of course, that the absolute possibility of *s* is *entirely* a matter of *non-repugnantia terminorum*; hence, it might be thought, *s* must qualify as absolutely possible quite independently of whether or not God is possible. The reason for rejecting that claim, on the other hand, is that the fact that the absolute possibility of *s* is entirely a matter of *non-repugnantia terminorum*

physicum est: non posse idem simul esse et non esse; ..." (*Grua*, 20; see also 238, 471). The two passages I have just cited unequivocally suggest that, on Leibniz's view, God cannot but think according to the principle of Contradiction: or, more generally, that no intellect (not even God's) can conceive of an absolute impossibility, i.e., an impossibility which explicitly or implicitly involves a denial of the principle of Contradiction (see *GP* IV, 360; VE, 1078). The same view had been put forth by (among others) St. Thomas and Duns Scotus: "Illud [...] quod non cadit in intellectum non potest cadere in voluntatem. Sed ea quae sunt secundum se impossibilia non cadunt in intellectum, cum sibi ipsis repugnent [...]. In divinam ergo voluntatem non possunt cadere quae secundum se sunt impossibilia" (*Summa contra gentiles* I, 84; see also *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 19, a. 3, and *Quodlibet* 9, q. 1, a.u.); "...in cuius cognitione vel cogitatione includitur contradictio, illud dicitur non cogitabile, quia tunc sunt duo cogitabilia opposita nullo modo faciendo unum cogitabile, quia neutrum determinat alterum" (*Ord.* I, d. 2 pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 137).

need not at all imply that it is an unrealizable possibility, i.e., a possibility which could not have been realized under any conditions whatsoever, or, equivalently, a possibility whose "object" is not a constituent of any possible world).

Thus we may – and do – claim that the absolute possibility of *s* is entirely a matter of *non-repugnantia terminorum*, which is itself independent of whether or not God actually – or even possibly – exists (note that such a *non-repugnantia* should be said rather to make *s* absolutely possible, than to make it possible). This claim implies no more than that, if God did not exist, or else if he were impossible, *possibilia* would be deprived of their *ontological* foundation (since the latter can only be provided by God), and, hence, that there would exist no *possibilia* at all, in any sense of "exist". We may, however, be unwilling to claim that *s* would count as possible even if God were impossible, i.e., even if *s* could not have obtained under any conditions whatever. For, were we to make such a claim, we should in effect be making the wholly implausible claim that there are such things as unrealizable possibilities. An absolute possibility, of course, qualifies as such – viz. as *absolute* – in and of itself: but it may justly be wondered what we are talking about when we say of it that it is an unrealizable possibility.⁶² Hence, I take it, the contention that the possibility of the (absolutely) possible depends on the possibility of God: such a contention, however, means no more than that there are no such things as unrealizable possibilities (there is, of course, a weaker sense of "unrealizable" according to which a

⁶² Poncius considers a similar objection to his view that "...esse diminutum non producit per actum divini intellectus" (*Philosophiae*, cit., p. 903b): "*Obiicies tertio: si Deus repugnaret, repugnaret etiam creatura possibilis: ergo creatura possibilis habet esse suum a Deo. Respondeo distinguendo antecedens: ex defectu influxus ullius in esse possibili, nego – ex eo quod si Deus repugnaret, non esset aliqua causa, quae posset dare creaturae esse simpliciter, et consequenter non haberet esse possibile, concedo antecedens; et distingo consequens: quatenus non esset possibilis nisi Deus esset [read: esset possibilis], concedo consequentiam – quatenus Deus communicaret ipsi esse possibile per influxum aliquem realem, aut intentionalem, nego consequentiam*" (*Philosophiae*, cit., p. 904a-b). I take Poncius to put forth here the following view: if God were impossible, it would be impossible for a(ny) given "possible creature" *c* to be actualized, so that, if by "possible" be meant "actualizable", *c* would indeed not be possible (or, as Poncius says: "...creatura [...] non haberet esse possibile"). Actualizable or no, however, *c* would still possess an *esse possibile*, i.e., it would still count as possible, since it has its *esse possibile* in and of itself ("...[creatura] habet [...] esse [possibile] a seipsa formaliter et necessario", *Philosophiae*, cit., p. 904b), and (hence) independently of whether or not God is in fact possible. If God were impossible, *c* could not, of course, be actualized under any conditions whatsoever: but this, according to Poncius, leaves its *esse possibile* unscathed. On this view, then, the notion of an unrealizable possibility is a perfectly intelligible one – so is, consequently, that of a *possibile* which is not a constituent of any possible world (note, however, that, on Poncius' view, a world may be possible without being actualizable, since it has its *esse possibile* in and of itself).

possibility can intelligibly be said to be unrealizable). Now, I suggest, Leibniz has a view of this sort in mind when he points out to Bourguet that

J'accorde que l'idée des possibles suppose nécessairement celle [c'est à dire l'idée] de l'existence d'un être qui puisse produire le possible. Mais l'idée des possibles ne suppose point l'existence même de cet être, comme il semble que vous le prenés, Monsieur, en ajoutant: *s'il n'y avoit point un tel être, rien ne seroit possible*. Car il suffit qu'un être qui puisse produire la chose, soit possible, à fin que la chose soit possible, ... Mais c'est *ex alio capite*, que rien ne seroit possible si l'être nécessaire n'existoit point. C'est parce que la réalité des possibles et des vérités éternelles doit être fondée dans quelque chose de réel et d'existant (GP III, 572).

A number of points are worthy of notice here. First, Leibniz sharply distinguishes between "l'idée de l'existence d'un être qui..." and "l'existence même de cet être": this distinction, I submit, is equivalent to the distinction between the possible existence of a being which can actualize a given possible, and the actual existence of that being. Second, talk of "l'idée des possibles" is not implausibly taken to be talk of the possibility of the possibles. Third, the contention that "... il suffit que ... à fin que la chose soit possible" should be taken to rule out the existence of unrealizable possibilities – Leibniz's point being, then, that the existence of a possible cause⁶³ is not so much what makes a possible possible, as what makes it *realizable*. This, of course, is perfectly consistent with the claim – Leibniz's, as a matter of fact – that the absolutely possible qualifies as such in and of itself⁶⁴ (the emphasis is on "absolutely" here). Finally, fourth, Leibniz also

⁶³ And *not*, mind you: actual – thus consider Leibniz's claim that "... quand on parle de la possibilité d'une chose, il ne s'agit pas des causes [viz. *actual* causes] qui peuvent faire ou empêcher qu'elle existe actuellement: [...] lorsqu'on demande si une chose est possible ou nécessaire, et qu'on y fait entrer la considération de ce que Dieu veut ou choisit, on change de question. Car Dieu choisit parmi les possibles, ..." (T, § 235). See also LR, 116.

⁶⁴ The view I have ascribed to Leibniz in the main text should also be ascribed to Scotus: according to whom "... illa potentia [= potentia logica] est modus [...] compositionis factus ab intellectu, causatus ex habitudine terminorum illius compositionis, scilicet quod non repugnant. Et licet communiter correspondeat sibi in re aliqua potentia realis, tamen haec non est per se de ratione huius potentiae: et sic possibile fuisset mundum fore ante eius creationem, si tunc fuisset intellectus formans hanc compositionem, *Mundus erit*, – licet tunc nec fuisset potentia passiva ad esse mundi, nec etiam activa, posito hoc per impossibile; ...". The logically possible, then, qualifies as such independently of whether or not a "potentia realis" *actually* exists (or will *actually* exist) which can bring it about, and hence, in particular, of whether or not God *actually* exists. The passage continues as follows: "... dum tamen *sine contradictione posset* potentia fore ad hoc activa" (*Quaest. subtilissimae in Metaph. Arist.* IX q. 2, n. 3 – italics mine). Note the shift from talk of a "potentia" which actually exists to talk of a "potentia" which *could* exist: Scotus' point, I believe, is that the fact that, first, a given combination of "terms" involves no *repugnantia* (and "corre-

sharply distinguishes between the question of the possibility, and the question of the reality, of *possibilia*, and explicitly suggests that the reality – but not the possibility – of *possibilia* depends on the (actual) existence of God (as we have seen, thin only means that, if God did not exist, *possibilia* would be devoid of reality, whereas, if God were impossible, not only would *possibilia* be devoid of reality, but, also, the very notion of possibility – or the “idea” thereof – would be unintelligible).

By way of conclusion, I should like briefly to discuss Leibniz’s claim that “... nisi ... Deus existeret, nihil possibile foret” (GP VI, 440).⁶⁵ The claim is clearly ambiguous: it may be taken to mean that (1) God is what makes the possible possible; or that (2) God is what bestows reality on *possibilia*; or that (3) God both makes the possible possible *and* bestows reality on *possibilia*. We should opt for (2). For, we have seen earlier, according to Leibniz whether or not something (say, a state of affairs) qualifies as absolutely possible depends on whether or not it implies (involves) a contradiction – and whether or not it implies (involves) a contradiction entirely depends on the so-called *rationes formales* of its “constituents”. The (absolute) possibility of a *possibile* is, accordingly, independent of God, who, being bound (we have also seen earlier) by the principle of Contradiction, can no more make the possible possible than he can flout that principle.

“... nisi ... Deus existeret, nihil possibile foret” does not mean, then, that the possibility of *possibilia* depends on the divine intellect: it does not mean, either, that it depends on the divine will and power. Rather, it means that, if God did not exist, the claim that *possibilia* have reality and, hence, that there are (in some sense of “there are”) such things as *possibilia* would have to be dismissed as false: everything – be it an actually existing thing or a *possibile* – depends on God for its reality – be it a reality *simpliciter* or a reality merely *secundum quid* (see e.g. GP VI, 439). As Leibniz points out to Bourguet in the passage I have cited earlier, the reason why “rien ne seroit possible si l’être nécessaire n’existoit point” is that “... la réalité des possi-

sponds”, therefore, to a logical possibility), and, second, that such a *non-repugnantia* is entirely a matter of the *rationes formales* of the “terms”, should in no way be taken to imply that there are such things as unrealizable possibilities. This point strictly concerns the notion of possibility: not that of *logical* possibility (which counts as such, viz. as logical, in and of itself). Scotus may well have a view of this sort in mind when he asserts that “... si oculus esset in tenebris, et impossibile esset illud opacum causans tenebras amoveri, impossibile esset talem oculum videre, – non quidem ex repugnantia intrinseca terminorum, quae est oculi ad videre, sed ex repugnantia alicuius extrinseci ad alterum extremorum, scilicet illius opaci ad videre” (*In Sent.* II, d. 7, q.u., n. 17; cf. also *In Sent.* IV, d. 11, q. 2, n. 8).

⁶⁵ See also, “... sans Dieu, non seulement il n’y auroit rien d’existant, mais il n’y auroit rien de possible” (*T.* § 184); “... sans luy il n’y auroit rien de réel dans les possibilités, et non seulement rien d’existant, mais encor rien de possible” (GP VI, 614).

bles... doit être fondée dans quelque chose de réel et d'existant": this implies in no way, of course, nor does it suggest, that the *possibility* of the possibles must be so "founded". (With obvious and minor modifications the same account applies to such counterfactuals as, "Si nulla esset substantia aeterna nullae forent aeternae veritates", VE, 484).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ As we have seen earlier in the main text, according to Leibniz the truth, but not the reality, of eternal truths is independent of God: the claim cited in the main text qualifies, therefore, as false if it is taken to mean that, if God did not exist, eternal truths would not be true; it qualifies as true, on the other hand, if it is taken to mean that, if God did not exist, eternal truths would have no reality. I should note in passing that the claim in question bears a striking similarity to St. Thomas' claim that "... si nullus intellectus esset aeternus, nulla veritas esset aeterna" (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 16, a. 7): the agreement, however, is purely verbal. Unlike St. Thomas (but cf. *Summa contra gentiles* II, 25), Leibniz would have accepted Scotus' view whereby "... si poneretur, per impossibile, quod Deus non esset, et quod triangulus esset, adhuc habere tres angulos resolveretur ut in naturam trianguli, ..." (*Rep. Par.* I, prol. III, quaestiunc. 4, n. 17); as well as Suarez's view whereby "... si per impossibile nulla esset [...] causa, nihilominus illa enunciatio [= 'Omne animal est sensibile'] vera esset" (*Disp. Met.* 31, 12, 45); as well as Cajetan's view whereby "Nihil [...] minus remaneret scientia mea de trianguli passionibus et rosa, etc., si omnia annihilarentur me solo remanente, quam si remaneret prima causa aut corpus coeleste etc." (*Commentarium in Post. Analyt. Arist.*, c. VI, V); as well as Soncinas' view whereby "Si per impossibile Deus non esset, et nulla causa agens, hominem esse animal esset verum, ..." (*Quaestiones metaphysicales acutissimae* V, q. 10).