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“Aporetic Monologues: Questions Surrounding 'Von der Allmacht’”

'Von der Allmacht' is a curious work. Its main focus is the critique of certain famous historical doctrines, and it is one of the few philosophical works Leibniz wrote in German. It also breaks off in mid-sentence, eternally leaving its audience to wonder how Leibniz might have finished it and why he never did. In a sense it seems like an aporetic dialogue, having established no positive view on the nature of evil by its end.

In a recent interpretation, Paul Rateau focuses on 'Von der Allmacht's' connection with Leibniz's lost, earlier works—a bridge to, rather than a continuation of, the works of the early 1670s. As such, its connection with Luther and Hobbes, and its strong necessitarianism, are contrasted with the 'Confessio Philosophi's' more moderate and original position. Other interpreters such as Sleight see 'Von der Allmacht' as raising the questions that the 'Confessio Philosophi' answers, thus 'completing' the dialogue with Leibniz's other works.

It is my intention to present a thorough study of 'Von der Allmacht'. First, I will examine and summarize the main doctrines presented in the work itself. Leibniz is objecting to the 'lazy reason', the conflation of God's foreknowledge of an event and its necessity. He also objects to a version of privation theory which makes God responsible for all the real and positive aspects of sin, and man for the privative or lacking aspects. Subsequently, I will attempt to integrate 'Von der Allmacht' with Leibniz's other early works. There are obvious connections with 'L'auteur du peche', another early fragment which deals with the division of responsibility of sin. The 'Confessio Philosophi' itself takes a similar stance, although this acquiescence is buried in its presentation of positive doctrines. Thus, it is important to contrast leading scholarly interpretations and weigh their validity. In the end, without the juvenile Latin 'brother' that Rateau claims is more strongly related to 'Von der Allmacht' than the works of the Confessio period, he just doesn't have enough evidence to support his conclusions. The connections with critiques made by Luther and Hobbes could be circumstantial, or stray points of agreement with those thinkers rather than a sign that Leibniz accepts any of their positive doctrines. Finally, the 'stronger' necessitarianism that Rateau sees in 'Von der Allmacht' just isn't there—the 'Confessio Philosophi' is still necessitarian, as Rateau later acknowledges. Necessitarianism can come in different forms, but can it come in different degrees? If not, then there is no reason to detach the work from the other early writings on evil.

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On the other hand, 'Von der Allmacht' and 'L'auteur du peche', despite their aporetic natures, continue to play an important part of Leibniz's formulation of a theodicean solution: he never changes his stance on those two doctrines, although other parts of the solution do change. It may seem at first glance that Leibniz recants his position on privation theory, but this is in fact an oversimplification—although he adopts a version of privation theory in the *Theodicy*, it is not the version that he so resoundingly rejects in his earlier works. Thus, my final task will be to incorporate 'Von der Allmacht' into Leibniz's writings on evil as a whole, demonstrating points of agreement with the *Theodicy* and illuminating the differences between Leibnizian and historical privation theory.