

Anne Conway and Margaret Cavendish have been paired together since at least Sarah Hutton's 1997 article, "Anne Conway, Margaret Cavendish, and Seventeenth-Century Thought."<sup>1</sup> In that paper, Hutton pointed out that Conway and Cavendish both endorse a monistic, vitalist natural philosophy set against the mechanism that dominated European natural philosophy in the middle of the seventeenth-century. But Marcy Lascano's excellent new book is the first sustained examination of Conway and Cavendish together, based on close readings of their texts. If you have not yet read it, I highly recommend that you do.

Marcy does not disagree with the characterization of both Conway and Cavendish as monists and vitalists, but one virtue of her book is that she zeroes in on exactly what these positions amount to. For example, regarding monism, Marcy argues that both Conway and Cavendish were priority monists, meaning that both endorsed a substance monism in which the whole is prior to its parts (p. xiv). Cavendish understands nature as a "body or organism," although not a conscious or goal-directed organism (p. 35); her view, as Marcy puts it, is a form of "biological holism" (p. 36) in which all of nature is material (p. 35). Conway, too, is a substance monist, with everything made of spirit (p. 42). And, Marcy argues, she is also a priority monist: she holds that many individual created entities exist, and yet all those entities are parts of one created body (p. 43).

But while establishing these similarities between their views, Marcy also emphasizes important differences between Conway and Cavendish. For example, she points out that the two had very different aims in developing their philosophical systems: Conway's metaphysics underpinned a theodicy that would explain human suffering, while Cavendish's metaphysics underpinned her accounts of natural phenomena (p. xi). Conway makes several substantive claims about God's nature and God's creation of the world, asserting that this creation is a continuous emanation from God (pp. 20–21); in contrast, Cavendish insists that because God's creation of the universe is "supernatural," we cannot understand it or make any claims about it (pp. 1–3). Marcy also argues that "while Conway's philosophical system is clearly teleological, Cavendish's system is only very weakly normative" (p. xvii), and that while Conway ascribed libertarian freedom to creatures (p. 143), Cavendish had a "compatibilist view of freedom" (p. 142).

Today I want to make the case that Cavendish's and Conway's views were closer than Marcy maintains on two topics: first, regarding the nature of God's creation, and, second, regarding human freedom. I'll do this by focusing on Marcy's interpretations of Cavendish's views on these topics, raising some questions that came up for me as I read through these sections of her book.

## 1. Knowledge of God and God's Creation

Marcy points out that while Conway provides an account of God's creation, Cavendish says that no created being can understand how God created matter or created our world out of matter, and indeed that no creature even has an idea of God (p. 1). Cavendish nonetheless thinks we—along with every other part of nature—know that God exists, although we cannot know anything about

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<sup>1</sup> In *Women, Science and Medicine 1500-1700*, edited by Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), pp. 218–34.

God's essence. I agree with Marcy on all this, but I am not sure exactly how Marcy wants to characterize the knowledge that Cavendish says we *do* have of God, namely, that God exists. I also think that, despite Cavendish's claims that it is beyond us to know how God created the universe, she does offer a certain view of God's creation, and that in this respect she resembles Conway more than Marcy suggests.

I'll start with Cavendish's claims about our knowledge of God's existence. First, she says that we can know that there must be something above nature that created nature; that is, we can know that God *exists* (OEP 89). She that humans know through natural philosophy that there must be a creator of nature (OEP 217), and indeed she insists that all parts of nature know this (OEP 90). And while Cavendish says God's *essence* is "incomprehensible" (OEP 216<sup>2</sup>) and that the parts of Nature cannot comprehend, conceive, or perceive God," (OEP 193), she nonetheless does not think that that precludes all knowledge of God (OEP 193). The very fact that God is supernatural, "above nature" (OEP 90), gives us some information about his attributes. The fact that God is supernatural allows us, and all the parts of nature to infer that God is more powerful than anything in Nature (OEP 90), and that God must be "eternal, infinite, omnipotent, incorporeal, individual, immovable" (OEP 216–17).

I have argued in the past that Cavendish thinks the knowledge that God exists and has certain attributes is part of what she calls "self-knowledge." Cavendish opposes self-knowledge to the perception of external objects (OEP 138), although ultimately she says that even perception is just an "act" of "interior and inherent self-knowledge" (OEP 138, 144). In her book, Marcy takes issue with my claim that Cavendish thinks self-knowledge includes knowledge of God's existence (p. 5). But I am not sure what the alternative is, and would like to hear more about how Marcy thinks Cavendish characterizes this knowledge.

As I see it, Cavendish identifies three kinds of knowledge. In OEP Section 35, she distinguishes the sensitive perception of external objects from self-knowledge. In sensitive perception, the sensitive matter in the sense-organs patterns out the motions of some external object. Typically, the rational matter then patterns out the motions of the sensitive matter, giving rise to what Cavendish calls "double perception" (OEP 149). However, in Section 36 she says that rational matter can move on its own, not copying anything in the sensitive matter. This is the cause of "fancies, thoughts, imaginations, conceptions, etc. which are figures made only by the rational motions in their own matter or substance without the help of the sensitive" (OEP 150). Since Cavendish then refers to "rational knowledge," it seems that this is a third kind of human knowledge, in addition to sensitive perception and self-knowledge.

So the knowledge of God's existence must be one of these kinds. Cavendish explicitly denies that knowledge of God is obtained through sensitive perception (OEP 17, 38), because (at least in humans) that involves what Cavendish calls "patterning" by sensitive matter and God is not the sort of being that can be patterned or copied. But Cavendish does characterize knowledge of God as a "conception" (OEP 17), indicating that rational matter creates this notion on its own, without patterning anything external. But I don't think Cavendish wants to say that this conception of God is like a "fancy," a kind of figment that rational matter *merely* creates on its own, for she characterizes knowledge of God as "innate" and "inherent" (OEP 17). This suggests that it is built into the *nature*

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all references to OEP are to O'Neill's 2001 edition by Cambridge University Press. All other parenthetical references are to the original editions of Cavendish's texts.

of rational matter to form this notion of God in every part of nature. Moreover, “innate” and “inherent” are the same terms she uses to talk about self-knowledge (OEP 17). So it seems that Cavendish thinks this kind of rational knowledge is *part* of self-knowledge.

Indeed, in another passage Cavendish *explicitly* characterizes a creature’s knowledge of God as an “interior self-knowledge” and says “it is probable” that all creatures have this (OEP 16). Marcy does not mention that passage, although she considers another, related one. In that passage, Cavendish writes, “It is probable, that God having endued all parts of nature with self-knowledge, may have given them also an interior knowledge of himself, that is, of his existency, how he is the God of nature, and ought to be worshipped by her, as his eternal servant” (p. 5, quoting OEP 38). Marcy emphasizes here that “Cavendish only claims that our knowledge of God’s existence is something that God might have *also* given us” (p. 5). I think Cavendish is making a stronger claim here: she couches many of her claims about natural philosophy in terms of what is or is not “probable,” so the fact that she uses this language here just indicates her usual epistemic humility, and not that she does not think it is true. So I think we need to conclude that Cavendish does, in fact, see this knowledge of God’s existence as part of self-knowledge.

So, as I see it, Cavendish think self-knowledge is a broad category that does not literally mean just knowledge of the self: it includes whatever knowledge is “innate” and “fixed,” that is, not acquired from external objects. On Marcy’s reading, self-knowledge is a more circumscribed kind of knowledge; pointing to passages where Cavendish says that “self-knowledge is the ground and principle of all particular knowledges (OEP 138),” Marcy says that “Cavendish simply means that self-knowledge is necessary for the perceptive abilities of individuals” (p. 77). The idea is when a creature knows what kind of entity it is, it knows what kind of perceptive abilities it has (p. 77): a cat will know, through self-knowledge, that it can perceive things through its eyes, ears, nose, and sense of touch, including its whiskers. So, on Marcy’s reading, a kitten in some sense knows, before it actually has any sensory experience, what kind of sensory experience it can have. Indeed, if this self-knowledge is (as Marcy says) actually necessary, then the kitten *must* know what kind of sensory experience it can have. This seems right to me, but I do not see what is lost by saying that a creature’s self-knowledge *also* includes the knowledge that it was created by God.

One reason might be that this would seem to undermine the naturalistic picture that Cavendish otherwise offers us. But since Marcy concedes that Cavendish *does* think all creatures have knowledge of God’s existence, she needs to locate this knowledge somewhere in Cavendish’s epistemology. What Marcy says is that “the human conception of his existence is manifested in conscience” (p. 6). Now, Cavendish does link knowledge of God with conscience; she says in her final work, *Grounds of Natural Philosophy*, that “the human notions of God, man calls *conscience*” (p. 5, quoting GNP 248). But Marcy’s claim that this knowledge is “manifested” is not Cavendish’s language, and I am not sure what it is supposed to mean. One natural reading, I think, is that it means a belief in God’s existence is shown by a creature’s behavior—for example, elsewhere in *Observations* Cavendish suggests a person should

love God from his soul, and with all his power, and pray for his saving graces, and offend not any creature when offences can or may be avoided, and follow the only instructions of the sacred church, not endeavouring to interpret the word of God after his own fancy and vain imagination, but praying zealously, believing undoubtedly, and living virtuously and piously. (OEP 218)

Cavendish also says that all parts of nature worship God, each kind in its own way (GNP App I chap. 5). But I do not think that Cavendish means worshipful actions *constitute* a creature’s

knowledge of God, if that is what Marcy means to suggest. Rather, worshipful actions are performed *because* creatures have “innate” and “fixed” knowledge of God’s existence. So I would be interested to hear more about how Marcy interprets Cavendish on this knowledge of God.

A related question concerns what Cavendish thinks we can know of God’s creation. Marcy writes that “Cavendish claims God’s act of creation is something ‘supernatural,’ and so we cannot understand it through our senses or reason” (p. 1). Cavendish does indeed say this, but she also hints in some texts that she understood God’s creation as emanation. Both editions of *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* end with a poem that refers to a “deistical center,” characterizing God as a “Center” from which all “infinetes flow” (PPO 1655, 173; PPO 1663, 454-55). Since Cavendish thinks nature itself is infinite, this suggests that she thinks nature flows from God, and the reference to things “flowing” from God suggests an emanation theory. Eileen O’Neill collected many such passages in her essay “Influxus Physicus”: Plotinus wrote of the principles of intellect and soul “flowing” into the visible universe, Albert the Great referred to the “flowing agent,” and Aquinas referred to the theory of emanation with the verb “effluxerunt.”<sup>3</sup> In *Philosophical Letters*, Cavendish refers back to her poem, where, she says, she “treat[s] of the Deistical Centre, as the Fountain from whence all things do flow, and which is the supream Cause, Author, Ruler and Governor of all” (PL 199). As Marcy points out, Conway also characterizes God’s creation as emanation (p. 21). I think it is possible, then, that Cavendish is closer to Conway on the issue of God’s creation than Marcy suggests.

## 2. Human Freedom

Marcy defends a compatibilist interpretation of Cavendish on freedom, in contrast to the libertarian interpretation that Karen Detlefsen originally ascribed to Cavendish and that I defended in my own book. Marcy reads Cavendish as being much closer to Hobbes and says that we should not “saddle [Cavendish] with a radical libertarian account that most of her contemporaries did not hold” (p. 137). But, first, I don’t think the fact that many of her contemporaries did not hold some view is a reason to think Cavendish did not hold it. After all, her account of matter as self-moving went against the grain, as did her claim that matter is eternal. Second, it seems tendentious to say that ascribing a libertarian account of freedom to Cavendish is “saddling” her with anything. The belief that humans had a power of “indifference” was a live option in Cavendish’s day, and was defended by Bishop Bramhall against Hobbes, first in person at an event at William Cavendish’s home in 1645, and then in a series of pamphlets in print in 1654.<sup>4</sup> We do not know if Margaret Cavendish was present at the original event, or read any of those pamphlets, but given the connection between the authors and her husband, it seems very likely that she knew of Hobbes’ and Bramhall’s views on freedom and necessity.

Marcy defends the compatibilist reading by (1) arguing that in Cavendish’s account of occasional causation, “the occasioning object is necessary for the effects in the principal cause” (p. 134; 115–116), and that for this reason, Cavendish’s account of occasional causation does not

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<sup>3</sup> Eileen O’Neill, “Influxus Physicus,” in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Stephen Nadler, pp. 27–55 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1993), at pp. 32–33, 37. For Plotinus, see the Second Ennead, third tractate, section 18. For Albert, O’Neill cites *Liber de Causis* I.4.2; see also *Liber de Causis* I.4.2 and 2.3.6. For Aquinas, see *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II.1.65.8.

<sup>4</sup> Vere Chappell, “Introduction,” in *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. xi.

require libertarian freedom, (2) arguing that the role of the occasioning object is to determine the direction of motion in another object, and (3) appealing to certain texts that seem to support ascribing determinism to Cavendish. After sketching the role of occasional causation in Cavendish's system, I will consider each of these strategies in turn.

In an instance of occasional causation, as Steven Nadler puts it, “one thing or state of affairs brings about an effect by inducing (but not through efficient causation . . .) another thing to exercise its own efficient causal power.”<sup>5</sup> Consider two objects A and B: A induces B to bring about an event *e*, so that the efficient and “primary” cause of the event is object B; the occasioning object A can be called a “secondary” cause. As Nadler has pointed out, the doctrine of occasionalism is just a special case of occasional causation, where the occasioned object B is God.<sup>6</sup> In Cavendish's account, however, God plays no role; both objects A and B are parts of nature.

Cases where Cavendish explicitly mentions occasional causation include fire causing something to turn to ash (OEP 97, 228; PL 311), wind causing an object to become hot or cold (OEP 120), infection by the plague (OEP 246), objects causing reflections in a mirror (PL 87), rarefaction and condensation (PL 121), a person's hand causing the motion of a ball the person throws (OEP 140), and a watchmaker causing the motion of a watch (PL 79, 100). In all these cases, the occasioning cause is some object whose motions are copied, or, as Cavendish says, “patterned out,” by the matter in the principal cause.

Cavendish also explains human sensory perception in terms of occasional causation: the presence of the external object occasions the matter in the sense organs to “pattern out,” or copy, the motions of the matter in the external object (GNP 5.9). She specifies that although all parts of nature can perceive, they probably do not all perceive through patterning (OEP 170), although she never suggests what non-patterning perception is like.

These passages occur in *Philosophical Letters, Observations, and Grounds*, which were all published after 1664. The doctrine of occasional causation does not actually occur in Cavendish's texts before that. It's worth noting that Eileen O'Neill traces Cavendish's language of “occasional causes” to the 1662 text *Oriatrike* by Jan Baptiste van Helmont, who was himself drawing on the Stoic concept of an antecedent triggering cause.<sup>7</sup> Cavendish examines van Helmont's text in some detail in *Philosophical Letters*.<sup>8</sup> Thus occasional causation plays an important role in Cavendish's works starting in 1664.

But what exactly is the role of the *occasioning object A* in Cavendish's system? As Marcy notes, in a case like the hand throwing a ball, the hand must play *some* role, although I have to confess that I don't quite understand how Marcy reasons here. Marcy asks, “if the external object, the hand in this case, plays no role in the causal process, how is Cavendish not committed to full occasionalism?” (p. 105). Now, Marcy does not specify what she means by “full occasionalism,” but she does say that Malebranche was a full occasionalist (p. 107). So presumably she means that if the external object

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<sup>5</sup> For this formulation, I follow Steven Nadler, *Occasionalism: Causation among the Cartesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Nadler, *Occasionalism*, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Eileen O'Neill, “Margaret Cavendish, Stoic Antecedent Causes, and Early Modern Occasional Causes,” *Review of Philosophy* 138 (2013): 311–36.

<sup>8</sup> O'Neill, “Margaret Cavendish,” p. 321.

played no role in Cavendish's account of causation, then Cavendish would have to hold a view like Malebranche's, where *God* is the only causal agent. Since Cavendish holds that God does not interact with the natural world (PL 10), this would clearly be a problematic view to ascribe to her. However, even in a fully occasionalist account, where God is the only causal agent, external object A cannot play *no* role in the causal process whereby object B acts. If object A plays *no* role at all, then there would be nothing to occasion God to act. If object A plays *no* role in Cavendish's account, then she could not be a "full occasionalist" at all. So it is clear that object A must play *some* role in Cavendish's account of occasional causation, as it must in any form of occasional causation.

What is the role of object A, then? According to Marcy's interpretation, Cavendish thinks object A determines the *direction* of the motion in object B (pp. 115–116). To make this case, Marcy draws on two passages where Cavendish explains how the sensory perception of external objects differs from the sensory-like experiences we have in dreams. In a passage in *Philosophical Letters*, Cavendish writes:

The sensitive corporeal motions having their proper organs, as Work-houses, in which they works some sorts of perceptions, those perceptions are most commonly made in those organs, and are double again; for the sensitive motions work either on the inside or on the outside of those organs; on the inside in Dreams, on the out-side awake. (PL 19, quoted in Lascano p, 115).

And in the second edition of *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, Cavendish says much the same thing:

The Difference between Sleeping and Waking, is, that in Sleep the Sensitive Animate matter and motions Work on the Inside of the Sensitive passages, as they do when as Awake on the Outside of the Sensitive passages, and when as the Sensitive motions Work on the Inside of the Sensitive passages, they Work by Rote, that is, they Work as to make Prints and Figures on the Inside of the Sensitive passages, without the Help or Patterns of Outward objects. (PPO 282,<sup>9</sup> quoted in Lascano, p. 115).

I want to raise some questions about, and some objections to, this interpretation. Marcy's explanation depends on claims Cavendish makes about the direction of motion specifically in the case of *human sensory perception*: when perception occurs, an external object A occasions the self-motion of the matter in object B, which is a sense organ, and that motion begins on the outside of the sense organ. For this to be a general account of occasional causation, it must also apply in other kinds of cases of occasional causation, such as the motion of a ball when a hand tosses it. I am curious to hear how Marcy thinks the account might generalize to other cases that do not involve sense-organs. In the ball example, it seems there are two options. One option is that the hand determines the direction of the ball's *trajectory*; but as far as I know, Cavendish makes no such claims.

Another option would model this case more closely on the human perception case. We have seen that Cavendish thinks human perception involves occasional causation, but Cavendish also seems to hold that all occasional causation involves some kind of perception; for example, the ball

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<sup>9</sup> This appears to be a greatly revised version of what Cavendish says in the first edition; see *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1655), p. 112–114.

perceives the hand's motion and then causes itself to move.<sup>10</sup> The scholarly consensus seems to be that since Cavendish assigns no role to either God or laws of nature that might otherwise explain why object A's action elicits any response from object B, she must think the occasioned object B perceives the action of the occasioning object A.<sup>11</sup> So, to return to Marcy's suggestion, perhaps what the ball determines is the direction of motion in the ball's *perception of the hand*, with that perception starting, as it were, from the outside of the ball and moving inwards. This would be in contrast to a case of the ball moving spontaneously, where the motion would begin on its inside, just as dreaming involves motion that begins inside the brain. Again, however, Cavendish doesn't say anything like this; her claim about the direction of motion occurs only in cases of human sensory perception, even though she thinks that there are other cases of occasional causation, like the hand throwing the ball. So, again, I'd like to hear how Marcy thinks the account of the direction of motion in human sensory perception could generalize to other cases.

But even if the account can generalize, I am not sure that it leaves Cavendish—or us—in any better position regarding the role of the external object in occasional causation. For if the occasioning object determines the direction of the motion, how does this determination come about? One possibility is a transfer model, whereby one object moving in a certain direction transfers its direction of motion to a second object. However, Cavendish explicitly rejects transfer models; that's part of what motivates her account of causation in terms of occasions rather than transfer. Another possibility is modeled on Descartes' account of how a certain state of the pineal gland occasions the mind. In that model, God has set things up so that an event of one kind in object A is necessarily followed by an event of another kind in object B.<sup>12</sup> But this would certainly fly in the face of the kind of naturalistic account Marcy wants to give. A third possibility is that Cavendish thinks that object B is fully determined by *itself*—its own previous state of motion and its nature, perhaps—to move in a certain direction when occasioned by object A. But if it is fully determined by itself, then it is *not* determined by object A, and so again there is no role for object A to play.

Now I want to turn to the issue of textual evidence. Regarding the two passages where Cavendish says that external objects cause a certain direction of motion in sensory perception, Marcy says that “we can conclude that in cases of proper perception the existence of the exterior occasional cause determines the direction of the causal process from exterior to interior” (pp. 116–17). But “determined” is Marcy's term; all Cavendish says in the two passages is that in perception,

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<sup>10</sup> This raises a problem. Seeing an apple (for example) is a case of the external object A, the apple, occasioning the sensitive matter in my eye (object B) to copy the motions of the apple. But if occasional causation *also* requires perception, then it seems that the matter in the eye (object B) must already perceive the apple (object A) in order to know how to respond, which seems to require that the eye can copy the motions of the apple before it actually perceives the apple; yet to copy the motions presupposes that it *does* perceive it. The solution, I think, is to recall that Cavendish says that only *human* perception proceeds through patterning. Thus although the human eye is occasioned by the apple to pattern out the motions of the apple, the eye “perceives” the motions of the apple in some other way that does not involve patterning and that presumably does not provide the human perceiver with the same kind of information that the perception-as-patterning provides.

<sup>11</sup> See Karen Detlefsen, “Reason and Freedom: Margaret Cavendish on the Order and Disorder of Nature,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 2007 (89): 157–91, at p. 168. O'Neill seems to concur with this, as she says that in the case of the hand throwing a ball, “the ball ‘perceives’ that the hand is about to so change its configuration that it is about to diminish its motion by n degrees” (Eileen O'Neill, “Introduction,” *Margaret Cavendish: Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], p. xxxiii).

<sup>12</sup> On Descartes' model, see Nadler, *Occasionalism*, pp. 38–43.

the motions work on the outside of the sense organ, not that they are determined to do. So I don't think these passages support the claim that occasional causation involves necessitation.

Marcy does point to two other passages to argue that Cavendish believes causation involves some kind of necessary connection, and thus to argue that Cavendish is a compatibilist. She quotes a passage from *Grounds* where Cavendish says this:

Though every Self-moving Part, or Corporeal Motion, have free-will to move after what manner they please; yet, by reason there can be no Single Parts, several Parts unite in one Action, and so there must be united Actions: for, though every particular Part may divide from particular Parts; yet those that divide from some, are *necessitated* to join with other Parts, at the same point of time of division . . . so that Division, and Composition or Joining, is as one and the same act. (GNP 6, quoted in Lascano, p. 142; emphasis added).

But I think this is very far from saying that the motion of one object A necessitates a particular motion, or particular direction of motion, in another object B. Cavendish is not asserting that there is a necessary connection between any particular cause and its effect so much as she is asserting a necessary consequence of the fact that the universe is a plenum. This fact does, as Marcy points out, constrain what parts of nature can do; they cannot separate themselves from other parts of nature (p. 142). But to say that there are external constraints on what an entity can do is consistent with holding that it has libertarian freedom. It simply means that its freedom is not "absolute," as it is in God. Thus, when Marcy quotes Cavendish as saying that "an absolute Free-will is not competent to any creature" (PL 505; quoted in Lascano, p. 142), this does not mean that Cavendish denies libertarian freedom to creatures; it just means that she denies *unconstrained* libertarian freedom to creatures. Creatures can will to do things that they nonetheless cannot carry out due to external impediments.<sup>13</sup>

Marcy also appeals to textual evidence that, she says, shows that Cavendish equates "occasioned" with "forced" or "necessitated" motions. Marcy points out, quite rightly, that Cavendish contrasts occasioned actions with voluntary actions (OEP 19, cited in Lascano, p. 139). She draws the further conclusion that occasioned actions must be forced from this passage, in which Cavendish objects to Hobbes' characterization of voluntary action as dependent on imagination:

I think, by your *Authors* leave, it doth imply a contradiction, to call them Voluntary Motions, and yet to say they are caused and depend upon our Imagination; for if the Imagination draws them this way, or that way, how can they be voluntary motions, being in a manner forced and necessitated to move according to Fancy or Imagination? (PL 45–46).

Marcy seems to read this passage as Cavendish saying that, since the actions that Hobbes says are voluntary are *actually* forced and necessitated by the imagination, they *cannot* be voluntary, because the voluntary is not forced or necessitated. And since Cavendish contrasts the voluntary with the occasioned, Marcy concludes that Cavendish thinks they must be forced and necessitated. However, the dialectic is important here. Cavendish is arguing that by Hobbes's own lights, he cannot call any actions voluntary if he *also* wants to say that they are forced or necessitated by the imagination. She is pointing out to Hobbes that a voluntary action cannot be forced or necessitated, but she is not herself saying that there are any forced or necessitated actions. Thus, although she *does* contrast occasioned actions with voluntary actions, this is not to say that she thinks occasioned actions are forced or necessitated. The same point can be made about what Cavendish says in the 1666 edition

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<sup>13</sup> See also Cavendish's claim that "though nature is self-moving, yet every part has not an absolute power, for many parts may overpower fewer" (PL 443). Again, this suggests that to say something lacks absolute power means that it can be constrained in its actions, not that it lacks libertarian power.



of *Observations*. She writes that motions that Hobbes says are voluntary “cannot properly be called voluntary, but are rather necessitated, at least occasioned by the Mind or Fancy; for I oppose voluntary actions to those that are occasioned or forced” (OEP 1666, Part 2 p. 55). It is Hobbes who should say that these actions are necessitated; her “at least” indicates that, for her part, she would say they are occasioned, *not* necessitated.<sup>14</sup> And the “or” in “occasioned or forced” is exclusive, not inclusive; if someone—like Hobbes—holds that there are forced actions, then the “voluntary” should be opposed to those. Her own view is “voluntary” is to be opposed to “occasioned.” But, again, that does not mean that she herself thinks that occasioned actions are forced.

Indeed, Cavendish actually says that in occasional causation, the occasioned object is *not* determined or forced to act in any particular way. Consider this passage from *Grounds*, where she is discussing how the rational matter can occasion the sensitive matter to move in certain ways, as when the mind has an idea of something to do and the sensitive matter in the body carried out that action. Cavendish writes,

Thus the Rational Corporeal Motions of the Mind, will occasion the Senses to watch, to work, or to sport and play. But mistake me not; for I do not mean, the Senses are bound to obey the Rational Designs; for, the Sensitive Corporeal Motions, have as much freedom of Self-moving, as the Rational: for, the Command of the Rational, and the Obedience of the Sensitive, is rather an Agreement, than a Constraint: for, in many cases, the Sensitive will not agree, and so not obey. (GNP 5.16)

This strongly suggests that occasional causation does *not* involve necessitation, force, or determination.

To sum up, I think the answer to Marcy’s question about the role of object A in occasional causation is simply that it is the *occasion* of object’s B action. However, object B is in no way *necessitated* to act by object A. If it were, A would seem to be *more* than a mere occasion. Furthermore, if Cavendish thought A determines, forces, or necessitates some aspect of B’s action, then it would be odd for her to use the language of “occasioning” at all; rather, we’d expect her to say that A is simply the *cause* of B’s action.

All of this is to argue that there is still good reason to think Cavendish ascribes libertarian freedom to the parts of nature in occasional causation. When object A acts, and object B perceives that action, it is up to object B how to respond. Since any given part of nature is an object of a certain natural kind, object B will know what constitutes a natural response to objects of type A, but it is not necessitated to act in that way. Parts of nature have what Bishop Bramhall called freedom of indifference. Anne Conway, too, says that creatures possess such indifference (Lascano, 143–44). So, if I am right about Cavendish, this is another similarity between their views.

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<sup>14</sup> I would give a similar interpretation of Cavendish’s discussion of Galileo’s the weight on the swinging line; when she says that “this motion of the line, although it is the line’s own motion, yet in respect of the exterior body that causes it to move that way, it may be called a forced, or rather an occasioned motion” (PL 443; quoted in Lascano, p. 116). From Galileo’s perspective, it is forced; from Cavendish’s, it is occasioned.

Critical Commentary on Lascano, *The Metaphysics of Margaret Cavendish and Anne Conway*  
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Lascano's book does a magnificent job of explaining two extraordinarily difficult metaphysical systems. I learned a great deal from it, and I'm glad to have had the chance to examine the book in detail. Still—as is perhaps unavoidable in our discipline—no sooner do we read a book than we find points of disagreement with its author. I'll get to these points of disagreement soon enough. However, in order to understand the significance of the places where I would dispute Lascano's interpretation, it will be useful to begin with some of our key points of agreement. In what follows, I'll focus entirely on her discussion of Anne Conway's philosophy—as I suspect our organizer predicted, that's the topic I'm most opinionated about.

On Lascano's interpretation, Conway's system is mainly oriented toward providing what we now call a theodicy, a way of solving the problem of evil without giving up the belief in a benevolent God. On Conway's view, theodicy requires at least three things. First, any suffering an individual undergoes must either be an appropriate punishment for some wrongdoing, or it must (eventually) serve to improve that individual (or both). Second, there cannot be any individuals who are damned, or punished without end. Third, every individual must be capable of salvation. No creature is so lowly or wicked that it can't in the long run become restored to a state of blessedness. With these three requirements in place, "the justice of God shines forth wonderfully, since it assigns the due and appropriate punishment for each kind and degree of wrongdoing nor does it demand hellfire and damnation for every single wicked sin and transgression" (P 6.8, CC 36).

Things get interesting when we look at how Conway enshrines these religious beliefs in her metaphysical picture. For example, what follows from the belief in universal salvation? Well, creatures had better not be bound to any particular natural kind, or else this would set limits on their capacity to participate in the good. If I were essentially a human, this would place limits on my potential "perfection or degree of goodness of being or essence" (P 6.6, CC 32). A horse had better be able to eventually become a human; a human had better be able to eventually become an angel. And of course the timeline here will need to be longer than the span of a single biological life: for a horse to become a human, the horse-parts have to be decomposed and reconstituted in new forms. So, starting from a religious doctrine of universal salvation, Conway infers that essentialism about species membership is false, and that some system of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls must be in place.

So far, all of this is stuff that, as I understand her, Lascano and I agree about. There's one further point of agreement that's worth noting, before we turn to disputes. A problem that fans of the transmigration of soul must address is: how do you keep track of which creature is which? Presumably if two horses die and become human beings, there is some fact of the matter as to which horse became which human. But what grounds that fact? Conway has set the bar particularly high, too. She can't endorse an account of identity in terms of an indivisible soul that is embodied now in one creature, now in another. She doesn't think that the soul is indivisible:

Just as a body, whether of a man or brute, is nothing but a countless multitude of bodies collected into one and arranged in a certain order, so the spirit of man or brute is also a countless multitude of spirits united in this body, and they have their order and government, such that one is the principal ruler, another has second place, and a third commands others below itself, and so on for the whole, just as in an army. (P 6.11/CC 39)

So if we address the identity question by saying that the soul remains the same across different lifetimes, we've just pushed the problem back a step. The soul is here depicted as a "principal" spirit that is itself composite. What then explains the identity of the soul itself across different lifetimes? Nor can Conway avail herself of anything like the Buddhist account of these matters. A traditional Buddhist approach rejects the notion of a soul-substance but allows for reincarnation on the basis of continuity between the consciousness of the dying individual and the consciousness of the newborn individual. This won't work for Conway, though, as she wants to allow for the reincarnation even of creatures which lack any consciousness at all in their present form. Even something like a fruit tree is subject to the "transmutation from one species to another" (P 6.7, CC 35).

All of this is to say that identity over time is a problem for Conway. One of the ideas that Lascano develops in her book is that, on Conway's view, facts about identity might themselves be grounded in moral considerations. She writes,

It is clear that Conway holds that what an individual is, as said above, is a bundle of spirits, and this is what persists through time. ... [W]e are a central spirit whose [internal] order at any time reflects the moral status of our former mode of existence and which continually expresses this moral status in new modes of being. (98)

I believe that what Lascano here refers to as "moral status" is what Conway variously calls a creature's "perfection" or "degree of goodness" (P 6.6, CC 32). How does this help us with the identity problem? Here's Lascano's suggestion:

We do not know how far we have fallen in the past or what heights we have achieved. But God, of course, knows all the changes of our central spirit, and each of us has an infinitely long path to our greater perfection and ultimate salvation. ... Each creature's path is unique and thus the changing order of their central spirit is also unique. Thus, we can say that the tracking of the central spirit's change of orderings, which are the direct causal result of the actions of the individual's previous life, secures an individual's identity over time. (99)

Instead of something like continuity of consciousness, then, we can appeal to the continuity of degrees of perfection. The choices we made in past lives must be intelligibly and justly connected to the degree of perfection we now enjoy. I want to flag how striking this is, philosophically. The problem of identity over time is usually taken to be a prerequisite to ascriptions of moral responsibility. How can we rightly blame you today for something done yesterday unless we can guarantee that it was you that did the crime? Here, however, the order of these issues has been reversed. What makes you identical to this or that past individual? Well, there is a unique chain of configurations of spirit connecting you to that past individual, such that the spiritual configuration at each link in the chain is the just reward or punishment of the actions undertaken in the previous configuration. I think Lascano is right about this, and that this solves an important problem for Conway that, to my mind, hadn't been satisfactorily resolved by previous scholarship on this issue.

The trick is to recognize that morality here isn't a phenomenon to be explained or justified; it's the basis for explaining or justifying everything else. Justice and moral responsibility are for Conway the hinges that everything else hangs upon. The best parts of Lascano's book—especially the points of agreement that I've been focusing on—are the parts that draw out and develop this idea. The parts that I found myself most deeply in disagreement with are the parts where the central significance of justice and morality seemed difficult to

reconcile with Lascano's interpretation. I'll focus on just three of these points of disagreement, in ascending order of importance (at least, according to me).

**First**, Lascano suggests that although the principal or central spirit of an individual never perishes, the spirits that compose the rest of an individual's being may cease to exist when that individual dies. She writes:

[S]oul and body are united by intermediary bodies or spirits. These intermediary bodies or spirits act as a medium between the more refined soul and the crasser body. When a creature dies, it is the intermediary spirits that cease to exist, thus freeing the spirit from its current body. (94)

So the picture is that, right now, you are a central spirit that is itself a bundle of infinitely many other spirits. That central spirit is presently organized or configured in a certain way (namely, as a human being) and it commands the body by means of intermediate spirits "that participate in both subtlety and crassness" (P 8.3, quoted on Lascano 94). (Indeed, the body itself is also composed of especially crass spirits.) But the interaction runs both ways, such that the central spirit isn't free to simply "emanate and fly off into other bodies" (P 8.5, *ibid.*): the intermediary spirits serve to implement the will of the central spirit, yet the central spirit is also attached to the intermediary spirits for as long as they stick around.

What happens when an individual dies? The intermediary spirits, on Lascano's view, "cease to exist," and this is what frees up the central spirit to begin forming a new and different body. I think the picture is going to have to be a little trickier than that. What after all was the motivation for holding that the central spirit doesn't cease to exist when an individual dies? As usual, it hinges on justice. Conway writes:

Hence it comes to pass that the soul of every human will persist as an eternally intact soul, one enduring without end, so that it may receive the proper fruits of its labors. The universal law of justice, which is inscribed upon every thing, requires this. (CP 7.4, quoted in Lascano 88).

This is in essence a transcendental argument. It is a condition on the possibility that the world is just that the soul must persist eternally, so that it can "receive the proper fruits of its labors." And the world *is* just, Conway thinks. Ergo, etc. But since humans aren't the only creatures with a shot at salvation, Conway extends the argument to *all* creatures:

For the same reason, it is evident that the central spirit of all the other creatures may remain indissoluble, and that although new central spirits are continuously formed in the production of things, no central spirit may dissolve, but instead it should be promoted upward or demoted downward in accord with its current dignity or indignity, and capacity or incapacity. (P 7.4, quoted in Lascano 89)

In other words, this is a world in which *no* creature *ever* ceases to exist. The conditions for the possibility of a just world are pretty demanding!

My first objection to Lascano, then, is that the picture of metempsychosis that we've just landed isn't consistent with the claim that there are any created spirits that cease to exist—even the intermediate spirits that bind the central spirit to the body, even the spirits that comprise the body itself. If we're going to give an account of what happens at bodily death to cause the central spirit to be separated from the body, it can't be that the intermediate spirits have ceased to exist. They, too, deserve to receive the proper fruits of their labors.

**Second**, Lascano at points endorses the view that, for Conway, individual creatures are modes of the whole of creation. She writes,

Conway holds that the individuals in the world are arrangements of the substance that constitutes creation. That is, while individual creatures are not modes of God, they are modes of creation. (45)

In other words, where Spinoza has the audacity to make individuals modes of God, Conway makes them modes of something else: the created world as a unified whole.

There are two problems with placing individual creatures as modes in Conway's ontology. The first is a theoretical difficulty that it creates. For Lascano not only wants to treat these individuals as modes of creation—she also them to be *parts* of the whole of creation: “all creation...according to Conway, is properly speaking only one body, of which individuals are only parts” (97). This, on Lascano's view, is what accounts for the interrelatedness of all creatures. She writes, “Creatures are all parts of one living body *and so* have relations of similarity and sympathy between them” (124, emphasis added). I think these latter two claims are exactly right. However, in what I take to be the standard usage of these terms in seventeenth century philosophy, the parts of a thing are not its modes, nor are its modes parts of it. The shape of this table is a mode of the table, but it isn't part of the table; and the legs of the table are parts of it, but they certainly aren't modifications of it. Parts and modes stand in different relations to their bearers: parts compose a whole, while modes inhere in a subject. So, unless Conway is departing from standard usage in a surprising way, it doesn't make sense to say that individual creatures are both modes of creation *and* parts of creation.

But there's another, more direct problem with taking individual creatures to be modes. If we take Conway's account of created substances at face value, it looks like individual creatures definitely fit the bill. It's worth briefly recounting, though I suspect most of this audience is intimately familiar already with the basic picture. Describing the “three kinds of being” (P 5.3, CC 24), Conway writes:

The first [i.e., God] is altogether immutable. The second [i.e., Christ] can only change toward the good, so that which is good by its very nature can become better. The third kind [i.e., created being] is that which, although it was good by its very nature, is nevertheless able to change from good to good as well as from good to evil. (P 5.3, CC 24)

The attribute that essentially characterizes the third kind of substance is *mutability with respect to the good*, a capacity to ascend or descend in one's degree of perfection. This is the essence of created being or substance—it is that which differentiates created substance from God and Christ. And when Conway gives examples of this sort of mutability, the moral subjects she chooses to illustrate her meaning are always particular created individuals. We've already seen this in discussing Conway's account of identity and persistence: the mutable moral subjects she describes are such things as humans and horses and angels and fruit trees. Strange if these creatures should each possess the essential attribute of a created substance without being created substances! Yet of course if they *are* substances, they cannot also be modes. And so, although I agree with the rest of Lascano's account of the identity and persistence of individual creatures—indeed, *because* I agree with the rest of her account—I don't find myself persuaded that individual creatures are modes of creation.

**Third**, Lascano takes Conway to hold that the whole of creation is ontologically prior to its parts. Although I think this is my most significant disagreement with Lascano, I'll try to be brief because my dispute on this point is already on record (in Grey 2023; some of what follows is cribbed from that article). And also because I suspect those of us steeped in Conway are getting a bit tired of the monism debate. Nevertheless, here we are. Suppose for the sake of

argument that the whole of creation is ontologically prior to the individual creatures that are its parts. What does “priority” actually mean, here? Well, one thing we can say is that priority requires asymmetrical dependence: it must be the case that the individual creatures depend on the whole of creation, while the whole does not depend on those individual creatures. I say that there’s no form of ontological dependence that satisfies this requirement.

The first candidate form of dependence is *necessary existential dependence*: the whole created world could exist without any particular creature, but no particular creature could exist without the whole created world. This is false, on Conway’s view. On her view, “God is a necessary agent and that he does everything he can do” (CC 3.4, 16). After all, she argues, God “must do whatever he does to and for his creatures since his infinite wisdom, goodness, and justice are a law to him which cannot be superseded” (CC 3.2, 16). It follows from this claim that if it is possible of a creature to exist, then it is necessary for that creature to exist.<sup>1</sup> So, if any particular created individual exists, then it necessarily exists; thus it is false that the whole created world could exist without that particular creature.

The other candidate to consider is *essential dependence*, such that the essence or being of this or that creature depends asymmetrically on the essence or being of the whole created world. Conway doesn’t seem to accept this view either. We’ve already seen that the essence of a creature is its mutability with respect to the good. So, creatures are essentially dependent upon the good: we cannot specify their nature without some reference to the good. Thus, if goodness is understood in terms of similarity to God, as Sarah Hutton (2018) has suggested, the essence of a created individual depends on the essence of God. However, there does not seem to be any similar dependence between the essence of created individuals and that of the whole created world. Created individuals receive their nature from God, working through Christ, who is “the true mediator between God and his creatures” (CC 5.4, 26; L 84) and “the most excellent creature produced outside of God” (ibid.) Adding a further chain of mediation here (from Christ, to the whole of creation, to this or that individual creature) seems neither necessary nor desirable, given this picture.

So, in short, the ontological priority of creation would require that creation is prior in either existence or essence to created individuals; but this just doesn’t seem to be the case, on Conway’s view.

That being said, I absolutely concede that Conway has breathtakingly strong views about the interrelatedness of all creatures. She writes:

All creatures, from the highest all the way to the lowest are inseparably united to one another by the subtler mediating parts which are interspersed between them and which are the emanations from one creature into another in virtue of which they can act upon each other all the way up to a great distance. This is the foundation of the sympathy and antipathy that occurs in creatures. (P 3.10, quoted by Lascano, p. 124)

This is central to Conway’s view of the created world, and it would be folly to deny it. But the claim that all creatures are intimately connected in this way is entirely distinct from priority monism, the claim that the whole of creation is prior to the particular creatures that make it up. The holistic view of creation advances no priority claim whatsoever. In fact, Conway here seems

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<sup>1</sup> Argument: Suppose the proposition “Peter exists” is possible but not actually true. If it is possible that Peter exists, then God can create Peter. However, as the passages just quoted indicate, Conway holds that if God can create something, he must create it. So, if God can create Peter, then he must do so—that is, it is necessary that Peter exists. This line of reasoning generalizes to any created individual.

to *explicitly deny* the asymmetry that would be required by priority monism: the lowest is inseparably united to the highest, but the highest is also inseparably united to the lowest.

Alright, alright—I couldn't keep the discussion of monism brief after all. Let me wrap this up.

If you're here, part of what you're interested in is what the current state of the discourse is on Cavendish and Conway, and what contribution Lascano's book makes to it. You (the audience) and I (the critic) are sort of at cross-purposes, in that respect. I'm trying to highlight the stuff I think is wrong about the book, and you're here trying to find out what's good about it. So let me close by saying that the book is an important contribution to the scholarship on Cavendish and Conway, and that it is well worth your time and effort if you haven't read it yet. A dismal lesson of our discipline is that not every book you disagree with is worth responding to or engaging with in a public forum. Lascano's book, by contrast, is *definitely* worth engaging with, even if you disagree with certain of the details. It sets out a thorough, textually grounded, systematic interpretation of Cavendish and Conway. And so I hope my critical remarks serve to indicate not only my reasons for disputing certain points, but also my esteem both for the book and for its author.

Author Meets Critics: *The Metaphysics of Margaret Cavendish and Anne Conway:  
Monism, Vitalism, and Self-Motion*  
Marcy P. Lascano  
Eastern APA, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

First, I want to thank Julia Jorati for organizing this session, and Marleen for chairing it. Of course, I am most grateful to Deborah and John participating in the session, carefully reading the book, and providing thoughtful criticisms.

Second, I want to note that I finished the manuscript and turned it in to Oxford (on time) on December 1, 2021. The final draft was written during the pandemic when I had a fellowship. I was lucky to have that time. However, the pandemic also meant all kinds of shortages—including printing time, editor, and paper shortages. Thus, the book took a bit longer than I expected to reach publication. All this is to say that if your article or book chapter on Cavendish or Conway was published after, say, May 2021, I did not read it before the submission of the manuscript. You must stop reading at some point. I have likely read your paper/book chapter since then.

### ***God and Self-Knowledge***

So, now I will try to briefly answer some of Deborah's worries. Her first worry is about how I understand Cavendish's claim that all of nature knows that something above nature exists and that is God. Deborah has argued in her wonderful book, *The Well-Ordered Universe*, and elsewhere that this knowledge must be part of creatures' self-knowledge.

I have a different read of self-knowledge and of how creatures know of God. As for self-knowledge, here is what I say in the book:

... every portion of matter has what she calls "self-knowledge." This is the knowledge that portions of matter have of their own current configuration. Since all portions of matter can form any type of figure, each portion must know what figure it currently has in order to know how it can move and what sort of powers it has in its current configuration. This knowledge is innate in matter and changes when figures change. Cavendish holds that "self-knowledge is the ground and principle of all particular knowledges" (OEP 138). Michaelian claims that "the nature of the priority of self-knowledge over perception remains obscure." However, I believe that Cavendish simply means that self-knowledge is necessary for the perceptive abilities of individuals. If a portion of matter is currently configured as a human eye, its self-knowledge will reveal its current perceptive abilities as determined by its interior motions, and these will be different from the perceptive abilities of a portion of matter that is currently configured as a cat's eye. Cavendish's account of self-knowledge does the work of explaining how it is that a portion of matter that can be at one time a human eye and at another time a cat eye, can know what it is and how it is moving at each of those different times. (Lascano 76-77)

Every part and particle has a particular and finite self-motion and self-knowledge, by which it knows itself, and its own actions, and perceives also other parts and actions; which latter is properly called perception; not as if there were two different principles of knowledge in every particular creature or part of nature; but they are two different acts of one and the same interior and inherent self-knowledge, which is a part of nature's infinite self-knowledge. (OEP 138)

Given that this is all that I think self-knowledge is Deborah worries that I cannot account for our inherent and innate knowledge of God. So how do I do this? I think that what enables creatures to know there is something above nature is ordinary rational knowledge. Deborah notes that "Cavendish characterizes knowledge of God's existence as a 'conception' (OEP 17), indicating that rational matter creates this notion on its own, without patterning anything external.<sup>1</sup> But Deborah worries that this would mean that it would imply that knowledge of

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<sup>1</sup> However, Cavendish also says: "But some may say, that a corporeal may have a conception, although not a perception of an immaterial. I answer, that a corporeal cannot have a conception of that which in nature is not a body." (OEP 89)



God is akin to mere fancy. But under rational knowledge Cavendish also includes inferences from effects to causes. And since rational knowledge is innate and inherent as it is a constituent degree of matter, it seems like the best option for our knowledge of God's existence. Moreover, Cavendish seems to hold that we come by knowledge of God's existence through reasoning from effects to causes. She writes,

And so God, being an infinite and eternal God, hath an infinite and eternal worship; for every part conceiving something about itself, and above its nature, worships that supreme, either through fear, or love, or both; yet knows not what the supreme being is. *But to conclude, my opinion is, that, as the sensitive perception knows some of the other parts of nature by their effects; so the rational perceives some effects of the omnipotent power of God; which effects are perceptible by finite creatures, but not his infinite nature, nor essence, nor the cause of his infiniteness and omnipotency.* Thus, although God's power may be perceived by nature's parts; yet what God is, cannot be known by any part: And nature being composable, there is a general acknowledgment of God in all her parts, but being also dividable, it is the cause there are particular religions and opinions of God, and of his divine worship and adoration. (OEP 90, emphasis added)<sup>2</sup>

because the rational part is the subtlest, purest, finest, and highest degree of matter; it is most conformable to truth, that it has also the highest and greatest knowledge of God, as far as a natural part can have; for God being immaterial, it cannot properly be said, that sense can have a perception of him, by reason he is not subject to the sensitive perception of any creature, or part of nature; and therefore all the knowledge which natural creatures can have of God, must be inherent in every part of nature; and the perceptions which we have of the effects of nature, may lead us to some conceptions of that supernatural, infinite, and incomprehensible deity, not what it is in its essence or nature, but that it is existent, and that nature has a dependence upon it, as an eternal servant has upon an eternal master. (OEP 17)

I think it is hard to completely resolve issues about God in Cavendish's works. She seems to care about her philosophical views being inconsistent with the church's views, and with saying that there is something above nature. But she doesn't seem to want to talk about theological issues in her natural philosophy. Of course, that doesn't mean she does not do it! This is in line with Hobbes, Descartes, and others.

### ***Occasional Causation and Human freedom.***

In the book I criticize Karen Delefsen's claims about freedom in Cavendish. Deborah has endorsed Detlefsen's views. Detlefsen writes,

Principal causes that are encouraged to act in a specific way by occasional causes are free, of course, for the following reasons: the constraint exercised is neither necessary nor sufficient for the action to occur; the principal cause is self-moved; and the principal cause acts in accordance with its own reasons. But the occasional cause exercises some constraining influence— a moral influence— over the actions of the principal cause. (Detlefsen, "Atomism, Monism, and Causation," 234.)

So, in the book, I argue that occasional causes are not free in that the entire cause—the hand and the ball—is sufficient for the action, that the only principal cause is matter, not individual creatures, and that Cavendish never talks about moral influences. Deborah provides a brief summary of my views about the role of the ball in the hands' motion in Cavendish's version of occasional causation. I will explain how I think of these issues.

First, I do think that the ball patterns the hand's exterior motions which, along with the interior nature of the ball, determines the motion of the ball. But Deborah claims that "Cavendish doesn't say this; her claim about the direction of motion occurs only in cases of human sensory perception, so I'm not sure how Marcy thinks that account generalizes to other cases." I think that Cavendish holds that perception is inseparably involved in all actions. She writes,

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<sup>2</sup> When Cavendish talks about God's attributes, I think she is just referring to the common notions of them.

In short, I desire it may be observed, 1. That there is perception in every action, but not that every perception is made by patterning. 2. That all self-moving parts are perceptive. 3. That perception, perceptive knowledge, and exterior knowledge, are all one thing, and that I take them indifferently. 4. That all voluntary actions, both of sense and reason, are made by perceptive parts; and therefore, when I make a distinguishment between voluntary actions, and perceptions, I mean the perceptions of a composed figure, and not the particular perceptive knowledges between those parts that join in the act of such perceptions, or in the making of voluntary figures. (OEP 173, see 172 for more details)

That said, perception *properly so called* does not include the actions done by rote, which are the actions of dreaming, imagining, etc. So, why talk about this? Here is what I say in the book:

Cavendish's accounts of dreaming are usually given in contrast to cases of proper perception, in which the exterior object is the occasion of the patterning of the exterior parts of our sensory organs, which information is the *direction* of the causal process from exterior to interior. Without the occasional cause, the figurative motions, if any, would move in a different direction—from the brain to the inside of the sense organs. In this way, we can claim that *the occasional cause does do something*. It does affect the perceiver, as it brings about a direction of causality within the perceiver that would not occur if it were absent. If the external object does determine the direction of causation, it would seem that the individual is not completely self-determining with respect to their perceptions. Although it is still true that the perceptive motions in the perceiver's sensory organs and mind are self-motions, these motions are affected by the presence or absence of the exterior object. Moreover, this explains why Cavendish calls occasioned action "necessary" or "forced." For example, she writes, "That exterior body is the occasion that it moves after such a manner or way, and therefore this motion of the line, although it is the lines own motion, yet in respect of the exterior body that causes it to move that way, it may be called a forced, or rather an occasioned motion" (PL 443). Lascano 116-117.

I think that Cavendish is a naïve realist with respect to perception. Evidence for this view is that Cavendish believes that in cases of perception, whenever we are presented with external objects and our senses are working regularly, we pattern those object *as they are*.<sup>3</sup> Cavendish holds that the entire cause of involves both the perceiver and the external object. If this is so then it also seems we are necessitated with respect to what we perceive. Finally, I mention the fact that parts must join other parts as another example of the ways in which parts of nature are constrained.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Spirits Never Perish***

Now to John and Conway. John's first disagreement is that when an individual dies it is not the case that the intermediary spirits "cease to exist." This is easy—it is a mistake that I wish I had caught in the proofreading. Those spirits cease to be part of that individual, but of course they never go out of existence. So, really no disagreement! If Oxford chooses to make a paperback, I will remedy this.

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<sup>3</sup> Consider the veridical experiences involved in cases where you genuinely perceive objects as they are. ... the naive realists hold that such experiences are, at least in part, direct presentations of ordinary objects. ... the naive realist holds that things appear a certain way to you because you are directly presented with aspects of the world, and ... things appear white to you, because you are directly presented with some white [object]. The character of your experience is explained by an actual instance of whiteness manifesting itself in experience.

Crane, Tim and Craig French, "The Problem of Perception", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/perception-problem/>>.

<sup>4</sup> A note on Deborah's note nine:

*Q. 14. How is it possible that any perception of outward objects, can be made by patterning, since patterning doth follow perception? for, how can anyone pattern out that which he has no perception of?*

I answer: Natural actions are not like artificial; for art is but gross and dull in comparison to nature: and, although I allege the comparison of a painter, yet is it but to make my meaning more intelligible to weaker capacities: for, though a painter must see or know first what he intends to draw or copy out; yet the natural perception of exterior objects is not altogether after the same manner; but, *in those perceptions which are made by patterning, the action of patterning, and the perception, are one and the same*. (OEP 178, emphasis added)

### *Modes are said in Many Ways*

This brings us to the hard stuff in Conway. I start with modes. Conway often refers to the third substance as *Creature* or *Creation* in the singular. Here are a couple of examples: “Nature or Creature” (P 3.9) and “Nature itself, i.e. the Creation” (*Creatura*) (P 9.2). I think this language is not accidental. But more importantly, I think that Conway thinks that unity is important. When she considers the unity of God and the unity of Christ, she sees that Creature or Creation also must be a unity. She writes,

just as God is one and does not have two, three, or more distinct substances in himself, and just as Christ is one simple Christ and does not have many distinct substances in him (namely, in as much as he is heavenly man or Adam, first among everything), so too and in like manner, the creature, or the whole of creation, should be in its species one substance or essence even though it may comprehend many individuals, collected under their own subordinate species, that are modally but not substantially or essentially distinct from one another. (P 6.4)

Modes need not *inhere* in substance; they do however determine (or complete) substance. That is, substance is undetermined without modes. I prefer to think of them this way. Creation is a particular way because the modes determine it in a certain way. In addition, modes are things (*res*) and Conway often refers to things acting and doing. I also think that when creatures are bad or sin, it is correct to say that creation gets worse. After all Conway reminds us that this world was once so bad that God destroyed it with water, and that it is supposed to eventually end in fire. In addition, I don't think that my way of thinking of modes prevents them from also being parts. Also, an account of modes that Conway would have been familiar with counts the arrangement of parts as a mode:

Perception, volition, and all the modes both of perceiving and of willing are referred to thinking substances. To extended substance belong size (that is, extension itself in length, breadth, and depth) shape, motion, position of its parts, their divisibility, and the like. Descartes *Principles* I.48<sup>5</sup>

Of course, Conway holds that there are other more important features of bodies and spirits than Descartes allows, but she certainly was aware of his views with respect to modes.

### *What kind of Monist is Anne Conway?*

Okay, now that thing we don't want to spend more time on—monism or pluralism? I first want to say that I really like John's paper (“Anne Conway's Ontology of Creation: A Pluralist Interpretation”) and I think that he makes a strong case for pluralism. That said, let me beg to differ.

I will take a kind of ontological dependence relation. Why? Well, it is the essence of creatures to be *mutable* with respect to good *and evil*. So, to say that the essence of creatures depends on goodness alone seems to be missing something. Admittedly, we probably don't want it to be the case that creatures are evil or dependent on evil. So, I want to say that the dependency goes this way: Creatures are modes and as modes they are dependent on their underlying substance to exist. This substance, Creation, is the basic concrete entity. While Creation is incomplete without modes, it is not dependent upon the modes for its existence. The modes are the derivative entities. That is the asymmetry.<sup>6</sup>

Thanks for listening!

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<sup>5</sup> This is quoted in Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 271. Pasnau gives an extensive history of accidents and modes. He also explains how substance in the early modern period becomes the object of skepticism due in part to the fact that it is incomplete without its modalities.

<sup>6</sup> There are other asymmetries in Conway's philosophy. For instance, we know that Conway thinks there is an asymmetry between good and evil in that evil is bounded whereas goodness is infinite.