The concept of sympathy plays an increasingly important role in philosophy over the course of the seventeenth century. In this chapter, I explore some of the most prominent debates about the concept in the middle decades of the century and then use this material to display its significance in the metaphysical systems of G. W. Leibniz and Anne Conway. Both philosophers are committed to universal sympathy, according to which all creatures correspond sympathetically to all the others. Although this is primarily a metaphysical claim, it has moral implications.¹

Section 1 offers an overview of the notion of sympathy in the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the century, sympathy is an “occult

¹ Eric Schliesser has been enormously helpful in designing the arc of this volume and making fine comments on my chapter. The other contributors have helped me think more clearly about sympathy. I would also like to thank the Herzog August Bibliothek and the American Academy in Rome for support during the time I was working on this project.
power” treated mostly by thinkers on the periphery of philosophy. During the second half of the century, it becomes a central component of mainstream philosophical systems. Section 2 discusses Stoic ideas about sympathy extant in the period and displays how three seventeenth-century thinkers use them. Section 3 turns to Platonist doctrines that constitute some of the raw materials for thinking about sympathy and articulates two kinds of relations: sympathy and enhanced sympathy. Section 4 displays the important role sympathy plays in the thought of G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716). Leibniz transforms the traditional notion into a central doctrine in one of the most significant metaphysical systems in the history of philosophy. Section 5 turns to the thought of the English Platonist Anne Conway (1631–79). Conway uses enhanced sympathy to create a metaphysics of striking originality. She goes beyond Leibniz to affix a moral aspect to universal sympathy. Finally, section 6 offers some concluding remarks about the concept’s arc in the century.

1. Understanding the Occult

In 1600, Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in the Campo de’ Fiori in Rome. The public execution of a prominent philosopher and cosmologist exemplifies the struggles and passions that philosophical ideas in the period provoked. By 1600, the Protestant reformers had splintered into warring factions and the counter-reformation was well under way. Europe was embroiled in political instability, religious chaos, and random acts of violence. Passionate disagreements extended to debates about the interconnections among the parts of the world. Many philosophers and students of nature assumed that worldly parts shared a sympathetic connection, although there were diverse ways of referring to, describing, and explaining these interconnections. In chapter 3 of this volume, Ann Moyer notes the history of the word *sympathia* and its cognates in the Renaissance, and displays the wide range of views about the “sympathetic” or “friendly” powers of nature. The common assumption underlying these diverse views is that there is, in the words of one
prominent thinker, “a certain affinity of Nature.” The disagreements arose in attempting to describe and explain this affinity.

By 1700, Leibniz’s philosophy of preestablished harmony was known throughout Europe and Isaac Newton’s *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* of 1687 was changing the course of science. Seventeenth-century views about sympathy influenced this groundbreaking work. The path from Renaissance notions of sympathy as a mysterious and magical power to something that could be rendered with logical and mathematical precision is more complicated than can be given here, but some of the most prominent steps along the way are as follows.

The sixteenth century was full of thoughtful people who believed in various forms of sympathetic magic and hidden forces. As Moyer shows, a wide array of medical doctors and natural philosophers took there to be phenomena whose explanations demanded a “sympathy,” “friendship,” or “affinity” among parts of the world. Important fifteenth-century thinkers like Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola promote the idea that bodies can be manipulated to “influence” one another “at a distance.” Although some considered the manipulation of the hidden or occult powers of nature to be demonic, many assumed that a thorough familiarity with such powers was a means to benefit humankind and discover, in Pico’s words, the “miracles concealed in the recesses of the world.”

Debates about sympathy as an “occult power” persist through the seventeenth century and continue to include questions about magic and the

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2 Giambattista della Porta, *Natural Magick* (London: Thomas Young and Samuel Speed, 1648), 1.9, 13; quoted in chapter 3.

3 This is a controversial claim for which I will not argue here.

4 See Giuseppe Gerbino’s Reflection in this volume, which discusses the fascinating case of “sympathetic resonance” as evidence of “a hidden force, sympathy, operating throughout nature and binding the universe in all its parts.” Particularly relevant here is the association assumed between love and sympathy.

dangers of manipulating such hidden forces. Many consider it important to distinguish natural from supernatural powers and to identify the kind of magic involved in their manipulations. For some, because sympathetic powers are supernatural, they defy understanding and even proper description. For others, because they are natural, their effects allow for study and careful description, even though their underlying cause might lie beyond what is “intelligible.” A widely used philosophical lexicon published in 1613 distinguishes between “natural magic,” which marks the “perfection” of philosophy, and “superstitious magic,” which involves “incantations and impure spirits” and is “diabolical.” The same lexicon defines the occult as what is “hidden or concealed from either sense or intellect or both.” Given our concerns, the most important sense of the term “occult” in the period is to designate natural powers that, with the right training, humans can learn to manipulate for their benefit. Leibniz, in his typical clear-headed fashion, distinguishes between an occult power whose cause is unknown and one whose “effect . . . can never become intelligible.” The latter must be avoided in serious philosophy.

In short, well into the seventeenth century, there is widespread disagreement about whether sympathetic powers afford careful exploration and articulation or defy understanding altogether.

Beginning in the early seventeenth century and lasting for several decades, the most prominent site for such debates about these issues is a medical phenomenon, “the power of sympathy,” on which hundreds of pages were written by learned experimenters and thoughtful physicians. It was widely agreed that an effective way to treat a wound was to apply a salve or powder (usually made out of copper sulfate) to an object that

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6 As the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry on magic notes, to study and manipulate natural powers in the period were often considered “legitimate and necessary fields of enquiry.” But some manipulation, especially of “supernatural” powers, was considered dangerous or “demonic.” See *OED* (Oxford University Press, 2013, http://www.oed.com).


contained blood from the wound (say, the sword that caused the wound or a bandage that had bound it). Well-respected medical doctors confirmed the healing powers of the treatment and then debated how best to describe the “sympathetic bond” between the wound and the blood to which the salve was applied. Rudolph Goclenius (1572–1628), a prominent Protestant professor of Marburg, promoted the use of the treatment, which he described as “natural magic,” operating through sympathy.\textsuperscript{10} In response, a Jesuit and professor of Würzburg and Mainz, Jean Roberti (1569–1651), warned against using any form of magic since it involved the “deceitful work” of the devil with whom practitioners were clearly in cahoots.\textsuperscript{11}

Jan Baptiste van Helmont (1580–1644), an influential Flemish physician and “chemist,” helps to shift the discussion in 1621 with the publication of \textit{On the Magnetic Curing of Wounds}, in which he insists that the debate between Goclenius and thinkers like Roberti, “who would involve demons,” could be easily resolved: all that was needed was to explain thoroughly the salve’s healing powers and make them “open to understanding.”\textsuperscript{12} Van Helmont offers a neat account of the debate and its history. According to him, the well-known physician and cosmologist Paracelsus (1493–1541) showed “sympathy to be natural” and so paved the way for a fully naturalistic account of this feature of the world.\textsuperscript{13} Anyone who wants “to explain sympathy and antipathy” in terms of demonic powers has simply misunderstood what it means to be natural. When doctors “manipulate” these “vitalities,” they are merely using their understanding of powers in God’s world. Because the effects of these vital forces sometimes seem “paradoxical,” they are often attributed to the devil. In fact, they result from a vitality that “has scattered itself

\textsuperscript{10} Goclenius wrote a number of popular books, including the \textit{Lexicon Philosophicum} of 1613.

\textsuperscript{11} For more on this debate, see Walter Pagel, \textit{Joan Baptista Van Helmont: Reformer of Science and Medicine} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 8–9.

\textsuperscript{12} Jan Baptiste van Helmont, \textit{De magnetica vulnerum curazione}, in \textit{Opera omnia} (Frankfurt: Johann Justus Erythropolis, 1632), §105–6.

\textsuperscript{13} For more on Paracelsus, the name given to Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, see chapter 3.
around” so that “all things” mutually “feel, move, are related, etc.”14 I will say more about Van Helmont’s views about vitality, power, and sympathy in the next section. The main point now is that he represents a shift in the seventeenth century to an attempt to offer an account of sympathetic powers that is thoroughgoing enough to be understood by all.

The “powder of sympathy” as a medical treatment and philosophical conundrum persisted at least through the 1660s. One of the most widely known English philosophers of the seventeenth century, Kenelm Digby, gave an account of the treatment in terms consistent with the new mechanical philosophy.15 According to the physical model offered by philosophers like Descartes, Hobbes, Gassendi, and Digby, all the features of the corporeal world could be explained in terms of corporeal components and their motions.16 In his Two Treatises of 1644, Digby offers an eclectic metaphysics based on a radical reinterpretation of Aristotle’s theory of elements and an atomistic account of nature.17 Having studied medicine and experimented with the healing powers of “the

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16 The young Leibniz places Digby alongside Galileo, Gassendi, Descartes, and Hobbes as a prominent “new philosopher.” References to Leibniz’s work in this chapter are mostly to *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (Darmstadt: Berlin Academy, 1923–), cited by series, volume, and page number; hereafter “A.” A standard English edition is *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, trans. Leroy E. Loemker, 2nd ed. (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1970); hereafter “L.” The reference here is to A VI 1.489–90; L 110.

17 Kenelm Digby, *Two Treatises: In the one of which, the Nature of Bodies, in the other, the Nature of Mans Soul; Is Looked into; In the Way of Discovery, of the Immortality of Reasonable Souls* (Paris: Gilles Blaziot), 1644. For a discussion of Digby and some of his views, see my *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, 105–7, 109–11.
powder of sympathy,” Digby became known throughout Europe for his atomistic explanation of sympathy. According to his account, because “the atoms of blood” on the object treated with the powder will seek their “proper source and original root” and because the powder “cannot choose but make the same voyage together with the atoms of blood,” the power will find “the proper source and original root whence they [the atoms of blood] issue” and “will joyntly be imbibed together within all the corners, fibres, and orifices of the Veins which lye open about the wound” so that the wound “must of necessity be refresht, and in fine imperceptibly cured.”18 Digby insists that instead of resigning ourselves to a “hidden Secret of Nature” or “some occult property,” it is possible to “examine the business, as it ought to be, observing all that is done.”19 If we are properly careful in our observations, then “we need not have recourse to a Demon or Angel,”20 but rather can grasp the “profound and hidden mysteries of Nature.” To discern the workings of sympathy, we need only “take the pains to discover them.”21

The main conclusion to draw from this section is that the middle decades of the seventeenth century witness a shift in discussions about the “sympathetic” or “friendly” powers in nature. Although accounts involving occult forces and demons persist, physicians and philosophers increasingly seek a detailed account of the cause and nature of these powers. They begin, in other words, to attempt to offer a metaphysical grounding for phenomena traditionally associated with occult sympathetic forces.

2. Universal Sympathy: Early Modern Stoicism

The primary goal of this section is to display the significance of Stoicism as a source of ideas for those seventeenth-century thinkers attempting to
create a systematic account of universal sympathy. Before turning to Stoicism, however, it will be helpful to note briefly one of the main philosophical difficulties that Stoic notions of sympathy were supposed to help solve. With the dismantling of the Ptolemaic universe and the promotion of new conceptions of the cosmos, as suggested by Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) and others, the need to rethink the forces in God’s world seemed increasingly obvious. The slow demise of Aristotelian physics coupled with the failure of the mechanical philosophers to ground their new physics in a satisfactory metaphysics encouraged many in the second half of the century to rethink the vital powers in nature. The 1650s and 1660s saw an explosion of creative ways of describing and explaining natural activity. The need to reconsider the activity and interrelations among natural things partly motivates the thought of prominent thinkers like Spinoza, Leibniz, and Newton as well as a long list of lesser known philosophers, including Henry More, Margaret Cavendish, Erhard Weigel, Nicolas Malebranche, and Anne Conway. Some of these thinkers found inspiration in the notion of sympathy, and many turned to Stoicism as a source for ideas about sympathetic powers.

In discussing early modern Stoicism, it is important to distinguish between Stoic ideas inherited from medieval Christianity and those introduced in the Renaissance. As one scholar puts it, ancient Stoicism was “absorbed into the complex amalgam of Judaic and Greek teaching that became Christian theology and ethics…. Of all the ancient philosophies, Stoicism has probably had the most diffused but also the least explicit and adequately acknowledged influence on western thought.”


Stoic ideas were part of the intellectual materials that early modern Europe inherited from medieval theism. When the term “sympathy” and its cognates gained common currency in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they could comfortably apply to long familiar ideas.

The history of Stoic metaphysics in the first half of the seventeenth century has yet to be written, but two things are clear. With the rediscovery of Stoic writings in the Renaissance, new raw materials were available and a careful inventory of Stoic metaphysical views became possible for the first time in hundreds of years. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed an increasing fascination with Stoicism as a philosophical source set against Aristotelianism and Platonism. Originally this interest focused on the moral philosophy of thinkers like Seneca and Epictetus. But in 1604, Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), the most prominent early modern promoter of Stoicism, published what one scholar has called “the first systematic attempt to gather together the fragments of the Stoics.”25 The result of Lipsius’s scholarly work led to a much better understanding of Stoic metaphysics and a clearer sense that, as Lipsius noted, Stoic ethics and metaphysics are inseparable. The effects of this important publication, however, were probably not what its author intended: Stoic metaphysical doctrines were so clearly unorthodox that there was a rising tide of disapproval.26 By the 1670s, condemnations became international and vitriolic.27 For example, the English Platonist Ralph Cudworth and the important German Aristotelian Jakob Thomasius are willing to list the dangers of


27 As protests increased about the dangers of Spinoza’s thought, Spinoza was increasingly branded a Stoic so that, in Sellers’s words, “the fate of Stoicism became intertwined” with the fate of Spinozism. See Sellers, “Is God a Mindless Vegetable?,” 124.
Stoic metaphysics. In his *True Intellectual System of the Universe* of 1678, Cudworth offers a sustained critique of Stoic philosophy. In a lengthy book published in 1676 on the dangers of Stoic philosophy, Leibniz’s mentor, Thomasius, presents a detailed comparison of the views of Aristotelians, Platonists, and Stoics on a number of points, emphasizing the false and dangerous views of the Stoics. Unsurprisingly, Leibniz is thoroughly familiar with Stoic ethics and metaphysics. Although he applauds some of their ideas, he rejects their claims that “God is the soul of the world or, if you wish, the primary power of the world” resulting in “a blind necessity” that “determines him to act.”

In other words, as Stoic metaphysical views became increasingly understood in the seventeenth century, more and more thinkers rejected their views as too heterodox. Few philosophers explicitly align themselves with Stoic metaphysics after the middle part of the period, although many combine Stoic ideas with those of other schools to explain the sympathetic powers of nature. It is virtually impossible to identify specific Stoic doctrines that directly influenced the development of seventeenth-century treatments of sympathy because, as we will see, they are so often combined with ideas from Platonism. In the remainder of this section, I survey the thought of three seventeenth-century philosophers who are particularly interested in sympathy, frequently refer to the Stoics, and propose ideas that seem indebted to Stoicism.

Jan Baptiste Van Helmont wrote a series of treatises in the first half of the seventeenth century that range from mystical to medical and

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28 See Sellers, “Is God a Mindless Vegetable?” But it is important to acknowledge that, as Sarah Hutton points out, Cudworth employed Stoic terminology and was sympathetic to some Stoic ideas. Also, according to Hutton, Cudworth’s “Stoicism is blended with Platonism.” See her introduction to *Ralph Cudworth: A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality with a Treatise of Freewill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ix–xx.


explicitly draw on ideas from Paracelsus, the Stoics, and Platonist authors.  
There is insufficient space here to give an overview of Van Helmont’s thought or even to list his various concerns. Instead, I give a rough summary of those metaphysical claims that form the context for the thought of Leibniz and Conway. According to Van Helmont, God is responsible for a spirit that permeates the “whole universe” and “preserves concord” among all things.  
In chapter 1 of our volume, Brouwer discusses the Stoic notion of fire or “pneuma” that fills and enlivens the world. Van Helmont sometimes describes God as full of light and fire, insisting that the “flame” of God fills all things and constitutes their essence. Because this spirit, fire, or vital “power has scattered itself around,” there is “a connection among things as active spirits” and hence a mutual “sensing and common attraction” among them. That is, the activity of all things seems to entail that they “feel, move, [and] are related” to one another and hence form a tightly “unified and interrelated whole.” Van Helmont sometimes asserts that God shares the “simple essence” of vitality and spirit so that “all things are unified” and thereby form a perfect “unity among substances.”  
Regardless of how inactive some earthly bodies may appear, everything stands in sympathetic attraction and concord with everything else and so is active. Because all things are active and all active things “sense” and “feel,” it follows that all things sense and feel all the others. As far as I know, Van Helmont does not explicate his views about perception and feeling in any detail, although he acknowledges an “ineffable intellectual light”

32 See Jan Baptiste Van Helmont, _Opera omnia_ (Frankfurt: Johann Justus Erythropilus, 1632). The references to Paracelsus and the Stoics are scattered throughout his works. There are significantly fewer explicit references to Plato and Platonists. See 254, 273, 290, 654, 811.
33 Jan Baptiste van Helmont, _De magnetica vulnerum curatione_, in _Opera omnia_, §151.
34 Van Helmont, _De magnetica_, §131.
35 Van Helmont, _De magnetica_, §142–43.
36 Van Helmont, _De magnetica_, §131.
37 Jan Baptiste Van Helmont, _Imago Dei_, in _Opera omnia_, 666–68.
38 Van Helmont, _De magnetica_, §131. Leibniz famously talks about the “mirroring” of substances or monads. As we will see, the mirroring among creatures is an important feature of his account of universal sympathy.
filling the world,\textsuperscript{39} which motivates humans to recognize “the Goodness, Power, infinity, Glory, and Truth” of God. This light is a “mirror” of the divinity.\textsuperscript{40} To summarize the most important points for us: the spirit and vitality of God permeates the world and each creature; each creature is an active and perceiving thing; each perceiving thing senses and feels all other creatures; the result of the shared vitality and the mutual perception is a “perfect harmony” among creatures.

Sylvester Rattray, a Scottish physician, published a book in 1658 entitled \textit{New Approach to Recently Discovered Occult Causes of Sympathy and Antipathy: Brought to Light through the Principles of Natural Philosophy}.\textsuperscript{41} According to Rattray, his contemporaries attempt to explain the causes of sympathy and antipathy using the theories of Aristotle and Galen. Instead of engaging in the errors of these and “other Ancients,” it is time to offer an account based on new experiments. Rattray describes the various means by which he has studied the causal relations among plants, animals, and minerals. By submitting their “elements” to the fire and carefully studying the results, he is able to describe their sympathetic interactions.\textsuperscript{42} He summarizes the views of the Aristotelians and the Epicurean atomists and finds each insufficient as an explanation of the medical phenomena. The Aristotelians fall short because “substantial forms” are “not useful” and cannot be understood.\textsuperscript{43} The atomists fail because their two principles, “the Atoms and the void,” do not “explain in what way matter is active in itself.”\textsuperscript{44} They neither offer a sufficient explanation of the “constancy of essences” nor do their explanations allow real understanding of “how things are formed.” In the end, Rattray prefers the account of Van Helmont because it offers

\textsuperscript{39} Jan Baptiste Van Helmont, \textit{Venatio scientiarum} in \textit{Opera omnia}, §17.
\textsuperscript{40} Van Helmont, \textit{Venatio scientiarum}, §§46–48.
\textsuperscript{41} Leibniz is familiar with Rattray. See Leibniz, A VI 4[A], 681.
\textsuperscript{42} Silvester Rattray, \textit{Aditus Novus ad Occultas Sympathiae et Antipathiae Causas Inveniendas: Per Principia Philosophiae Naturalis, ex Fermentorum Artificiosa Anatomia hausta Patefactus} (Glasgow: Andreas Anderson, 1658). See “To the Reader.”
\textsuperscript{43} Rattray, \textit{Aditus Novus}, 84–86.
\textsuperscript{44} Rattray, \textit{Aditus Novus}, 90–94.
better explanations of natural activity, the “diverse grades of things,” and their interconnections. Rattray’s work includes a very long list of the powers of plants, vegetables, and minerals, including the way they ferment and interact. Although Rattray’s articulation of Van Helmont’s metaphysical views is somewhat cursory, his main concern is to describe the healing powers “of Sympathy” in the world.⁴⁵

In 1669, a young German philosopher, Jacob Heinrich Gangloff, published his university dissertation, *On Sympathy*.⁴⁶ The fifty-page work explores the current metaphysical and physical debates about sympathy. One of its main concerns is to show that sympathetic “effects” are not the result of “occult powers”; another goal is to use the Aristotelian notion of substantial form to help explain sympathy. Gangloff avers that when phenomena occur “concerning humans, animals, and other natural things” whose causes “are not able to be seen,” people turn immediately to “occult qualities,” which are “as a whole called SYMPATHY” and of which they have “a feeble understanding.”⁴⁷ In an attempt to define the term in a way that “unifies” its various senses, Gangloff proposes in chapter 1 that sympathy is “a mutual natural harmony among natural things, arising from a particular hidden affinity on account of which these things, by a friendly affect or secret love, are mutually drawn to each other.”⁴⁸ He gives a brief history of the notion, citing a wide range of philosophers. He mentions the ancient Aristotelian Alexander Aphrodias, who explained “natural affinity and loving concord” in terms of a similarity “whether of origin, or nature or temperament,” and refers to the ancient Sicilian philosopher Empedocles (ca. 495–435 BCE), whom

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⁴⁶ The major claims in seventeenth-century dissertations are very often those of the presiding professor, the equivalent of a dissertation adviser. The presiding professor here is Johann Michael Schwimmer, a professor at the university in Jena, who wrote on related topics.

⁴⁷ Jacob Heinrich Gangloff, *Disputatio physica de sympathia* (Jena: Samuel Adophus Müller, 1669), A 2r.

⁴⁸ Gangloff, *De sympathia*, A 2r. The Latin is: “SYMPATHIA est conspiratio mutua naturalis inter res physicas, orta ex peculiaris occulta cognatione, ob quam istae res amico affectu, seu occulto amore, ad se invicem trahuntur.” The word *cognatio* here appears frequently in the second half of the seventeenth century in explications of sympathy. In Stephanus Chauvin’s *Lexicon*, for example, we find that sympathy is “affectionum cognatio [an affinity of affections].” See Chauvin, *Lexicon Philosophicum*, 2nd ed. (Leeuwarden, repr. Düsseldorf, 1713), 647.
he quotes as claiming that sympathy is “mutual love, friendship of things, harmony of things, agreement of natural things.”

Gangloff distinguishes in chapter 1 between “natural” and “moral” sympathy. The former concerns “the harmony of natural bodies.” Moral sympathy, on the other hand, concerns “jointly commiserating or mutual benefit.” Gangloff intends to explicate the notion in terms of substantial forms. Because there is a substantial form “in every individual,” which constitutes its “principle of individuation” and the cause of its distinctive “temperament,” one can turn to the form of a thing to explain its sympathy. God, the “author of nature,” has constructed natural things to be drawn to one another, although the amount of “mutual harmony” among them differs. After presenting the definition and brief history of sympathy in chapter 1, Gangloff turns his attention in chapter 2 to describing its effects, insisting that we can “know sympathy by its effects.” Relying on the work of Galen, Avicenna, and especially Rattray, he lists various natural phenomena and then avers: “the only reasonable cause is Sympathia.” Finally, in chapter 3, Gangloff turns to various accounts of sympathy. He moves through the views of a diverse group of thinkers (including Aquinas and Francisco Suarez) to take up the proposal of Jan Baptiste van Helmont and the idea that there is “a universal form and soul of the world” and that this “universal form . . . permeates all things.” It is this form or “soul of the world” that is the cause of the “gentle sympathy” of all things. In the end, therefore, it is this “spirit of God” that “animates the world.” The implication is that this divine animating spirit constitutes the forms of things. Gangloff endorses the Aristotelian notion that the individual substantial

49 Gangloff, De sympathia, A 2v. The Latin is: “amor mutuus, amicitia rerum, rerum concordia, rerum naturalium convenientia.”
50 Gangloff, De sympathia, A 2r.
51 Gangloff, De sympathia, §6.
52 Gangloff, De sympathia, §22–23.
53 Gangloff, De sympathia, §47–49.
form of a substance constitutes its principle of activity. But he also makes each form the source of “affinity” and “love.” The amount of sympathy is partly a function of the similarity among creatures (for example, horses are more sympathetic to horses) and partly due to proximity in space and time.

Van Helmont, Rattray, and Gangloff offer impressively detailed descriptions of the effects of sympathy. Despite their different concerns, they are strikingly similar in their fundamental claims. They are all willing to mix Stoic ideas with those of Paracelsus and other sources, both ancient and modern, to explain sympathy. They agree that the greater the similitude among creatures, the greater the affinity. And they agree that the ultimate cause of sympathy is a divinely produced spirit that is shared among creatures so that each has an affinity for all the others. Although the details of their explanations differ, they concur that sympathy is a divinely produced power or, in Gangloff’s words, “a hidden affinity” that draws things together.

3. Universal Sympathy: Platonism

By the fifth century, Christianity had absorbed Platonist assumptions. Although few works by the historic Plato were extant in the Latin west, the Platonist ideas promulgated by Plotinus (204/5–70 CE) and Proclus (412–85 CE) informed much of medieval philosophy. When Aristotelianism was imported from the Arab world in the thirteenth century, it too was full of Platonism. Scholasticism resulted from the blending of this Platonized Aristotelianism and medieval Christianity. European Platonism changed radically in the fifteenth century, when the great

54 For a helpful account of Platonist views about causation between the fourth and twelfth centuries, see Ian Wilks, “Efficient Causation in Late Antiquity and the Earlier Medieval Period,” in Efficient Causation: A History, ed. Tad Schmalz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

55 Brian Copenhaver and Charles Schmitt have written: “Given the quantity of Platonic material transmitted” through Arabic authorities “or generally in the air in medieval universities, it is not surprising that parts of Thomist metaphysics owe more to Augustine, Proclus, or Plotinus than to Aristotle.” See Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, Renaissance Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 133.
Florentine humanist Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) produced an edition and translation of all of Plato’s dialogues.⁵⁶ The awkward truth about Ficino’s Platonism, however, is that it owes almost as much to the thought of Plotinus and Proclus as to Plato himself.⁵⁷ By the middle of the seventeenth century, many philosophers had rejected Ficino’s interpretations and were keen to distinguish between the “mystical things” he says about Plato and “the teaching of... the great man.”⁵⁸ But the die had been cast: Ficino’s editions and commentaries would continue to define future discussions. Another major source of early modern Platonism is the Augustinianism endorsed by both Protestants and Catholics. Luther himself emphasized the importance and profundity of Augustine’s thought⁵⁹ and counter-reformation theologians praised the “divine Augustine.”⁶⁰ Seventeenth-century discussions of sympathy are informed by many forms of Platonisms. Unsurprisingly, the designation “Platonism” is frustratingly vague although various strands and loosely connected doctrines can be associated with the term.⁶¹ In the remainder of this section, I explicate metaphysical commitments that reveal Platonist sources and that constitute the raw materials out of which seventeenth-century thinkers

⁵⁶ Ficino’s edition and translations were circulated widely and remained prominent well into the eighteenth century.
⁵⁷ Ficino also edited and translated Plotinus’s *Enneads*. Much has been written about Ficino, his thought, and his influence. A fine place to begin an exploration of these topics is Michael J. B. Allen, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies, *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).
⁵⁸ Leibniz, *Gerhardt*, 7.147. Leibniz’s mentor, Thomasius, complains that Ficino’s account of Plato is more “poetic” than philosophical. See *Exercitatio*, 184.
⁶⁰ For the importance of Augustinianism in seventeenth-century France and for other examples of major figures proclaiming the importance of the “divine Augustine,” see Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 21–25.
like Leibniz and Conway build their metaphysics of universal sympathy. They are as follows.

Supreme being assumption: For many ancient thinkers, ontological priority was to be explained mainly in terms of self-sufficiency. As one scholar makes the point, “that which stands in need of nothing for being what it is is ontologically primary.” For many Platonists, there was a hierarchy of self-sufficiency and being such that each of the lower strata in the hierarchy was supposed to depend on and be caused by the higher. Many Christian and non-Christian Platonists assumed that there is a supremely perfect, wholly simple, and unified being on which all else depends. Only the highest being was wholly perfect, self-sufficient, simple, and real. The beings in the lower strata had diminishing degrees of these features. Modern philosophers have tended to think of being as an all or nothing affair, but there is a long line of Platonists who endorse a hierarchy of being. The assumption is that the strata in the hierarchy differ according to their unity, self-sufficiency, and perfection. What is more self-sufficient is more unified and therefore more fully what it is. What has less self-sufficiency and unity is less independent and therefore less fully what it is. For many in this tradition, self-sufficiency required activity and awareness. Van Helmont, Rattray, and Gangloff endorse main parts of the supreme being assumption: they all seem to believe that the supreme being shares its self-sufficient vitality with its creatures so that the latter have a lesser kind of self-sufficiency. Each creature is itself relatively unified and each contributes to the unity of the whole. For Van Helmont and Gangloff, the unity of the world is grounded in the fact that each active thing has a degree of “feeling” and “relatedness” with all the others.

63 Needless to say, this is a thorny topic. The hierarchy of being is often described in terms of ontological and causal dependency, but not always. For a good introduction to the issues, see Dominic J. O’Meara, “The Hierarchical Ordering of Reality in Plotinus”; and Kevin Corrigan, “Essence and Existence in the Enneads,” both in The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66–81, 105–29. For more recent discussions of these topics, see Lloyd P. Gerson, The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 618–48.
Emanative causation: There are two closely related kinds of emanative causation. By far the more significant in the history of philosophy is hierarchical emanation, where the cause is taken to be more perfect than its effect. The assumption here is that, for a being A that is more perfect than a being B, A emanates its attribute f-ness to B in such a way that neither A nor A’s f-ness is depleted in any way, with the result that B has f-ness, though in a manner inferior to the way it exists in A. The emanative process is continual so that B will have f-ness if and only if A emanates f-ness to it. For many theists, for example, God conceives triangularity or has it as “an idea,” which is the emanative cause for created triangles. The divine idea is perfect; its effect is not. The latter is often said “to participate in” or be an “image of” the former. For theists, one of the great benefits of hierarchical emanation is that it allows God to be both transcendent from and immanent in creatures. In his *Philosophical Lexicon* of 1613, Goclenius says he is following Plato and Augustine in claiming that God “contains all things” in the best and “most excellent way” while creatures contain them with “a certain limitation.” Although “creatures are not the being [esse] of God himself, nonetheless they are in him . . . [because] whatever is in creatures proceeds from God.” For those philosophers who endorse more than one stratum in a hierarchy of being, each of the strata has its attributes independently of its emanated effect and yet those attributes are immanent in the effect. As Conway puts it, God is “in a real sense an essence or substance distinct from his creatures” and yet “is not divided or separate from them but present in everything most closely and intimately in the highest degree.” God “gives to them form and figure but also essence, life, body, and whatever good they have.”

64 The history of the causal theory of emanation is rich and complicated. For more on the views in early modern philosophy discussed here, see my *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, especially 178–95. In the seventeenth century, there were a number of different accounts of emanation. The account I offer here covers the most important of those. For a recent helpful survey, see Eric Schliesser, “Newtonian Emanation, Spinozism, Measurement and the Baconian Origins of the Laws of Nature,” *Foundations of Science* 10.3 (2012): 1–18.


The nonhierarchical sense of emanative causation is modeled on the hierarchical, but does not require that the effect be inferior to its cause. As the fifth-century Platonist Proclus writes in his influential *The Elements of Theology*: "Every productive cause produces . . . while itself remaining steadfast. For if it imitates the One, and if the One brings its consequents into existence without movement, then every productive cause has a like law of production." For us, the important point is that certain sorts of active things produce their effect without being diminished. Like the hierarchical notion, the f-ness of B is assumed to be coexistent with the emanative activity of A. And like the hierarchical notion, the effect is often understood to follow with necessity in the sense that A’s action constitutes the necessary and sufficient conditions of B. In the *Immortality of the Soul* of 1659, the English philosopher Henry More writes: “An Emanative Effect is coexistent with the very substance of that which is said to be the Cause thereof. This must needs be true, because that very Substance which is said to be the Cause, is the adequate and immediate Cause, and wants nothing to be adjoined to its bare essence for the production of the Effect.”

**Plenitude:** In order to understand the role of sympathy in early modern philosophy, we need to be clear about what was supposed to follow from God’s nature. The principle of plenitude assumes that God fills the world with as many beings as possible. For Plotinus, the supreme being emanates the fullness of its being continually so that every possibility exists. He writes: “it is not possible for anything else to come into being; all things have come into being and there is nothing

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The common assumption is that God’s nature implies not only that the world is filled with creatures but also that they stand in harmony with one another. As the influential Jewish Platonist Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE) makes the point: “And being superior to, and being also external to the world that he has made, he nevertheless fills the whole world with himself; for, having by his own power extended it to its utmost limits, he has connected every portion with another portion according to the principles of harmony.” Generations of theists insist that divine goodness and unity apply to the organization of created things and that God adds to the goodness of the world by making the world appropriately harmonious. As Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) succinctly makes the point about order: “each thing in its nature is good, but all things together are very good, by reason of the order of the universe, which is the ultimate and noblest perfection in things.” Philosophers in the Platonist tradition take universal sympathy to add significantly to the goodness of worldly order.

*Universal sympathy:* The conjunction of the supreme being assumption, emanative causation, and plentitude implies a good deal about the order of the world. It was common in the seventeenth century to relate vitality or self-sufficiency to perception or sense and affinity. As we have seen, Van Helmont assumes that active things have active spirits and that active spirits feel and sense one another. Gangloff describes the harmony formed by mutually sympathetic creatures as one of “friendly affect or secret love.” The underlying assumption for such thinkers is that God causes creatures to have vitality, from which it is supposed to follow that each creature responds sympathetically to the states of all the others. For the purposes of this chapter, it will be helpful to think of the sympathetic relation as follows: two creatures bear a

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sympathetic relation to one another when each perceives and responds to each of the states of the other. When every created thing bears a sympathetic relation to every other, there is universal sympathy. For thinkers like Conway, the sympathetic relation helps explain antipathy in that a creature cannot be repelled by another (or otherwise antipathetic to it) unless it bears a sympathetic relation to it.

Enhanced universal sympathy: As we have seen, many philosophers took the divine nature to entail an order among creatures and many conceived that order in terms of universal sympathy. For those interested in theological questions about divine justice and the problem of evil, universal sympathy was taken to contribute significantly to the goodness of the world. The sympathetic relation among creatures not only seemed to constitute an additional good, it was also believed to increase worldly goodness over time because creatures could enhance one another’s progress. As an introduction to the metaphysics of Leibniz and Conway, it will be helpful to explicate what I will call enhanced universal sympathy. When two creatures bear a sympathetic relation to one another, each responds to the other. When two creatures bear an enhanced sympathetic relation to one another, an increase in the goodness of one will cause an increase in the goodness of another, although the relation is nonreciprocal (that is, the increase in the second will not then promote an increase in the first). Since enhanced sympathy means that an increase in the goodness of one creature will promote an increase in the goodness of those creatures with which it has this enhanced relation, it follows that an increase in the goodness of any creature will cause an increase in the goodness of every other. In a world in which enhanced sympathy holds among all creatures, each is capable of contributing much more to the goodness of the world than merely its present state of goodness: with every increase in its goodness, it contributes to the goodness of every other creature with which bears the relation.

74 For a fuller account of these notions in the period, see my, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, ch. 6, and “Platonism in Early Modern Natural Philosophy,” especially 111–13.
There is enhanced universal sympathy when all creatures bear an enhanced sympathetic relation with all others. The supreme being assumption can be taken to suggest that an increase in goodness involves an increase in vitality or self-sufficiency, which itself is related to moral perfection. As we will see, Leibniz seems to think that human beings bear an enhanced sympathetic relation to one another. Although he is not committed to enhanced universal sympathy, Conway is.

4. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

Leibniz is one of the most significant figures in the history of philosophy, mathematics, logic, and physics. He is famous for his metaphysics of preestablished harmony, according to which created substances do not causally interact, but stand in perfect harmony with one another, each expressing God and all other substances from its own unique point of view. Like so many other early modern thinkers, he grounds his metaphysics in the belief that God shares divine self-sufficiency with created things, whose mutual affinity creates a tightly unified whole. But unlike his predecessors, Leibniz transforms this idea into a metaphysics of astonishing originality: each of an infinity of substances corresponds perfectly with all the others and each expresses God, the world, and every other substance. Preestablished harmony is universal sympathetic harmony pushed to its limits.\textsuperscript{75}

From the very beginning of his philosophical career, Leibniz conceives the relation between God and the world in emanative terms and the relation among creatures as a tightly unified harmony among substances. Consistent with the supreme being assumption and with hierarchical causal emanation, Leibniz insists that God is a supremely perfect, self-sufficient, and unified being that emanates its attributes to...

\textsuperscript{75} I have argued elsewhere that these constitute the materials out of which Leibniz developed his famous doctrine of preestablished harmony. For that account, see Leibniz’s Metaphysics, esp. chs. 6, 8, and 10 (sect. 1).
an infinity of creatures. Every substance contains all the attributes of God, although in a manner inferior to their divine source. In a very early essay, he acknowledges that his account of the relation between God and creatures owes a good deal to Platonism and Stoicism. As he explains in 1668–69, he agrees with the Stoics and “Plato in the Timaeus about the world soul” in understanding God to be “diffused through everything.”

Like Van Helmont and Gangloff, Leibniz takes God to share divine self-sufficiency and vitality with every creature. Like Gangloff, he describes the vital nature of each substance as having a form. On the Origin of Things from Forms of 1676 claims that God “contains the absolute affirmative form that is ascribed in a limited way to other things.”

In a related essay, he adds: “all things are in a way contained in all things. But they are contained in a quite different way in God from that in which they are contained in things.” All creatures contain all things and sympathetic harmony relates them all to one another.

Before turning to Leibniz’s account of universal sympathy, it is important to acknowledge that he does not use the term *sympathia* or its cognates very often. When he does use the term, it is usually in the context of analyzing bodies, their “coherence” and motions. As we have seen, Leibniz’s early modern predecessors disagree in what sense sympathetic powers are occult and whether they resist understanding. Even for thinkers like Van Helmont and Gangloff who struggle to make the “affinity” and “love” among natural things “understandable,” sympathy remains a somewhat mysterious power binding the parts of the universe. Leibniz famously complains that Isaac Newton’s account

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76 Leibniz, A VI 1.510. He also mentions Aristotle’s agent intellect in this context.
78 Leibniz, A VI 3.523: Pk 85. Also see A VI 1.485.
79 In his early works, the term is restricted to discussions of bodies. For example, see Leibniz, A VI 2.190, 2.40, 2.45, 2.57, 3.25, and 4.98. But he also acknowledges the role of “sympathy and antipathy” in “vulgar” science. See A VI 4[A], 4.57, 6.18, 6.19. In the notes of 1672–76, he often writes that bodies of the world are in sympathy among themselves. See A VI 3.79, 85, 87, 91.
of gravity as “action at a distance” is itself occult.\footnote{As noted in section 2, Leibniz distinguishes between a sense of “occult” as something whose cause is unknown and as “an effect that can never become intelligible.” He suggests that Newton’s account of gravity falls in the latter category. See Leibniz, Gerhardt 3.519. For a recent account of Leibniz’s disagreement with Newton and Newton’s response, see Andrew Janiak, \textit{Newton as Philosopher} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), ch. 3.} In a letter to Christian Huygens of 1693, Leibniz goes so far as to compare Newton’s views to that of sympathy a kind of “inexplicable quality.”\footnote{A II 2.520–21. Thanks to Eric Schliesser for helping track down this passage.} It seems likely that Leibniz chose to coin new terms in order to avoid misunderstanding about his reinterpretation of universal sympathy. By such means he could sidestep pejorative associations with \textit{sympathia} and use untainted terminology. Whatever his reasons to refer to sympathetic harmony by other means, it is clear that his views about the interrelations among substances have roots in the tradition described above. While Leibniz is developing the details of his elaborate metaphysical system, he often acknowledges that his conception of creaturely relations is a form of sympathetic harmony.\footnote{A VI 4[B].1011.} In the late 1670s and 1680s, he echoes philosophers like Van Helmont when he associates sympathy and perceptions. He argues, for example, that because there is a “universal sympathy of things,”\footnote{A VI 4[A].308. See also A VI 4[B].1613.} they “all perceive together [comperceptibilia].”\footnote{A VI 4[A].669.} In short, Leibniz was perfectly familiar with the debates about sympathy and chose not to use the term in presenting his views about pre-established harmony.

In the remainder of this section, I display the roles that universal sympathy and enhanced sympathy play in Leibniz’s philosophy. There is insufficient space to give a detailed presentation of Leibniz’s thought, but even a brief account reveals his debt to these relations. Leibniz’s preestablished harmony is constituted of (at least) three closely related claims. As a group, they constitute a reinvention of universal sympathy. The first claim, which is sometimes called “spontaneity,”
is the view that the nature of a substance contains the cause or source of all of its features or states. In 1686, Leibniz writes in *Discourse on Metaphysics* 8: “the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to contain and to allow us to deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which this notion is attributed.” Roughly speaking, all the perceptions and states of every creature arise from the substance’s substantial form or inner nature, which God has given it. Not only do the perceptions and features of every substance arise “spontaneously” from its nature, its perceptions contain those of every other substance and, in that sense, “expresses” every other. Leibniz writes in a somewhat later work, entitled *First Truths*: “Every individual substance contains in its perfect notion the entire universe and everything that exists in it, past, present, and future…. Indeed, all created substances are different expressions of the same universe and different expressions of the same universal cause, namely, God.” So each substance expresses not just its own states but also those of all other substances. In other words, each of the infinity of substances bears a sympathetic relation to all the others.

The second main constituent of preestablished harmony, which is sometimes called the “world-apart thesis,” maintains that no feature or state of any created substance has as a real cause some feature or state of another substance. Substances do not directly interact; there is no inter-substantial causation. As Leibniz puts it in *Discourse on Metaphysics* 14, “each substance is like a world apart, independent of all other things, except for God…. God alone (from whom all individuals emanate continually and who sees the universe not only as they see it but also entirely differently from all of them) is the cause of this correspondence of their phenomena.” The perceptions of every substance correspond perfectly with those of every other because God has guaranteed that they do so. Each substance is in perfect sympathetic harmony with every

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85 A VI 4[B].1646: AG 41.
86 A VI 4[B].1646: AG 32.
other because God has created each to “contain” all the others. Leibniz continues: “one particular substance never acts upon another particular substance nor is acted upon by it,” but “what happens to each is solely a consequence of its complete idea or notion alone, since this idea already contains all its predicates or events and expresses the whole universe.”

The third main doctrine of preestablished harmony, what is sometimes called “parallelism,” owes the most direct debt to universal sympathy. It claims that the perceptions or states of a substance correspond perfectly with those of every other substance at any given time. *Discourse on Metaphysics* 14 asserts: “God produces various substances according to the different views he has of the universe and through God’s intervention the proper nature of each substance brings it about that what happens to one corresponds with what happens to all the others, without their acting upon one another directly.” Leibniz’s doctrine of parallelism has the benefits of universal sympathy while avoiding its problems. It insists that all created substances correspond perfectly but sidesteps the need to explain how exactly the sympathetic force between creatures is transmitted. For Leibniz, God constructs each substance so that it bears a sympathetic bond to every other and yet nothing is transmitted between them. As he summarizes the point in *Discourse on Metaphysics* 9, “each singular substance expresses the whole universe in its own way…. Moreover, every substance is like a complete world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way.” Toward the end of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, he makes the point that “everything that happens to the soul and to each substance follows from its notion, and therefore the very idea or essence of the soul carries with it the fact that all its appearances or perceptions must arise spontaneously from its own nature and precisely in such a way that they correspond by themselves to what happens in the whole universe.”

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87 A VI 4[B].1550–51: AG 47.
88 A VI 4[B].1549: AG 46.
universe.”90 Then, using a cognate of sympathy to refer to the correspondence among bodies, he explains that each “body receives the impression of all other bodies, since all the bodies of the universe are in sympathy, and, even though our senses are related to everything, it is impossible for our soul to attend to everything in particular; that is why our confused sensations are the result of a truly infinite variety of perceptions.”91 Each of the infinity of substances perceives all the others with more or less confusion in perfect preestablished harmony.92

If universal sympathy is the glue that binds the parts of preestablished harmony, then enhanced sympathy contributes to its aesthetic and moral luster. The comparison of creatures to mirrors is a prominent fixture in Leibniz’s philosophy and a vivid means to enhance sympathetic harmony. His earliest use of the comparison, in a note of 1669–70, is striking:

If God did not have rational Creatures in the world, he would have the same harmony, but barely and devoid of Echo, the same beauty, but barely and devoid of reflection and refraction or multiplication. On this account, the wisdom of God required [exigebat] rational Creatures, in which things might multiply themselves. In this way one mind might be a kind of world in a mirror, or a diopter, or some kind of point collecting visual rays.93

Leibniz assumes that rational creatures bear a sympathetic relation to one another. Consistent with the principle of plenitude, the correspondence

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90 A VI 4[B].1582: AG 65.
among these creatures is itself beautiful and good, but such beauty and goodness are greatly increased when they also mirror one another. That is, when two creatures mirror one another, each enhances the good of the other. Leibniz is even more explicit about the benefits of enhancement in a related note:

But as a double reflection can occur in vision, once in the lens of the eye and once in the lens of a tube, the latter magnifying the former, so there is a double reflection in thinking: for since every mind is like a mirror, there will be one mirror in our mind, another in other minds. Thus, if there are many mirrors, that is, many minds recognizing our goods, there will be a greater light, the mirrors blending the light not only in the [individual] eye but also among each other. The gathered splendor produces glory.94

Juxtaposing modern scientific images (of lenses and magnification) and ancient ones (of shadows and light), Leibniz creates a vivid picture of the effects of enhanced sympathy among rational minds. Throughout his long philosophical career, he thinks of enhanced sympathy as a significant addition to the world. Consistent with plenitude, it adds to worldly goodness and makes it easier for rational beings to recognize the order and beauty of the world and hence the divinity itself. When Leibniz talks about the "glory" that results from mirroring, he means to emphasize the insight into the divinity that mirroring makes possible. In his most important publication, *Essays on Theodicy* of 1710, Leibniz summarizes the point:

The perfections of God are those of our souls, but he possesses them in boundless measure; he is an Ocean, whereof to us only drops have been granted; there is in us some power, some knowledge, some goodness, but in God they are all in their entirety. Order, proportions, harmony

94 A VI 1.485. Also see A VI 1.479.
delight us; painting and music are samples of these: God is all order; he always keeps truth of proportions, he makes universal harmony; all beauty is an effusion of his rays.⁹⁵

In short, according to Leibniz, enhanced sympathy among rational creatures encourages them to discern the order, beauty, and goodness in the world. In the end, they will begin to understand God and, as he argues in the Essays on Theodicy, become “familiar with virtue.”⁹⁶

5. Anne Conway

Anne Conway is an English philosopher whose only work, The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy, was published posthumously in 1690. Although many of her contemporaries offered the work high praise,⁹⁷ like the works of so many women, her book was left out of the history of philosophy by later thinkers.⁹⁸ Conway’s vitalist philosophy exemplifies the power of enhanced universal sympathy to solve a number of philosophical problems extant in the early modern

⁹⁵ Gerhardt, 6.27. The standard translation of the Theodicy remains Theodicy, trans. E. M. Huggard (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1985), 51. The French here is: “Les perfections de Dieu sont celles de nos âmes, mais il les possède sans bornes: il est un Ocean, dont nous n’avons reçu que des gouttes: il y a en nous quelque puissance, quelque connaissance, quelque bonté, mais elles sont toutes entières en Dieu. L’ordre, les proportions, l’harmonie nous enchantent, la peinture et la musique en sont des échantillons; Dieu est tout ordre, il garde toujours la justesse des proportions, il fait l’harmonie universelle: toute la beauté est un épanchement de ses rayons.”

⁹⁶ Gerhardt, 6.25.⁹⁷ Leibniz developed his metaphysics independently of Conway, but he did think very well of her ideas. In his New Essays on Human Understanding, for example, he mentions her as the “best” among the vitalist philosophers. See New Essays on Human Understanding, ed. and trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 72. For the range of significant figures with whom she corresponded and who referred approvingly of her work, see Anne Conway, The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne Viscountess Conway, Henry Moore, and Their Friends (1642–1684), ed. Marjorie Hope Nicholson and Sarah Hutton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); for Leibniz’s various comments, see 454–57.

period. Her metaphysics is not only the most prominent example of the impact of universal sympathy on mainstream philosophy, it is important for what it reveals about the relationship between metaphysical and moral sympathy at the end of the seventeenth century.

Conway argues that there are three distinct substances: God, Logos, and the created world. Perfectly exemplifying hierarchical emanation, God, the first substance, emanates the second, which then emanates the world. As the middle substance between God and world, Logos is the metaphysical conduit and mediator between God and creatures.99 The created world is a single, infinitely complex vital substance, whose various modes constitute individual creatures. Like Leibniz, Conway maintains that the world contains an infinity of creatures. Like him, she takes their vitality to result from God’s emanation. And like him, she thinks that all vital things perceive and correspond to all others.100 But whereas Leibniz considers each creature to be substantially distinct from every other, Conway insists that all creatures are constituted of the same vital “substance or essence” although they differ radically in their degree of vitality.101 Her commitment to the supreme being assumption, hierarchical emanation, and plenitude leads her to insist that the created world is constantly bettering itself so that all creatures eventually become conscious moral beings and attain the “excellent attributes” of “spirit and light.”102 Each creature shares in God’s goodness and therefore has a capacity to perceive, understand, and love all things: “God is infinitely good and communicates his goodness to all his creatures in infinite ways” so that “there is no creature which does not receive something of his

99 Conway refers to this second substance as “Christ,” which suggests a more thorough commitment to Christianity than she in fact has. For a summary of Conway’s metaphysics and her non-Christian use of “Christ,” see my “Anne Conway’s Metaphysics of Sympathy,” in Feminist History of Philosophy: Recovery and Evaluation of Women’s Philosophical Thought, ed. Eileen O’Neill and Marcy Lascano (New York: Springer, 2015).

100 Conway wrote her Principles in the 1670s, at the same time that Leibniz was developing the details of his own system. Because she developed her views entirely independently of his, their similarities are all the more striking.


102 Principles IX §§6, 66.
goodness.” This “goodness of God is a living goodness, which possesses life, knowledge, love, and power, which he communicates to his creatures.”\textsuperscript{103} It follows that every created thing is capable of “every kind of feeling, perception, or knowledge, even love,” although the “transmutations” required to achieve those capacities will occur over a very long time. For example, as a mode of vitality, the slug can be transmuted to that of a horse and eventually to that of a conscious human being. God has so arranged things because he “sees that it is more fitting for all things…to attain, through their own efforts, ever greater perfection as instruments of divine wisdom, goodness, and power, which operate in them and with them.”\textsuperscript{104} Given our concerns, it is particularly important that the perfection of creatures is the direct result of enhanced universal sympathy. One of the most basic features of the third substance is that every creature has an enhanced sympathetic relation with every other: “God has implanted a certain universal sympathy and mutual love into his creatures so that they are all members of one body and all, so to speak, brothers, for whom there is one common father.”\textsuperscript{105}

There is insufficient space here to discuss the details of Conway’s views about the development of consciousness and moral improvement. The underlying point is that an increase in the vitality of one creature contributes, if only slightly, to the goodness of others. A succession of increases in vitality will lead to moral improvements until every creature becomes sufficiently vital to be conscious. Once conscious, creatures move slowly to moral perfection. She writes: “the more spiritual [vital] a certain creature becomes…the closer it comes to God,…the highest spirit.”\textsuperscript{106} The enhanced sympathetic harmony among the individual modes or creatures guarantees that they will progress toward ever-increasing perfection “to infinity.”\textsuperscript{107} So the third substance constantly improves,

\begin{footnotes}
103 \textit{Principles} VII §7, 44–45.
104 \textit{Principles} IX §6, 66.
105 \textit{Principles} VI §4, 31.
106 \textit{Principles} VII §1, 41–42.
107 \textit{Principles} VI §1, 42.
\end{footnotes}
although its “progression and ascension cannot reach God…whose
nature infinitely surpasses every creature, even one brought to the high-
est level.”\textsuperscript{108} Because of enhanced sympathy, “a creature is capable of a
further and more perfect degree of life, ever greater and greater to in-
finity, but it can never attain equality with God. For his infinity is always
more perfect than a creature in its highest elevation.”\textsuperscript{109} In the end, like
Leibniz, Conway believes that enhanced sympathy allows all human
beings to discern the “excellent order” and “splendor” of the world.\textsuperscript{110}
Like him, she takes enhanced sympathy to help them find virtue. But she
differs from Leibniz in allowing all creatures the benefit of enhancement.
For her, universal enhanced sympathy guarantees that all creatures will
become virtually divine.

6. Conclusion

The seventeenth century begins with debates about “occult” sympa-
thetic powers in nature. Physicians, natural philosophers, and theolo-
gians disagree about the intelligibility of such powers and worry about
their demonic associations. Then, often using Stoic and Platonist ideas,
philosophers begin to rethink and sometimes to clarify the description
and explanation of those powers. Over the century, universal sympathy
is increasingly rendered more precisely until it becomes a key ingredient
in prominent metaphysical systems. In the philosophical proposals of
Leibniz and Conway, it is the main unifying force among an infinity of
creatures in God’s world. Worldly sympathy acquires a moral aspect that
adds significantly to the goodness of the world and to the ethical devel-
opment of rational beings. By the end of the century, sympathy is a moral
force to be reckoned with. In Conway’s words, it encourages “love, all
power and virtue, joy and fruition.”\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{108} Principles IX §5, 65.
\textsuperscript{109} Principles IX §7, 67.
\textsuperscript{110} Principles VI §5, 31–32.
\textsuperscript{111} Principles IX §6, 66.
Author Query

AQ1 The term "counter" is capitalized in the New Oxford American Dictionary and Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary; it's the only form in the dictionaries, not lower-cased.

AQ2 The term "counter" is capitalized in the New Oxford American Dictionary and Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary; it's the only form in the dictionaries, not lower-cased.

AQ3 AQ: I don't think a Latin word put in brackets in a quotation needs to be in italics.

AQ4 Please keep all of these letters in brackets. The standard edition uses them to distinguish among volumes in this part of the series. They must all be included.

AQ5 Please keep all of these letters in brackets. The standard edition uses them to distinguish among volumes in this part of the series. They must all be included.