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Causality and Mind: Essays on Early Modern Philosophy

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BOOK REVIEW

Nicholas Jolley: *Causality and Mind: Essays on Early Modern Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 296. £45.00 (hb). ISBN: 978-0199669554.

Nicholas Jolley is an exemplary scholar and a highly engaging writer. He has published several books on major figures and themes in the early modern period. These are his *Leibniz and Locke* (1984), *The Light of the Soul* (1990), *Locke* (1999), and *Leibniz* (2005). But he has also published numerous articles and chapters in disparate venues. It is fitting, then, that Oxford University Press has elected to combine a number of these publications in a single volume, making these scholarly contributions more accessible to students and researchers alike. This volume does not gather all of Jolley's published papers, but it brings together seventeen articles and chapters on issues pertaining to early modern theories of causality (e.g. God, substance, volition, and laws of nature) and mind (e.g. innate ideas, abstract ideas, intentionality, and consciousness). These papers were originally published in journals, special journal issues, and edited volumes between 1986 and 2010. Some of these papers may be familiar to readers such as the excellent 'Malebranche on the Soul', which is Jolley's contribution to the *Cambridge Companion to Malebranche* (2000). Other papers are likely to be less familiar such as his 'Leibniz and the Causal Self-Sufficiency of Substances', which first appeared in French in a special issue of *Revue philosophique de Louvain* (2009) and is provided here for the first time in English.

The papers collected in this volume touch on a subset of canonical figures from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz, Berkeley, Locke, and Hume. Although two figures, Malebranche and Leibniz, receive considerably more attention than the others, it is Malebranche who stands out most in this collection. A full half of the papers either solely concern Malebranche or include substantive discussion of his views in conjunction with another figure. A mere five papers make no mention of occasionalist doctrines. However, this is not necessarily a shortcoming of the book. Three central issues in the thought of Malebranche receive attention throughout the volume: the vision in God doctrine according to which all ideas, perceptions, and sensations in created minds are caused by God; the occasionalist theory of causation whose emphasis on the logically necessary connection between causes and effects entails that only God is causally efficacious; and, finally, the nature of the tripartite relationship between divine volition, 'efficacious laws', and particular events in the world. Because these articles and chapters were not originally written with an eye to being bound in a single volume, it is surprising how little repetition

we find in Jolley's several treatments of Malebranche. This speaks of Jolley's talent and ingenuity as a scholar. All told, he considers a variety of possible objections to these occasionalist doctrines, pries into the philosophical motivations for them, traces their development across Malebranche's writings, and argues that some of these doctrines either foreshadow or bear considerable resemblance to contemporary philosophical positions. It is for this reason that many of the papers in this volume, when taken together, offer a penetrating and intricate analysis of Malebranche's position.

Descartes, Leibniz, and Locke each have at least one paper dedicated solely, or at least primarily, to their respective views. Other figures, such as Berkeley and Hume, are discussed strictly in conjunction with Malebranche. It is clear that comparison with occasionalist doctrines can be philosophically rewarding. Two papers comparing Leibniz and Malebranche, 'Leibniz and Malebranche on Innate Ideas' and 'Leibniz and Occasionalism', are especially rich and seem to bring out the very best in both thinkers. One wishes that this model were adopted in more cases. Another paper on Leibniz, which draws on Malebranche to a lesser extent, ends with a remarkably sweeping conclusion: 'Malebranche's theory of causality [is] philosophically fruitful. By contrast, Leibniz's account of causality [is] a philosophical dead end' (168). Such a statement seems unwarranted and risks being shortsighted, especially when the only evidence offered on its behalf is that Malebranche's view 'leads straight to Hume' (168). One might respond by challenging the strength of the implied connection between Malebranche and Hume or perhaps by denying the assumption that 'lead[ing] straight to Hume' is evidence of bearing philosophical fruit.

It is unfortunate that one of the two papers on Berkeley as well as the only paper on Hume appear to fall into the category of unprofitable comparisons with Malebranche. These are his 'Berkeley and Malebranche on Causality and Volition' and 'Hume, Malebranche, and the Last Occult Quality'. The former paper argues, less resourcefully than is usual for Jolley, that Berkeley adopts a distinctly Malebranchean concept of causality. The paper then goes on to criticize Berkeley from multiple angles, both occasionalist and rationalist, for failing to deliver an account of voluntary action that satisfies the criteria set out by Malebranche. Jolley concludes that 'Berkeley's position on causality is, at bottom, incoherent' (253). Perhaps a more philosophically coherent theory can be found in Berkeley once we unburden him from what are, arguably, imposed commitments. Jolley's paper on Hume argues that Malebranche offers the 'more progressive and interesting' theory of causation (256). Hume, we learn, advances a view still laden with a vaguely 'Scholastic notion of causality'; while Malebranche, by contrast, articulates 'the more precise notion of law' (255). I fear that Jolley, at the very least, has ended the disagreement between Malebranche and Hume prematurely. There is ample room here for an analysis of these two thinkers that is as engaging and sophisticated as his work comparing Malebranche and Leibniz. More worrisome, I believe, is that Jolley seriously underestimates the scope of

Hume's naturalist project and the purpose of his regular excursions into ordinary human psychology. Hume endeavours to explain the motivation underlying both philosophical and commonsensical propensities to think of the world in causal terms. Drawing on experience and psychological tendencies, Hume has the resources to explain why philosophers have embraced certain causal theories despite the failure of these theories to explain anything about causation itself. It is evident from the sustained criticism of Malebranche across multiple texts that Hume takes his view of causation to be among them.

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