Leibniz: three threats against freedom.

In the preface to the Theodicy, after referring to the two main problems ("labyrinths") for reason: freedom and continuity, Leibniz goes on to list three threats to freedom. One is trivial: to simply deny freedom. The other two are less direct, more subtle: they may be called "dilemmatic" threats. First, freedom seems to be incompatible with foreknowledge. Secondly, freedom is presented as incompatible with the principle of bivalence; for this second issue the classical text is Aristotle: De interpretatione, 9.

Leibniz's text. From: Theodicy, Preface, translated by E.M. Huggard.

There are two famous labyrinths where our reason very often goes astray: one concerns the great question of the Free and the Necessary, above all in the production and the origin of Evil; the other consists in the discussion of continuity and of the indivisibles which appear to be the elements thereof, and where the consideration of the infinite must enter in. The first perplexes almost all the human race, the other exercises philosophers only. I shall have perchance at another time an opportunity to declare myself on the second, and to point out that, for lack of a true conception of the nature of substance and matter, people have taken up false positions leading to insurmountable difficulties, difficulties which should properly be applied to the overthrow of these very positions. But if the knowledge of continuity is important for speculative enquiry, that of necessity is none the less so for practical application; and it, together with the questions therewith connected, to wit, the freedom of man and the justice of God, forms the object of this treatise.

Men have been perplexed in well-nigh every age by a sophism which the ancients called the 'Lazy Reason', because it tended towards doing nothing, or at least towards being careful for nothing and only following inclination for the pleasure of the moment. For, they said, if the future is necessary, that which must happen will happen, whatever I may do. Now the future (so they said) is necessary, whether because the Divinity foresees everything, and even pre-establishes it by the control of all things in the universe; or because everything happens of necessity, through the concatenation of causes; or finally, through the very nature of truth, which is determinate in the assertions that can be made on future events, as it is in all assertions, since the assertion must always be true or false in itself, even though we know not always which it is. And all these reasons for determination which appear different converge finally like lines upon one and the same centre; for there is a truth in the future event which is predetermined by the causes, and God pre-establishes it in establishing the causes.