The Metaphysics of Transubstantiation: The Problem of Individuation in the Seventeenth Century

Conrad J. Collins
University of Mississippi. Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

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THE METAPHYSICS OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION:
THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUATION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

by
Conrad Joseph Collins

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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Approved by

Advisor: Professor Timothy Yenter
Reader: Professor Steven Skultety
Reader: Professor Dan O’Sullivan
ABSTRACT
CONRAD JOSEPH COLLINS: The Metaphysics of Transubstantiation: The Problem of Individuality in the Seventeenth Century
(Under the direction of Timothy Yenter)

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the recurring question of the relationship between theology and philosophy by investigating the 17th century debate on the Eucharist as it revolved around Descartes and Leibniz. The Jesuit explanation of transubstantiation involves the philosophical problem of individuation, which asks what makes an individual substance what it is. Therefore, the study focuses specifically on the problem of individuation as it is treated by the philosophers Descartes and Leibniz as they try to answer the previous question. Descartes’s mechanical philosophy runs against the notion of what constitutes a body, while Leibniz’s monadology finds an obstacle in explaining a change of substance. The evidence of these attempts suggests that what transubstantiation implies can be demonstrated only within a proper metaphysics. Thus, the question shows that certain theological commitments have specific metaphysical consequences and vice versa.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1563 the Council of Trent, one of the Catholic Church’s most important ecumenical councils, came to a close and promulgated its decrees. As a response to the Protestant Reformation that took place earlier in the 16th century, the council was convened to clarify the Church’s doctrines and teachings and condemn teachings promoted by Protestantism. The Catholic Church responded to a common Protestant view that the Eucharist was not substantially the body of Christ by restating and more fully defining the doctrine of transubstantiation, which is the way in which the Catholic Church explains how Christ comes to be present in the bread and wine.

The Council’s decree gave three parts to the Catholic Church’s explanation of the sacrament of the Eucharist. The first is the claim that Jesus Christ is present body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. This presence Catholics call the Real Presence. Second is how he is present. The Church states that he is present under the species of sensible things and that he is sacramentally present to us in his own substance. Of these first two matter, the Council decreed, “In the first place, the holy Synod teaches, and openly and simply professes, that, in the august sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things” (Council of Trent 76). As the decree states, the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist must be
declared first, because the foundation of the Catholic belief in the Eucharist is that Jesus Christ is substantially present in his body. Transubstantiation need not occur if this is not the case.

Yet, because this is the position the Church promotes, the decree involves a third part, which describes the way in which Christ becomes present:

Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation (Council of Trent 78).

The Council of Trent’s decision to restate and define the doctrine of transubstitution effectively committed the Catholic Church to a certain metaphysical stance that used the language of Aristotle, using words such as “species,” which means appearances, and “substantially” (substantiae). The use of Aristotelian terms in the Council’s decree on the Eucharist comes from a revival of scholasticism and the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. This revival in the 16th century, as Cyril Vollert states in his introduction to Francisco Suarez’s “On the Various Kinds of Distinctions,” was primarily theological, but brought with it “a philosophical restoration, characterized by a return to the thirteenth century, above all to the thought of St. Thomas” (2). It is expressed in the decrees of the Council of Trent, which used the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas alongside the Bible, but it was spearheaded by the Jesuits, the members of the Society of Jesus.
Despite this resurgence of Thomistic thought in the 16th century, Christian philosophy was shifting away from Aristotle by the 17th century. The Protestant Reformation had not been stymied by the work of the Jesuits, and the Church was fighting what it considered yet another theological threat in the form of Jansenism. The Jansenists emphasized predestination and the necessity of divine grace, and saw themselves as followers of St. Augustine’s teachings. As such, their teachings resembled some common Protestant teachings and they were also opposed to the Jesuits.

In addition to the theological threat, the successes of the so called “new science” were disproving more and more of Aristotle’s physics and hurting his metaphysics. Simply put, Aristotle’s physics and metaphysics were becoming obsolete. As Roger Ariew put it in *Descartes and the Last Scholastics*, “one of the more important changes in seventeenth-century philosophy is the movement from what is variously called Scholasticism, naturalism, or animism to what is variously called the mechanical philosophy, corpuscularism, or atomism” (123). Disappointed with Aristotelian thought, the philosophers of the time—figures such as Descartes and Leibniz—turned elsewhere for inspiration.

What in Aristotelian scholasticism disappointed these new philosophers? The problem of individuation related directly to the struggles that Aristotelianism faced with the Eucharist. Individuation is the metaphysical term to express what makes a thing itself and not something else. “The struggle with individuation was, for medieval thinkers, a struggle to make good on the Aristotelian project of articulating the structure of substance, supplementing and refining Aristotle’s own account in response to perceived explanatory demands of various metaphysical and theological concerns” (Cover 12). For
the follower of Aristotle, discussions of individuation always involved form, matter and accident. Generally, either form or matter, or both together were used to settle the problem of individuation (Cover 12). The Jesuits scholastics generally sided with St. Thomas and Aristotle that matter was the principle of individuation, but other schools of thought, which opposed this position, were gaining momentum in the 17th century.

Some matters of theology come with certain philosophical commitments, and especially certain metaphysical commitments. It is for this reason that Roger Ariew says, “it was the common practice of Catholic philosophers when they were theorizing about natural philosophy to discuss the compatibility of their physical theories with such mysteries of the Catholic faith as the sacrament of the Eucharist” (147). He is speaking about the philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries. Catholic intellectuals commonly believed that metaphysics was intimately connected to theology. Suarez, a Jesuit at that time, stated in one of his Metaphysical Disputations that “[metaphysics] has for its object the most universal and supreme principles which embrace all being and are the foundation of all knowledge” (“Distinctions” 6). The doctrine of transubstantiation practically embodies this notion; it is a metaphysical description of one of the most important theological tenets of Catholicism.

This paper will look at three approaches to the problem of transubstantiation. The first will be the so called “orthodox” position defended by the Jesuits, which was used as the basis of criticism against novel philosophical theories. The second is Descartes’ approach through his substance dualism and anti-Aristotelian philosophy. The third is the reconciliatory approach of Leibniz. Descartes and Leibniz were both influenced by Jesuit scholastics but were instrumental in turning early modern philosophy away from
Aristotle. A problem for these two philosophers was to explain adequately the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist in a way that was philosophically free from Aristotelian notions of substance, yet still retained what is essential to the notion of transubstantiation, mainly, that a change of substance occurred without the change of appearances. The Jesuits saw it as their responsibility to determine whether philosophers like Descartes and Leibniz had accomplished this.

Thus, we begin with the Jesuit understanding of transubstantiation and their subsequent criticism of the philosophies of Descartes and Leibniz. The Jesuits involved in this study were not simply trying to condemn Descartes and Leibniz. They were, rather, looking for a better philosophy than the scholastic philosophy they had. These Jesuits wanted Descartes and Leibniz to succeed in giving an orthodox philosophical theory, and so were challenging those points which were seemingly in conflict with the teachings of the Church. So, the Jesuit positions will lead us into the solutions Descartes and Leibniz provide.

The first of these two that I will look at is Descartes, who studied at the Jesuit college at La Fleche. Descartes’s explanation of transubstantiation in strongly connected to his decision to denote the mind, or soul, as the substantial form and principle of individuation in his metaphysics. Subsequently, Descartes and his followers were heavily criticized for their explanations of the Eucharist. Indeed, this seems “to have been the focus of opposition to Cartesianism” (Ariew 142). The criticism, however, came primarily from within Descartes’s own network of correspondents and followers. This ‘Cartesian network’ was made up of close correspondents who wanted Descartes’ mechanical philosophy to succeed, but who also wanted to remain orthodox. The purpose
of these criticisms was to urge Descartes to demonstrate how a Catholic could accept his philosophy while remaining faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. For this reason, the chapter on Descartes will begin by analyzing the first of Descartes’s attempts to defend the compatibility of his philosophy with transubstantiation.

The initial defense comes from the “Fourth Set of Objections and Replies,” where the Jansenist Antoine Arnauld expresses reservations on account of the difficulties Descartes’s metaphysics pose to a Catholic account of transubstantiation. This sets the foundation of Descartes’s demonstration of transubstantiation according to his metaphysics, which is addressed more fully through the correspondence Descartes held with several Jesuits and Catholic theologians. Through these various sources, I will piece together a coherent picture of Descartes’s view of transubstantiation that can be evaluated against the three parts of the Catholic Church’s explanation of the Eucharist. Thus, I will have provided an explanation of transubstantiation according to a philosophy expressly opposed to the Aristotelian philosophy from which the doctrine of transubstantiation emerged.

Having established Descartes’s position on the Eucharist, I will turn to Descartes’s description of the mind as a revival of Augustine’s own description. Using Descartes and Augustine by Stephen Menn and The Augustinian Tradition by Gareth Matthews, I will establish Descartes’s concept of the soul and of bodies as rooted in Augustine and opposed to Aristotelianism. This will be viewed primarily as Descartes’s answer to the reforming theologians of his time who wished “to free the faith” from Aristotelianism yet still retain the immortality of the soul (Menn 52). Descartes’s answer provides a “new approach to philosophy” that begins with the insensible soul and moves
to the nature of bodies as its end (Menn 52). Having established the Augustinian tradition in Descartes, I will have demonstrated how this conflict within the Cartesian network over the nature of the Eucharist embodies the emerging conflict over the relation of faith and reason.

Less radically minded than Descartes is the Lutheran philosopher Gottfried Leibniz. It was generally the desire to do philosophy without Aristotle that drove Descartes to explain transubstantiation in a way that did not use Aristotelian thought, but for Leibniz, retaining some of Aristotelian philosophy was an important part of his reconciliatory method. Leibniz preferred to take what was reasonable in various philosophies rather than completely reject entire philosophical systems. In his early career, Leibniz was very much tilted toward scholastic philosophy. This early attachment remained with Leibniz even as his philosophy matured, because of his larger program of bringing all the divisions of Christianity back together. His reconciliatory attitude and the Aristotelian influence, however, did not protect Leibniz from criticism on account of transubstantiation.

The problem Leibniz’s metaphysics posed to transubstantiation revolved around the nature of substances and the existence of substantial forms in his philosophy, much in the same line as Descartes. Leibniz’s monadology made mental entities the most real, and all bodies became mere phenomena. The emphasis on mental entities appears to be a radical take on Augustine’s own approach to the relation between minds and God. Leibniz’s view arises from a Neoplatonic conception of “divine causation” that makes God the “source” of His creatures’ perfection (Fouke 47). Therefore, our analysis of Leibniz will begin with his own explanation of transubstantiation and of corporeal
substances in his correspondence with the Jesuit Bartholomew Des Bosses, whereby he introduces the notion of the substantial bond, or *vinculum substantiale*, and then move to elucidating his theory of monads, which forms the foundation of his later metaphysics.

The introduction of the substantial bond comes in the part of the correspondence where Des Bosses and Leibniz begin to discuss the apparent incompatibility of his metaphysics with transubstantiation. The problem was very much connected to the problem of individuation and so involved his controversial Identity of Indiscernibles, but much of his motivation for explaining transubstantiation with his metaphysics seems to have come from his reconciliatory attitude. Fouke writes that Leibniz’s first attempts “to demonstrate the possibility of transubstantiation” were part of his efforts to “reunify the churches” (46). Indeed, early in his career, Leibniz began the *Catholic Demonstrations*, which were meant to cover a variety of theological topics, one of which was “demonstrate the essential agreement of Catholic and Protestant doctrines of the Eucharist” (Loemker 167). Leibniz, as a Lutheran, does not believe in transubstantiation (Look lviii). So, the question Des Bosses is pressing on Leibniz is whether a Catholic can affirm transubstantiation “while accepting Leibniz’s theory of monads” (Look lviii).

Answering this question involves analyzing Leibniz’s response in light of the three parts of the Church’s explanation of the Eucharist, then studying Leibniz’s metaphysical program in relation to his approach to religious reconciliation. This will demonstrate an approach to the problem of transubstantiation from the perspective a separating faith and reason.

Having laid out two philosophical explanations of transubstantiation that depart from the traditionally Scholastic explanation, I will conclude with comparing the
approaches of each theory. For Jesuits, the goal is retaining the original understanding of transubstantiation as it is expressed by the decrees of the Council of Trent. For Descartes, the approach involves an Augustinian, rather than Thomistic, Catholic perspective. For Leibniz, his approach involves disconnecting philosophy from faith, and so making the goal simply avoiding logical contradiction. Despite these differences in approach, each philosopher had to tackle the problem of individuation in explaining the Eucharist.

Thus, the common philosophical theme that is carried throughout this work is how the problem of individuation is treated by each philosopher, and how each argument shaped, or was shaped by, the problem of transubstantiation. Thus, we find in the debate over the Eucharist an effort to accept the discoveries of the new science while also maintaining orthodox beliefs, which showed itself in the dynamic that brought together the new thinking of Descartes and Leibniz and the traditional thinking of the Jesuits.

Through these different approaches to the problem of transubstantiation, I expect to provide thought provoking philosophical explanations of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist that retain what transubstantiation implies.
CHAPTER I: THE INFLUENTIAL INQUIRIES OF THE JESUITS

As was mentioned in the introduction, the philosophical movement of the 16th century was spearheaded by the newly established Society of Jesus, which was founded by St. Ignatius to combat the spread of Protestantism. St. Ignatius advised his fellow Jesuits, as they called themselves, to follow the theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, which required accepting his philosophy, which in turn required following Aristotle. So, the Jesuits generally veered toward Thomism. Still, they were free to follow their own philosophical speculations since “the Society had no direct roots in the medieval tradition” and had no ties to St. Thomas Aquinas (Suarez 2). Thus, it was not a steadfast rule and many Jesuits were not afraid to disagree with the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Much of the discussions over the Eucharist during the 17th century involved the “tension between maintaining solidity and uniformity in doctrine while negotiating different natural philosophical traditions and coming to terms with contemporary developments” (Hellyer 548). The Jesuits came to represent this tradition, and so this chapter will focus on the Jesuits as defenders of the traditional understanding of the decrees of the Council of Trent. It is important to note that their main agenda was to protect the validity of the sacrament of the Eucharist. Since they felt unconstrained by the traditional scholasticism, they were free to dialogue with mechanical philosophers such as Descartes. This most likely was the result of the philosophical climate of the time, which was separating the realms of philosophy and theology.
Despite this philosophical freedom, the Jesuits still preferred to hold on to the Aristotelian scholasticism of St. Thomas Aquinas until they felt a better philosophical system was proposed. Some argue that, for the Jesuits, one could not simply criticize Aristotle. “If some new philosophy were to replace Aristotle’s, it would have to be at least as systematic and scientific, at least as compatible with Christianity, at least as practically productive for empirical research and for morality” (Menn 24). This is how the Jesuits who were in correspondence with Descartes and Leibniz approached new philosophies. As a result, the dialogues with Descartes and Leibniz referenced in this work should be viewed as productive criticism. These Jesuits were constantly challenging these philosophers to work out any perceived flaws or conflicts with the faith.

There are two groups of Jesuits important to this study. On one hand were Jesuits like Francisco Suarez, who established the kind of thought the Jesuit contemporaries of Descartes and Leibniz followed. Suarez and other Jesuits were also a great influence on both Descartes and Leibniz themselves. Suarez, in particular, wrote extensively on the problem of individuation, which was large in medieval philosophy and continued to persist into the early modern period. He is also especially important because of his *Disputatio Metaphysicae*, which some consider to be “the most carefully worked-out system of metaphysics” of any Catholic philosopher (Vollert 4). These Jesuits give understanding to the positions of Descartes, Leibniz and the Jesuits they were in correspondence with. Therefore, it is important to look at some of their approaches to the problem of individuation.

On the other hand, there are the Jesuits who were in contact with Leibniz and Descartes. These were figures like Bartholomew des Bosses and Denis Mesland, who
were able to throw their weight into the philosophical debates of the time and press the discussions on the Eucharist through these exchanges. The important determining factor in this search was whether the philosophical theory was compatible with existing theological doctrines. Hellyer captures the conflict when he writes, “A theological doctrine was, in effect, determining whether a physical doctrine was acceptable” (Hellyer 547). Thus, the problem for the Jesuits is apparent. The theological doctrines they were defending were infused with Aristotelian language, but they were looking for philosophies that resolved the problems that Aristotelian philosophy faced. So, the question arises for philosophers of whether they needed to drop Aristotle completely or work to figure out what could be retained and what could be lost.

To this effect, this chapter will first examine the Jesuits who engaged in the discussions on the Eucharist with Descartes and Leibniz, and particularly Bartholomew Des Bosses and Denis Mesland, in order to understand from what perspective these Jesuits were approaching the issue. Then it will conclude with a look at Francisco Suarez, a Jesuit who preceded Descartes and Leibniz and who influenced both philosophers. The primary purpose of this structure is to extract the problem of individuation that is inherent to the problem of the Eucharist. Through this, we will be able to more adequately understand the reactions of Descartes and Leibniz when we look at them individually.

Des Bosses, in a characteristically Jesuit manner, works with Leibniz to reconcile his theories with the orthodox teachings of the church. To this effect, he presents his own explanation of transubstantiation using Leibniz’s theory of monads (Des Bosses, Correspondence 175). He begins by stating that the Catholic position is that both the form and the matter of the bread and wine are destroyed. For Des Bosses, this would
seem to mean that the monads of wheat must be destroyed, but that contradicts Leibniz’s position that monads cannot be destroyed. So, Des Bosses argues that, since monads do not make up the mass, these monads can be removed and replaced by the monads of the body of Christ, as long as the monads of Christ’s body are “deprived of their extension, which is not essential to them” (Correspondence 175). In this way, Des Bosses believes, the act of transubstantiation can be adequately explained. In doing so, he maintains that the substance of Christ is determined by the monads of the body of Christ rather than a single monad.

In my research, I was unable to find either Mesland or Mersenne’s letters to Descartes that prompted his explanations of the Eucharist. Yet, by analyzing Descartes’s letters, I was able to put together a picture of their views. The primary letter from Descartes to Mesland is dated 9 February 1645, wherein Descartes provides a detailed explanation of the Eucharist “useful for avoiding the slander of heretics” (3: 242). This explanation completely relies on the principle of individuation being the human soul, rather than the union of matter and form. In Descartes’s following letter it is obvious that Mesland was not satisfied with this explanation, because Descartes clarifies that there is no need to accept the explanation, but repeats that he thinks it is useful against heretics who claim the teachings of the Church are unreasonable.

The letters to Mersenne, which come earlier, demonstrate that the two Jesuits shared a concern for Descartes’s philosophy on account of transubstantiation. Father Marin Mersenne was an ordained priest and intellectual supporter of figures such as Descartes, but was also a defender of Aristotle against their new philosophies. For Mersenne, simple criticism of Aristotle was not enough. That Mersenne found Descartes’
philosophy wanting did not mean that he would condemn it, but that he would remain with Aristotle for the time being but continue to encourage Descartes in becoming “the new Christian Aristotle” (Menn 24). This seems to be the mentality of the Jesuits with whom Descartes was in correspondence. Descartes’s responses in these letters are primarily directed at answering this call by showing that his explanation does better than the scholastic explanation. Unfortunately, we do not know for certain whether Mesland and Mersenne were convinced by his explanations, but the available letters from Descartes suggest they were not. From Descartes’s repeated need to explain the compatibility of his views, it seems that the two Jesuits continued to follow the traditional scholastic understanding of transubstantiation.

While these contemporaries of Descartes and Leibniz were instrumental in shaping Descartes and Leibniz’s thoughts according to theological traditions, and provided the catalysts for their explanations of the Eucharist, the most influential Jesuit for Descartes and Leibniz was Francisco Suarez. As was stated previously, his metaphysical system is the most carefully worked out system of any Catholic philosopher. Furthermore, Suarez sits on the brink of the shift from scholastic philosophy to mechanical philosophy. He is firmly planted in the scholastic tradition, but he does not feel bound to follow his predecessors in his approach to philosophy. Some argue that Suarez held the understanding that philosophy and theology occupied “independent spheres of operation” and had different methods and concerns (Gracia 478). For problems of philosophy, then, he tries to give purely philosophical arguments. And it is those arguments that I look at next in determining the traditional understanding of individuation
amongst Jesuits that provides the philosophical background within which Descartes and Leibniz were working.

Suarez takes the position that unity “does not add anything positive” to being (qtd. Gracia 480). He maintains that there is a distinction between unity and being, but that “it is not a distinction in which the notion of unity includes something that the notion of being does not” (Gracia 480). On the face of it, this does not make very much sense, but this confusion can be resolved by Suarez’s theory on distinctions.

For Suarez, there are three kinds of distinctions. The first is a real distinction, whereby a negation “distinguishes between positive, real things, one of which is not the other” (Suarez, “Distinctions” 17). The second is a mental distinction which only intervenes between “things designated as distinct…as they exist in our ideas” (Suarez, “Distinctions” 18). The third is a modal distinction. Of the modal distinction Suarez states,

“I think it is true without qualification that there is among created things a certain actual distinction which is found in nature prior to any activity of the mind, and that such distinction is not so great as the distinction between two altogether separate things or entities” (“Distinctions” 27).

Suarez believes that unity is distinguished from being “not only because it is one of its attributes, but because the name ['one' and 'being'] are not synonyms, and to them correspond diverse formal and objective concepts in the mind” (qtd. Gracia 480). Therefore, distinction between unity and being would fall under mental distinctions, and so would not be really distinct.
This distinction leads to the conclusion that unity, in reality, is an “attribute of being,” (Gracia 483). Furthermore, it is that attribute which prevents an entity from being divided “into many similar entities such as itself” (qtd. Gracia 484). Thus, unity is that which gives individuality. In other words, the principle of individuality is the whole entity, and so, as Gracia says, “being is convertible with individual being” (483). This understanding of individuality, which argues that “everything insofar as it exists is individual,” reflects the Aristotelian scholastic formula (486). Every entity is individual: matter, substantial form, etc. Considering this principle, we understand the standard scholastic explanation of the Eucharist to maintain that accidents have individual unity from the substances they inhere in. Being metaphysically distinct, they can logically exist apart from their original substance. Yet, because of their nature, they do not give identity to a substance. Rather, the union of matter and form do. This is the explanation which Descartes and Leibniz contend with in choosing to attribute the principle of individuation to something other than simply being.
CHAPTER II: THE REBELLIOUS REASONING OF DESCARTES

Descartes believed that the explanation of transubstantiation that used Aristotelian metaphysics was inadequate and hurt the validity of the sacrament. So, for the sake of maintaining the rationality of Christianity, Descartes found that it was necessary to find a better metaphysics. His metaphysics was the cause of a great deal of criticism, but Ariew notes the irony that most of the criticism of Descartes were previously used against Aristotelianism in the thirteenth century (144). Descartes’s solution to the problem of transubstantiation is best elucidated in one of his letters to the Mesland. He argues that, at the words of consecration, the soul of Jesus Christ informs the particles of bread and wine. Since, all matter, “which as a whole is informed by the same human soul,” is considered to be an entire human body, the bread and wine wholly and individually are made to be the body and blood of Jesus Christ when his soul informs them (Descartes, 3: 233-4). Descartes reaches this conclusion by completely turning around the principle of individuation as it was understood by the scholastics. Following St. Thomas, most scholastics saw matter as the principle of individuation, but Descartes declares that it is the soul which serves this function.

This chapter will first look at Descartes’s defense of transubstantiation with his own theories in response to Antoine Arnauld’s objections and in correspondence with the Jesuits Mersenne and Mesland. Then, I will evaluate his explanation according to the three parts of the Church’s decree on the Eucharist. This look at Descartes’s explanation of transubstantiation will reveal his view on the problem of individuation, which will lead
to a consideration of how equating the human soul with substantial form determines his view of individuation, noting particularly that the nature of the soul in Descartes’s metaphysic borrows heavily from the philosophical tradition of St. Augustine. Then, I will conclude with my observation of how Descartes's own beliefs affect his approach to the blurred lines between metaphysics and theology.

In his earliest references to the Eucharist, Descartes claims that transubstantiation can easily be explained using his philosophy, but avoids elucidating how this is done. The first reference Descartes makes to transubstantiation in his preserved letters is found in a letter addressed to Vatier in 1638. In this letter, Descartes is apparently addressing the recipient’s previous concerns that his philosophy contains ideas contrary to the faith. Descartes believes that his philosophy more strongly supports the Catholic faith. He writes, “Transubstantiation, in particular, which the Calvinists regard as impossible to explain by the ordinary philosophy, is very easily explained by mine” (Descartes, 3: 88). Yet, Descartes refrains from addressing how this is done. Instead, he writes that he sees no obligation to do so for the time being (3: 88). Again, in a letter to Mersenne, which is dated in January of 1641, he writes that transubstantiation “is very clear and easy to explain” on his principles (Descartes, 3: 172). He does not, however, address the issue any further in this letter.

Finally, in letter to Mersenne dated three months after the previous one, Descartes mentions that he is sending his replies to Arnauld’s objections (3: 177). In the same letter, Descartes is markedly bolder in his stance on transubstantiation. He writes the following to Mersenne:
You will see that in it I reconcile that doctrine of the Councils about the Blessed Sacrament with my own philosophy - so much so that I maintain that it is impossible to give a satisfactory explanation of the doctrine by means of the traditional philosophy. Indeed, I think that the latter would have been rejected as clashing with the Faith if mine had been known first. I swear to you in all seriousness that I believe it is as I say. So I have decided not to keep silent on this matter, and to fight with their own weapons the people who confound Aristotle with the Bible and abuse the authority of the Church in order to vent their passions - I mean the people who had Galileo condemned (Descartes, 3: 177).

In this excerpt, it is obvious that Descartes has decided to pit his philosophy against the Aristotelian tradition. Furthermore, this is also the letter with which Descartes sends his replies to Arnauld. Therefore, to see how Descartes addresses the apparent conflict of his metaphysic with the doctrine of transubstantiation, we must start with his response to Arnauld.

In the “Objections,” Arnauld voices the problem that Descartes faces. Catholics believe that the substance of the bread is taken away, with only the accidents remaining. Descartes does not think there are such things as sensible qualities, or accidents, to use the language of the Scholastics, only “various motions in the bodies that surround us” (Descartes, 2: 153). The motions enable us to perceive certain impressions that we call qualities. Only shape, extension and mobility remain and actually inhere in a substance, and they cannot exist without that substance. Indeed, Descartes identifies the substance of body with extension. Furthermore, there is no distinction between the substance and its different states (Descartes, 2: 153). So, Descartes is challenged to explain a change of
substance that is not accompanied by a change in appearance. To answer this challenge, Descartes ultimately appeals to a metaphysical entity that exists beyond the metaphysical entity of matter, the substantial form, but this answer comes later in his correspondence with Mesland. Therefore, I begin by looking at Descartes’s reply to Arnauld.

The first part of Descartes’s reply is simply a response to a technicality: he never explicitly denied the existence of accidents (Descartes, 2: 173). He distinguishes between not having knowledge of them, and supposing they do not exist, using the program of the Meditations as a way to avoid the criticism. Satisfied with this explanation, he states that God can separate modes from the substance they inhere in. So, he qualifies his position to mean that the modes cannot naturally be separated from their substance in order to avoid denying the omnipotence of God (Descartes, 2: 173). Following these qualification is perhaps the most important point of Descartes’ reply. The concept he chooses to adhere to in this instance is the problem of perception. He maintains that our senses only perceive the surface of things, and that this surface is neither part of the substance nor of the surrounding bodies, but rather “the boundary that is conceived to be common to the individual particles and the bodies that surround them; and this boundary has absolutely no reality except a modal one” (Descartes, 2: 174). To bring the point back to the matter of the Eucharist, the problem is that “the new substance must affect all our senses in exactly the same way as that in which the bread and wine would be affecting them if no transubstantiation had occurred” (Descartes, 2: 175). That is the role of the boundaries, which Descartes explores further in his letters to Mesland.

In two letters to the Jesuit Mesland, Descartes discusses ‘surfaces’ where he mentions the Eucharist. In the first, he distinguishes bodies from their surfaces as “a
substance from its modes” (Descartes, 3: 235). For the outward shape of the bread to remain in the Eucharist, at least one mode belonging to the bread must remain within it. That mode must be the ‘surface’ of the bread (Descartes, 3: 235). Continuing this discussion in the next letter, Descartes clarifies his concept of surfaces, which he defines as that which sits between an object and the air surrounding it. The surface is a mode of being, “which cannot be changed without a change in that in which or through which it exists” (Descartes, 3: 241). The importance for the matter of the Eucharist is that the surface of the bread and the surface of the air touching the bread are, in reality, a single thing. As Descartes says, “For if the body of Jesus Christ is put in the place of the bread, and other air comes in place of that which surrounded the bread, the surface which is between that air and the body of Jesus Christ is still numerically the same as that which was previously between the other air and the bread” (3: 242). This is because the numerical identity of the surface “does not depend on the identity of the bodies between which it exists, but only on the identity or similarity of the dimensions” (Descartes, 3: 242). Having elucidated this point, Descartes then provides an explanation of transubstantiation.

When talking about the body of a man Descartes feels it is necessary to clarify what he means by ‘body’. There are two ways in which to talk about bodies. In one sense, it is simply a “determinate part of matter,” but when speaking of the body of a man we mean something else (Descartes, 3: 242). The traditional philosophy of Descartes’ time says that man is conceived as body and soul. The contemporary of Descartes recognizes that dead and living people have something in common, a body. Therefore, in recognizing that there is an evident difference between a dead body and a living person,
the philosopher supposes that a living person has a soul and dead people do not. Furthermore, the philosopher must conclude, this soul is responsible for the acts of the living person’s body (Menn 250). The body of the man is all the matter attached to that man’s soul. It is for this reason that we can say, after the matter changes or the body increases or decreases in size, that it is the same body as long as it is united with that particular soul (Descartes, 3: 243).

Descartes next point builds directly into his theory of what happens in the Eucharist. When one eats bread or wine, the particles which make it up are dissolved into our bodies in a form of natural transubstantiation. They are the same particles, yet they are now part of the human body, united with the soul (Descartes, 3: 243). This is a natural transubstantiation, where the body incorporates the particles which were once considered particles of bread or of wine into itself. The miracle of transubstantiation in the Eucharist is that the soul of Jesus Christ informs the particles of the bread and wine “simply by the power of the words of consecration” (consecration is the action of declaring bread and wine to be the body and blood of Christ) as opposed to Jesus consuming them (Descartes, 3: 243). Since it is the soul which gives identity, Descartes concludes, one can easily see how the body of Christ can be wholly present once in the undivided host and also “whole and entire” in each of its parts, because “all the matter, however large or small, which as a whole is informed by the same human soul is taken for a whole and entire human body” (3: 244). With this explanation, Descartes maintains the supernatural aspect of transubstantiation, while also retaining the physics of his philosophy, but he also offends the traditional understanding of transubstantiation.
Ariew writes, “there is no doubt that both aspects of Descartes’s explanations of the Eucharist are in conflict with Thomist explanations” (152). Yet, I believe that his second explanation adequately captures what transubstantiation entails. The Thomist explanation equates numerical identity with matter, and the explanation of the Eucharist refers “not only to specific metaphysical and physical theories about substance, substantial forms, accidents or modes, and extension and quantity, but also to place and to the principles of individuation” (Ariew 152). This does not make sense within a philosophy that accepts atoms or something akin to them, such as Descartes’ mechanical philosophy. With philosophy working to accommodate the new science, the previous way of thinking needed to be replaced. Thus, Descartes writes in a later letter to Mesland, “the numerical identity of the body of a man does not depend upon its matter, but on its form, which is the soul” (3: 278). Associating numerical identity with form was not a novel concept. The Scotists (followers of Duns Scotus), in opposition to Thomists (followers of Thomas Aquinas), who held the previously common view, held the position that form was the principle of individuation (Ariew 85).

This solution might have been given more consideration if Descartes’ metaphysics had no other points of contention. Indeed, it was the radical dualism of Cartesian metaphysics that put other philosophers in doubt over his philosophy. Descartes was facing the same “Scotist-type” problem of the unity of mind and body in the human being (Ariew 56). Progress in the sciences, however, was giving support to his physics that was born from this metaphysics. So, critics had to ask where the soul resided in the body so that it could influence and be influenced by it. Eustachius gave multiple opinions on the topic, citing the church fathers claiming it to be in the heart, the Platonists.
claiming it to be in the brain, and Aristotle in holding that it informs the body in all its parts (84). Descartes’ explanation of transubstantiation seems to align with Aristotle’s view on this point, but in the Sixth Meditation, Descartes observes that the mind is only really affected by a small part of the brain, the pineal gland (2: 59).

Putting the validity of Descartes’ metaphysics aside, we will evaluate his explanation of transubstantiation according to the three parts of the Catholic Church’s understanding of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The first claim is that Jesus is present body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. Descartes’ explanation claims that when Christ’s soul informs the bread and wine, that they become his body. Bread and wine particles are incorporated into our bodies whenever we consume them. This is only a natural transubstantiation, whereas the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is a supernatural transubstantiation. The power of God makes this supernatural transubstantiation occur. Therefore, Descartes can confidently say that the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus are all accounted for according to his theory.

The second claim is that Jesus is present under the species of sensible things so that he is sacramentally present to us in his own substance. According to Descartes, the particles of bread and wine are made to be part of Jesus Christ’s body. Sensible things, according to Descartes, are the result of motion, which is found in matter. That the bread and wine particles remain, albeit substantiated into Christ’s body, allows for Jesus to be present under the species of these sensible things. Again, it seems that Descartes’ theory holds up.

The final claim is that the whole substance of the bread and the whole substance of the wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. Here,
Descartes is faced with difficulty. His theory claims that the particles of bread and wine are not actually destroyed. Yet, the traditional understanding of this passage was that the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine are destroyed and replaced by the substance of the body of Christ. The purpose for this was to avoid the confusion with the theory of consubstantiation, which states that both the substance of the bread and the substance of Christ’s body are present. The Catholic Church is adamant in its stance that the bread is no longer bread after the words of consecration, so Descartes’s theory received backlash, but in reality his theory seems to do no harm.

Yet, Descartes was working at a time when the intellectual world was generally dissatisfied with Aristotle, and much of Christianity was falling back to the theology and philosophy of Augustine. Menn describes the present tension when he states, “Aristotelian philosophy began with sensible things, and encountered the soul only at the end of its journey, as the last and most obscure question of physics: it is not surprising that the answers it gave were not always in accord with Christian faith” (54). Indeed, the problem of the Christian philosopher working with Aristotle was reconciling the ancient philosopher’s ideas with those of Christian theology. Descartes’s philosophical program intersects the expectation of the Counter-Reformation for a Christian philosophy “based integrally on Augustine and without appeal to Aristotle” (Menn 44). It is no coincidence, then, that Descartes found an audience with Jansenists such as Antoine Arnauld. The Jansenist movement was deeply rooted in Augustinian views of the nature of free will and grace.

According to Menn, Descartes “was answering the call of the Catholic reformers to take up Augustine’s method of reflection on soul and God, and to make it the basis for
thought” (44). But how does this embrace of Augustinian thought show itself in Descartes’ interpretation of transubstantiation? Augustine, in the *Confessions*, attributes the principle of individuation to form, rather than matter (307). The terms ‘form’ and ‘matter’ were used to denote the two foundations of substances in scholastic philosophy. Descartes almost completely rejected forms, except in allowing that the human soul be the form of a human being. This allows Descartes to claim in his letter to Mesland, that the soul of Jesus Christ, upon informing the matter of the host, makes the bread his body (3: 243)

That Descartes determines the soul to be the form of the human person thus reflects Augustine’s influence. Some have even argued that Descartes “anchors his whole philosophy where Augustine does, proceeding to draw the consequences of what Augustine too regarded as the starting-point of our knowledge of God and the world” (Menn 5). And, as Matthews points out, contemporaries of Descartes like Mersenne and Arnauld “all pointed to a similarity between Descartes’s cogito and reasoning…that can be found in Augustine” (222). This similarity is Descartes’s method in the *Meditations*, which begins with knowledge of the soul, moves to knowledge of God, and only then proceeds to knowledge of the world. This is significant because, as Emily Grosholz writes, “the objects of knowledge that Descartes puts first in the order of reasons are all individuals” (44). An individual knows herself first, then God, then extended things. This is basically the reverse of the method of the Aristotelian philosophers, who began with sensible things and moved upward to God.

Before even discussing extended objects in the Sixth Meditation, Descartes demonstrates in the Second Meditation that the first thing we can know exists is our soul,
“as conceived purely intellectually,” and in the third Meditation that the first thing we come to know outside of the soul is God, “as conceived purely intellectually” (Menn 246). Thus, Grosholz can say, “the two entities that Descartes claims to know first in the order of reasons are individuals: the self and God” (52). The second meditation suggests that human individuality consists in the human soul. Yet, Descartes’ radical doubt forces him to reconsider the individuality of other things. To do this, he must first move to knowledge of God. It is in perceiving God “purely intellectually” that Descartes is able to move from the knowledge of the soul to knowledge of God. Both the soul and God are known as purely intellectual. This, however, is only a starting point. For Descartes, and all Christians, God is so much more than pure intellect. Descartes, then, must prove that God is the creator of both spiritual and extended things. For this purpose, Descartes introduces the deceiving God.

As Menn states, “When we confront the possibility of an omnipotent deceiving God, we are forced to recognize that God is involved in knowledge, at least negatively, as a possible obstacle to knowledge” (238). Thus, the meditator is forced to conclude that we do not possess within ourselves the power of knowledge, which the soul can only receive from an appropriate source, “the God of popular belief” (Menn 238). Once the Meditator is forced to accept that God is at least involved in knowledge, Descartes can work to demonstrate “not just that God is non-deceptive or even benevolent, but also that he has whatever power is needed to produce a creature capable of knowledge” (Menn 242). To provide His creatures with the perfection of knowledge, God himself must hold the perfection of knowledge. Descartes believes he is able to infer all other divine attributes from this principle that God knows everything, and so he adopts the scholastic
interpretation of omniscience, which states that for God to know everything outside of Himself, He must have willed it to be (Menn 289). Thus, Descartes concludes that God must be the creator of all things outside of Himself by virtue of being omniscient, and therefore is the creator both spiritual and extended objects.

This is where Descartes presents his theory of dualism, which receives a great deal of backlash for many reasons, one of which being the problem raised by Antoine Arnauld in the “Fourth Set of Objections.” Arnauld says that what will most likely give the greatest offence to the Church “is that according to the author’s doctrines it seems that the Church’s teaching concerning the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist cannot remain completely intact” (Descartes, 2: 153). Yet Descartes’s theory of transubstantiation literally has the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine change into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. He can do this because he does not attribute individuation to matter. Substance is something more basic than matter and substantial forms inform matter. It is for this reason that Descartes believes his theory is of better use to the Church than the theories of the scholastics. Furthermore, when viewed in comparison to the three aspects of the Church’s explanation of the Eucharist, Descartes’ theory of transubstantiation is actually promising, especially when also considering modern discoveries in the realm of physics, such as the atom and subatomic particles. Attributing identity to physical entities causes all sorts of problems involving parts, and wholes, and parts of wholes. By keeping substance firmly rooted in the metaphysical realm of nonphysical being, Descartes preserves the unity of physically composite organisms. Following suit, we see Leibniz remove physical entities even further from his theory of metaphysics and explanation of transubstantiation.
CHAPTER III: THE APPEASEMENT APPROACH OF LEIBNIZ

When looking at Leibniz’s treatment of the Eucharist and the doctrine of transubstantiation, it is important to note the difference between early Leibniz’s philosophy and the philosophy of the later Leibniz, because early Leibniz “was very much immersed in a scholastic approach to [substances]” (Cover 19). This can easily be seen in his 1668 work, *On Transubstantiation*, which provides the first example of Leibniz’s attempts to make sense of transubstantiation as well as insight into how scholastic philosophy looked in the 17th century. Mature Leibniz moves away from this thinking and, in his later years, proposes the theory of monads that he commits himself to for the rest of his life. While his approach to the Eucharist may have shifted as he matured, McCullough argues that “when it comes to individuals and their individuation,” Leibniz remains within the framework of the scholastic tradition (204). Thus, his early approach to the Eucharist remains relevant to our study.

That being said, while I begin by looking at early Leibniz’s understanding of transubstantiation in order to garner a better understanding of his later views, I maintain that Leibniz’s explanation of transubstantiation according to his mature philosophy is the primary subject of this chapter. I will compare this theory to his later explanation of transubstantiation as it is expounded through his correspondence with the Jesuit Bartholomew Des Bosses. As in the chapter on Descartes, I will then evaluate his theory in light of the three parts of the Council of Trent’s decree on the Eucharist, and relate the problem of transubstantiation in Leibniz to the broader philosophical problem of
individuation through his theory of monads. Thus, I will conclude with my observation of how Leibniz’s beliefs, and particularly his Protestantism, determines his understanding of the relationship between theology and philosophy in the example of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The method of philosophical reasoning in Leibniz’s *On Transubstantiation* is very reminiscent of St. Thomas and the Jesuit scholastics in that he presents the explanation, then gives commentary on it (Leibniz, *Papers* 178). In the essay, he hopes to demonstrate the scholastic position that the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine are destroyed and replaced by the substance of Christ body with “only their appearance or accidents remaining,” and that Christ is present wherever “the appearance of consecrated bread and wine exists” (Leibniz, *Papers* 178). For Leibniz, this requires clearly defining the meanings of the terms “*substances, appearances or accidents, and numerical identity*” as the Scholastics understood them (Leibniz, *Papers* 178). These premises capture Leibniz’s understanding of transubstantiation at this point. A human body is a substance insofar as it is united with the human mind. When this union with a concurring mind changed in a body, it can be said to have been transubstantiated. “Hence bread and wine as bodies, when the concurrent mind is changed, are substantiated into the body of Christ, or taken up by Christ” (Leibniz, *Papers* 170). The significant point is that Leibniz attributes particular substance to union with a mind. In the case of the human body, this would mean union with the soul, which was believed to have mental processes. The connection of particular substances to minds relates closely to his later theory of monads, which will play a larger role in his discussions of the Eucharist.
Leibniz follows this claim to the necessary conclusion that a body “appropriated by the mind of Christ” must be numerically the same as “the body of Christ who suffered for us,” thus making either the consecrated bread or the consecrated wine a “numerically identical substance as the body of Christ” (Leibniz, *Papers* 180). Since nothing has changed except the “concurrent mind” which is united with the body, all accidents are preserved in the consecrated bread and wine (Leibniz, *Papers* 180). Finally, since minds are not in a place themselves, but act upon bodies which are in space, “the mind of Christ can be present everywhere in the species of consecrated bread and wine” (Leibniz, *Papers* 181). In defining transubstantiation as a change of substantial form, Leibniz has demonstrated “numerical identity of substance from the numerical identity of substantial form” and made substantial form the principle of individuation (Leibniz, *Papers* 182). So, having attributed individuation to form rather than matter, Leibniz expresses the same influence that impacted Descartes. Still, Leibniz retains much of the scholastic tradition in using the same language and terms.

The mature Leibniz took a different approach to the problem of transubstantiation. And more specifically, the Leibniz who corresponds with Des Bosses is tackling the problem that corporeal substances pose to his theory of monads and simple substances. Des Bosses initiated their discussion on the Eucharist by urging Leibniz to explain the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. For Des Bosses, it was important for being able to understand how extension can come about through Leibniz’s monads (*Correspondence* 149). To answer this challenge, Leibniz reaches for two possibilities: “either bodies are mere phenomena, and so extension also will be only a phenomenon, and monads alone will be real, but with a union supplied by the operation of the
perceiving soul on the phenomenon,” or we accept the existence of corporeal substances, and that they consist in some unifying reality, “which adds something absolute (and therefore substantial), albeit impermanent, to the things to be unified” (Leibniz, Correspondence 227). Transubstantiation, Leibniz says, must involve a change of that something, “for monads are not really ingredients of this added thing, but requisites, although they are required for it not by an absolute and metaphysical necessity, but only by exigency” (Leibniz, Correspondence 227). By this reasoning, when the substance is changed the monads will remain, because monads are not part of the substance of the body.

In his explanation, Leibniz is attempting to relate the accidents in the Eucharist to phenomena. The corporeal substance is above monads. By this explanation, the body is not truly a substance but only a phenomenon we perceive. Indeed, Leibniz states in a supplement to the same letter that if “bodies are phenomena, and are judged by our appearances, they will not be real, since they will appear differently to others” (Correspondence 231). He prefers that explanation to the introduction of some unifying reality, but Des Bosses does not accept that bodies are mere phenomena, and so must regard the unifying reality as something true. Leibniz is convinced that this thing must be a substance, but Des Bosses argues that it is an accident, in that it cannot exist without monads, and so is ‘accidental’ to them (Correspondence 237). There must be something more than mere phenomena for the theology of the Eucharist to make sense. Since Leibniz equates accidents with phenomena, he recognizes that this superadded thing must be a substance, because monads alone “do not constitute a complete substance” (Correspondence 243).
It takes several more letters before Leibniz proposes an explanation of transubstantiation using the idea of a substantial bond. The monads are retained, but God adds “the substantial bond of the body of Christ” while the previous substantial bond is destroyed, in order to substantially unite the “monads of the bread and wine” (Leibniz, *Correspondence* 273). It is the phenomena of the bread and wine monads which remain. The monads are not the principle of individuation for bodies. As Leibniz says, “we do not designate monads by either “this” or “body” (for how many have thought of them?), but the substantiated thing arising or composed through substantial bonds” (*Correspondence* 273). Thus, to explain “the substantial change of transubstantiation,” Leibniz introduces the *vinculum substantialae*, or substantial bond, as the unifying principle in corporeal substances (Cover 51).

Leibniz’s substantial bond “was to enjoy many of the properties Leibniz reserved for substances: it was to explain metaphysical unity...to have the status of a substantial form, and to consist in the primitive active power from which all actions of a substance arise” (Cover 51). The qualities of the substantial bond are the same as those which Leibniz would attribute to the principle of individuation. Hence, he can say that there only needs to occur “the destruction and substitution of the thing that formally constitutes composite substance,” thus allowing the monads, which cause the phenomena, to remain (Cover 275). With this explanation, the substantial bond would seem to provide an account of transubstantiation but for the fact that it seems to only be introduced to appease Des Bosses’s requests for an explanation of transubstantiation.

The *vinculum substantialae* is often used to charge Leibniz with insincerity as a philosopher. Leibniz did not believe in transubstantiation himself, and the *vinculum* is
inconsistent with Leibniz’s “picture of a world containing only simple substances” (Cover 51). Yet, discussions of the vinculum and transubstantiation were a significant part of the correspondence between Leibniz and Des Bosses, and the idea of the substantial bond was something the later Leibniz became fixated on explaining. That it first arises during a discussion of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist should not disqualify it from being considered genuine philosophy. Rather, it allows one to understand how Leibniz treated the distinction between philosophy and theology.

With the introduction of the vinculum substantiale into his theory of monads, Leibniz believes he has provided a way in which a Catholic can accept his metaphysics and still hold the Church’s teaching on transubstantiation. Leibniz does not accept either corporeal substances or transubstantiation as true (Look lxiii). He is only working to show how a Catholic might build off his monadology in order to understand certain matters of faith. That Leibniz clearly draws a line between philosophy and theology says a great deal about his program. The theory of monads is purely a philosophical theory that, in Leibniz’s eyes, “best accounts for the phenomena in a way consistent with the requirements of perfection, or divine wisdom” (Look lxi). Any religious claim must go beyond the theory of monads, which is supposed to be neutral on matters of dispute within Christianity, only having the constraint “that any miracles appealed to must be consistent with the theory of monads” (Look lxi). This is the difficulty with Leibniz’s position. He cannot completely separate metaphysics and theology, because they ultimately have consequences for one another.

Leibniz’s theory of monads questions the reality of matter in physical objects. A large part of Catholic belief emphasizes the reality of the material world, and it is for this
reason that Des Bosses has reservations “about the metaphysical adequacy of the theory of monads” (Look lxv). Leibniz supports the premise that bodies are mere phenomena, and the introduction of *vinculum substantiale* and corporeal substances does not actually change the nature of bodies in Leibniz’s monadology. Bodies in a corporeal substance are only realized phenomena (Leibniz, *Correspondence* 297). The phenomenological view of bodies is what puts Leibniz’s theory in contention with the Catholic Church’s teaching on the Eucharist. Having said this, I will evaluate his theory against the claims of the Church.

Again, the first claim is that Jesus is present body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. Leibniz’s theory is already at risk with this first claim. To begin, Jesus Christ’s body and blood are considered phenomena under Leibniz’s theory. Then, the substantial bond of the body of Christ is added to the monads of the bread and wine. These monads remain monads of bread and wine, but they are unified by a different substantial bond, that of the body of Christ. Leibniz makes no mention of the presence of Christ’s soul and divinity, but we can assume that they are somehow present in the substantial bond. Leibniz’s concern is more of the physical side of the metaphysical problem and less on the supernatural end. Yet, the monads of Christ are not present, and so one must wonder whether Christ is fully and substantially there.

So, we come to the second claim, which is that Jesus is present under the species of sensible things so that he is sacramentally present to us in his own substance. The preservation of the monads of the bread and wine explain how Jesus is present under the species of bread and wine, because the monads provide the phenomena. Assuming that the reality of substance is determined by the substantial bond, we must agree with
Leibniz that Jesus is present in his own substance if the substantial bond of his body has
replaced the previous substantial bond. Des Bosses’s reservations about the vinculum
being a substance are well founded, especially since Leibniz’s theory of monads does not
require them. Accepting or rejecting the reality of corporeal substances determines what
is considered substantial, and Leibniz seems to sway on the side of all thing being
phenomena.

The final claim is that the whole substance of the bread and the whole substance
of the wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. There cannot
be substantial change if there are no substances, and Leibniz only considers monads to be
substances, not bodies. Therefore, the reality of corporeal substances must be accepted to
even consider the act of transubstantiation. By Leibniz’s explanation, the monads of
bread and wine remain, but their substantial bonds are destroyed and replaced by the
substantial bond of the body of Christ. If the monads are part of the whole substance of
the bread and the whole substance of the wine, they must be replaced during
transubstantiation as well, but Leibniz is adamant that they remain, because they provide
the phenomena. The difficulty in reconciling Leibniz’s theory of monads with
transubstantiation should be apparent. It is difficult to speak of the change taking place
within a philosophy that rejects many common accounts of what change is.

As such, Leibniz’s position is tenuous. It is made even more precarious by the fact
that (1) he does not himself believe in the reality of transubstantiation, and (2) his answer
requires the reality of something that he is not fully ready to admit to. His program is
very much one of proposing “what if’s.” If transubstantiation is true, then corporeal
substances must be posited. If corporeal substances are true, then the vinculum
**substantiale** must be posited. If the *vinculum* is true, then we are left with a confusing understanding of the monads that contradicts Leibniz’s own emphasis on simple substances. Thus, his exploration of the matter with Des Bosses looks more like a thought experiment. Yet, it is still a fruitful correspondence, because it demonstrates that Leibniz considers the substantial bond to be the principle of individuation of corporeal substances.

The problem of individuation played a prominent role in much of his metaphysical thinking throughout his career. Leibniz tries to tackle the problem of individuation in one of his earlier papers, “First Truths,” where he sets the stage for his program by stating that no two things in nature can have only a numerical difference (Leibniz, *Papers* 413). This follows from his premises that an individual substance contains all of its past, present and future predicates within itself, and that each individual substance “involves the whole universe in its perfect concept” (Leibniz, *Papers* 414). Leibniz also proposes a theory of harmony, where, through God’s creation and ordination, everything that happens to the body “corresponds perfectly and automatically” to everything that happens to the soul. At this point, Leibniz brings in the problem of corporeal substances, which are confusing within his theory of monads, for they must exist in some sort of union added to the monads (Cover 51). No corporeal substance, Leibniz says, can be without some incorporeal component. If there was “nothing but extension, or magnitude, figure, and their variations” in a corporeal substance, then two corporeal substances could exist that were perfectly similar to each other, and since that is impossible, it follows that there is something “analogous to the soul” in corporeal substances, which would be similar to a substantial form (Leibniz,
Thus, all of these points build into the idea that bodies do not individuate substances, but some unifier is the principle of individuation.

The idea that this substantial bond is the principle of individuation comes from the concept of a substance as a thing in itself. The principle of individuation cannot be something attached to a substance, otherwise it could be shared amongst substances, making it something that is not the principle of individuation. “It is absolutely fundamental to Leibniz’s thinking on individuation that whatever individuates a substance must be something wholly internal to that substance itself” (Cover 28). The difficulty with corporeal substances in Leibniz’s metaphysics is that in order to exist, there must be some unifying reality over and above the monads. Thus, that unifying principle must be the substance, and therefore the principle of individuation as well.

Removing the distinction between substance and the principle of individuation is a foundational part of Leibniz’s metaphysics. For Leibniz, “there is something about individuals themselves that makes them individual” (McCullough 203). This something must account for and individual’s unity and distinction from other individuals and cannot be merely a quality of the individual. Basically, Leibniz is arguing that “each individual is its own principle of individuation” (McCullough 206). This is hinted at by his statement in De Transubstantione, where he states, “Substance is being which subsists in itself” (Papers 178). Thus, Leibniz’s view on individuals reflects the scholastic view that “everything insofar as it exists is individual” (Gracia 486). At the same time, however, he rejects the division of substance into matter and form, and takes up the theory of monads in its place. Having redrawn the lines of division, Leibniz is left with substantial bonds as his solution to corporeal substances.
The place of substantial bonds in the metaphysics of Leibniz is a strange one, but it makes sense in a philosophy that makes the principle of individuation the whole entity. In corporeal substances, there are parts that are being brought together. None of these parts can in themselves be the principle of individuation, and so the unifier that brings and holds the parts together must necessarily be the principle of individuation. Since the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist requires at least that corporeal substances exist, Leibniz is required to provide this explanation whether he accepts transubstantiation or not. Thus, a theological doctrine is still affecting the metaphysics of this philosopher by forcing the creation of an entirely new entity to deal with the problem of individuation.
CHAPTER IV: BRINGING THREE INTO ONE CONCLUSION

In the introduction, I set the stage for the problem at hand and gave an account of the doctrine that spurred the discussion, that of transubstantiation. In the following chapters, I followed the concept of individuality as three different methods of philosophy treated it within the problem of transubstantiation. These three philosophies were defended by the Jesuits, Descartes and Leibniz. The Jesuits provided the standard Catholic position on the Eucharist as it was passed down from the Council of Trent. This is the position against which Descartes and Leibniz were compared in determining the compatibility of their metaphysics with the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is clear from these observations that, for these philosophers, transubstantiation requires that the individuality of substances involves something other than what affects our senses. It must be something more real than mere phenomena. Indeed, a philosophy that wishes to remain true to transubstantiation can neither be completely materialistic, nor be total idealism, for the decree on the Eucharist clearly states that a substantial change occurs that cannot be perceived through the senses. We have already evaluated how Descartes and Leibniz’s theories held up to this doctrine, but how their theories compare to one another is a matter I now conclude with.

Descartes and Leibniz represent two different ways in which to approach philosophy. On one hand was Descartes, who wanted to replace scholastic philosophy. On the other hand was Leibniz, who took a more reconciliatory approach. Descartes more boldly left behind the traditional understanding of substances by adopting the position of
substantial dualism, while Leibniz retained a great deal of scholastic thought. Yet, despite these philosophical approaches, Descartes was a professed Catholic and Leibniz a professed Lutheran. They treated the line between metaphysics and theology very differently. Hence why Descartes’s *Meditations* reflects the thought of St. Augustine, while Leibniz must add an entirely new concept that was not previously a part of his philosophy to explain a theological decree. Descartes accepted the blurred lines between metaphysics and theology, but Leibniz thought that philosophy and theology occupied separate realms. Thus, their philosophical programs as well as their own religious beliefs impacted their theories on the Eucharist.

Despite these differences, Descartes and Leibniz are not completely different from each another and share a common view on individuality. This is obvious in the similarities between Leibniz’s *vinculum substantiale* and Descartes’s substantial form. In both instances, they are the principle of individuation for bodies, they are superadded to whatever reality is already present, and they do not have any extension in space. Both ideas are used in the explanation of corporeal substances, which are made of immaterial and immaterial. In both cases, the bond and the soul do not destroy the pre-existing components of the corporeal substance. So, unifying theme appears between these two philosophers, which says that individuality is associated with the unity within substances. Thus, Descartes and Leibniz reflect the position of Suarez, who held that substance itself is the principle of individuation, because individuality requires unity. Thus, Descartes and Leibniz’s metaphysical approaches demonstrate, at the same time, the consequences that theology has for metaphysics and the consequences that a certain metaphysic can have for theology.
LIST OF REFERENCES


