Preface

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The first time I was taught David Hume's example of the billiard ball, I was baffled. How can it be that all my life I thought that causation was something so simple? When one pool ball hits another, of course it causes the other to move. This seems like just plain common sense. As an eighteen year old in my first philosophy class, I went to my dorm room thinking about causation and about how Hume explained that there is no "necessary connection" between one ball moving to another and causing the other ball to move: it is just a matter of custom and habit that we think that it does. Such causation cannot be proven or follow from logical induction. This was exasperating but amazing at the same time. Much later I learned that Hume was not the first to come up with this criticism of causation in the 1730s. Malebranche had used it earlier in his *Search after Truth* (*De la recherche de la vérité*, 1674–1675) to support the view of God as the "occasional" cause of every instance of cause and effect: For even a billiard ball to cause another to move, God had to intervene. One does not need to go into all of the details of the transformation between Malebranche's metaphysical view of the world and Hume's skeptical one, Hume could not have thought what he did without Malebranche's philosophy.

This one example from the history of philosophy invisibly motivated me to study philosophy further: what causes something else to move? For a teacher the question might be, what story or philosophical argument might impel a student to be moved to desire further study? I could tell many friends Hume's story of the billiard ball, and these friends would not necessarily be moved as I was to study philosophy, to pursue the quest for knowledge more deeply. Moreover, this story of causation led me to ask, why is there something rather than nothing? Why is it

that we are here? Why is it that there is anything at all, and how do we account for this "anything"?

These questions form the background for the following examination on a silent and invisible occurrence in early modern philosophy: the move from wonder (*thaumadzein* in Greek or *admiration* in French) to curiosity. Simply speaking, every person in every society wonders about his or her existence. Even if this becomes a more scientific curiosity, the wonder need not disappear. It is only reignited in a different sense. The goal of this book is to show what this means in early modern Europe. Most of the authors included in this volume are early in their academic careers, as are the editors, who hoped this relative nearness to the initial influence of wonder might provide a novel introductory reflection upon the thinking of early modernity. In place of resorting to the antiquated method of teaching the history of philosophy by establishing Continental rationalism (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) versus British empiricism (Locke, Berkeley, Hume), the editors of this volume think that looking at a broader array of thinkers is more fruitful. We encourage teachers of the history of ideas or early modern philosophy to take thinkers like Malebranche, the Cambridge Platonists, Physico-Theology, or Giambattista Vico into account—none of whom fit neatly into Frederick Copleston's (1907–1994) reading of early modernity.[1] The book in hand attempts to read the history of early modern ideas in light of the notion of wonder, which is missing from the current literature. For example, in the recent sixteen-hundred-page *Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, wonder is mentioned merely on two occasions and only in relation to Descartes.[2] We hope this work begins to fill that lacuna. Although this book is by no means exhaustive of all of the early modern philosophers, theologians, or scientists on the subject of wonder, nevertheless as the subtitle indicates, it is meant as an introduction, not only to present early modern philosophy, but ideally to

1. See F. C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8 vols (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1946–1966), esp. vols. 4–6. Volumes 9–11 appeared later. This work is still the leading single-authored history of philosophy.

2. See *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, eds. D. Garber and M. Ayers, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2:933–34. Wonder is also overlooked in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. K. Haakonssen, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. D. Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

initiate the very experience of wonder within our readers. Our aim has thus been to inspire readers with awe as well as to enable them to read historical texts in a new way.[3]

Besides following the Coplestonian reading of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most scholars of early modern thought interpret this time period as one when God was considered an afterthought, or even superfluous, to the thought systems of, for example, Descartes, Spinoza, Berkeley, and the like. In place of this misreading of early modernity, we seek to show in this book that philosophy is still intimately connected to theology. Against scholars such as Jonathan Israel, who points to the secular origins of early modern thought, we think that for both Hobbes and Spinoza, theology and religion were at the very center of their work, even if theirs were fairly unorthodox theologies.[4] At the same time, a great number of thinkers were advancing and arguing for new philosophical theologies, such as "physico-theology." Many know that philosophy and theology were closely related in medieval thought, but this was also the case for most of early modernity, which is less acknowledged. During this latter period, however, another system of thinking and culture is added: science. In place of the centrality of philosophy and theology for medieval thought, philosophy, theology, *and* science become intertwined.[5] Belief in the wonder and works of God, evident in the quotation of Robert Boyle above, need not be taken as incompatible with philosophy and science. Unlike many thinkers and scientists of

3. One of the intended uses of this book is as an undergraduate textbook. For this reason, we point out that some chapters are more accessible than others for this audience. Most, especially those on single philosophers (e.g., Descartes, Pascal, Malebranche, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, and the like), are directed toward an undergraduate audience, though they may also be interesting to more-advanced scholars. The chapters considering various thinkers (e.g., "Religious Awe at the Origin of Natural Science in Eighteenth-Century Physico-Theology," "A Risk of Testimony: Astonishment and the Sublime," and "Ways of Wondering: Beyond the Barbarism of Reflection") are less accessible to undergraduates.

4. Cf. Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

5. For this discussion, see David C. Lindberg, "Medieval Science and Religion," in *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, edited by Gary B. Ferngren (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 57–72. For the birth of science as a system of thinking and culture, see Stephen Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity*, 1210–1685 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006).

today, the early modern writers discussed in this book did not take for granted this interaction between philosophy, theology, and science.

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