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# Foreshadowing Spinoza

## *Johannes Clauberg on God and Miracles*

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### Abstract

This paper examines two interpretations of a passage in Descartes's text. Johannes Clauberg and Benedict Spinoza comment on the same paragraph in the *Principles of Philosophy* (1646). Descartes, in the paragraph, argues that the same amount of motion remains in the universe because of God's immutable essence and operation. On the one hand, Clauberg embraces Descartes's physics in general but modifies it to suit the theological tradition of the Reformed church, which held the official confession for where his professional career mattered. Spinoza, on the other hand, gets rid of all traces of the biblical religion from Descartes's physics. While particular theological (or anti-theological) positions of these thinkers dictate their interpretations of Descartes's text, their solutions are surprisingly similar.

### Keywords

Johannes Clauberg – Cartesianism – Spinoza – miracles – naturalism – biblical religion

## 1 Introduction

After the death of Descartes, controversy over the new science in general, and over Descartes's philosophy in particular, continued to divide university life in the Dutch Republic. At a time when Descartes was still in the Netherlands, the conservative theologians, led by Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), had started a campaign against the new philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Though the intervention of the

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<sup>1</sup> Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650*

state somewhat calmed the controversy, a group of young Cartesians appeared on the scene, enthusiastically promoting their master's thought during the 1650s and 1660s.<sup>2</sup> The group included Tobias Andreae (1604–1676), Johannes de Raey (1622–1702), Johannes Clauberg (1622–1665), and Christoph Wittich (1625–1687).<sup>3</sup> These young “Calvinist” Cartesians were careful not to deviate from the confession of the Reformed Church,<sup>4</sup> as many of them held academic positions in various universities and gymnasiums, which were under heavy scrutiny of the ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>5</sup> Their version of Cartesianism, accordingly, took a theological shape—though they often claimed only to do philosophy.

Johannes Clauberg was one of the leading figures among these Cartesians.<sup>6</sup> Because of his mastery of the new philosophy, he was sometimes even esteemed higher than his master. In a letter written in 1668 to his pupil Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), Jacob Thomasius (1622–1684) writes:

In the last few months, I have read both Descartes and Clauberg carefully. I must tell you the following: for my taste, I prefer Clauberg to Descartes. More than his famous teacher, Clauberg protects his pen from idle chatter by learning to write more methodically, clearly, and simply. At the same

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(Carbondale, 1992); J.A. van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality: Voetius and Descartes on God, Nature, and Change* (Leiden, 1995).

- 2 This was partially due to the liberal stance of the state during the *stadholderless* period (1650–1672). On the relationship between politics and philosophy, see Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden, 2001), 65–74; Herbert Harvey Rowen, *John de Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland, 1625–1672* (Princeton, 1978), 401–419.
- 3 Tobias Andreae, *Methodi Cartesianae Assertio* (Groningen: Cöllén, 1654); Johannes de Raey, *Clavis philosophiae naturalis* (Leiden: Elsevier, 1654); Christoph Wittich, *Dissertationes duae* (Amsterdam: 1652/1653). On these works, see Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch* (see above, n. 1), 72; Leen Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge* (Leiden, 1994–1995), 2: 429; Han van Ruler, “Substituting Aristotle: Platonic Themes in Dutch Cartesianism,” in *Platonism at the Origins of Modernity: Studies on Platonism and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Douglas Hedley and Sarah Hutton (Dordrecht, 2008), 159–175.
- 4 Some call them “ecclesiastical Cartesians.” See Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)* (Leiden, 2001), 84–85.
- 5 Regarding censorship in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, see Wiep van Bunge, “Censorship of Philosophy in the Seventeenth-century Dutch Republic,” in *The Use of Censorship in the Enlightenment*, ed. Mogens Laerke (Leiden, 2009), 95–117. Also, on Voetius’s relation to Cartesianism, see Aza Goudriaan, *Reformed Orthodoxy and Philosophy, 1625–1750: Gisbertus Voetius, Petrus van Mastricht, and Anthonius Driessen* (Leiden, 2006).
- 6 On Clauberg’s life and works, see Theo Verbeek, “Johannes Clauberg: A Bio-Bibliographical Sketch,” in *Johannes Clauberg (1622–1665) and Cartesian Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Theo Verbeek (Dordrecht, 1999), 182–200.

time, I know you have a word or two to say regarding this matter since you have known the Cartesians much better than I do.<sup>7</sup>

Led by other Cartesians like Tobias Andreae (1604–1676) and De Raey, Clauberg became a staunch follower of Descartes and began to defend his master's thought in various academic settings. Teaching in Herborn and subsequently in Duisburg, Clauberg published his *Defensio cartesiana* (1652) with a view to demonstrating that Cartesianism in no way deviated from the theological orthodoxy of the Reformed tradition.<sup>8</sup> He also composed a work on logic, incorporating Cartesian philosophy into traditional scholastic logic.<sup>9</sup> During this period, Clauberg also wrote *De cognitione Dei et nostri* (1656), which later came to be regarded as a quintessential work of Calvinist Cartesianism.<sup>10</sup> In addition to these works, he composed a book of Cartesian metaphysics called *Ontosophia*, which would go through three major revisions.<sup>11</sup> Together with its last edition, he published a collected work on physics. One of the works from this collection, the *Physica contracta*, will form the primary source of investigation in this paper.<sup>12</sup> In all these works, we can observe a general tendency to harmonize Cartesian philosophy with Calvinist theology. However, amidst a productive career, Clauberg passed away in January 1665 at the age of forty-two.

Clauberg's works were not only influential among the Calvinist Cartesians but also among thinkers such as Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) and Lodewijk Meyer (1629–1681), who are said to have “radicalized” Cartesianism.<sup>13</sup> Unlike

7 G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen (Berlin, 2006), II.1:22.

8 Clauberg, *Defensio cartesiana* (Amsterdam: Elzevir, 1652).

9 Clauberg, *Logica novantiqua* (Amsterdam: Elzevir, 1654).

10 Clauberg, *De cognitione Dei et nostri* (Duisburg: Wyngaerden, 1656). Abraham Heidanus (1597–1678), the leader of Leiden Cartesians, presented the work to Voetius to prove their orthodoxy. See Aza Goudriaan, *Philosophische Gotteserkenntnis bei Suárez und Descartes: Im Zusammenhang mit der Niederländischen Reformierten Theologie und Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Leiden, 1999), 39.

11 Clauberg, *Elementa philosophiae sive Ontosophia* (Groningen: Nicolai, 1647); Idem, *Ontosophia nova* (Duisburg: Wyngaerden, 1660); Idem, *Metaphysica de ente, quae rectius ontosophia* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1664). See Massimiliano Savini, *Johannes Clauberg: Methodus Cartesiana et Ontologia* (Paris, 2011).

12 Clauberg, *Physica, quibus rerum corporearum vis et natura ... explicantur* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1664).

13 The inventory of Spinoza's library at the time of his death indicates that he owned a Dutch translation of Clauberg's *Defensio cartesiana* (see above, n. 8) as well as *Logica novantiqua* (see above, n. 9). The latter was also referred to several times in the work of his friend Lodewijk Meijer (1629–1681), *Philosophia S. Scripturae interpres* ([Amsterdam], 1666), 4,

the Calvinist Cartesians, these men were less mindful of ecclesiastical authority, partly because they did not hold any academic position. Working outside the academy and being free of ecclesiastical pressure, these radical thinkers began to produce interpretations of Descartes's philosophy that would shake the Dutch *intelligentsia*.<sup>14</sup> As an example of such interpretations, Spinoza published his *Principia philosophiae cartesianae* (hereafter *PPC*) and its appendix *Cogitata metaphysica* (hereafter *CM*) in 1663.<sup>15</sup> The work does not fully disclose Spinoza's thought as it would become known in his later works. And yet, because of its keen and radical interpretation of the Frenchman's philosophy, Spinoza's name became well known beyond his immediate circle.<sup>16</sup>

Commentators agree that a clear party line existed between the Calvinist Cartesians and the radicals.<sup>17</sup> Though mutually indebted to the Frenchman's philosophy, these groups could not see eye to eye on a range of issues regarding God, the Bible, and politics. Comparative analyses on Clauberg and Spinoza generally follow this scheme as well.<sup>18</sup> For example, Jeongwoo Park, focusing on metaphysics, sees a strong contrast between the two; and, of course, there are obvious differences: whereas Clauberg accommodates Descartes to protestant scholasticism, Spinoza gets rid of all the remainders of scholastic theology. In contrast to these studies, some have suggested that there is

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38. See Jacob Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's: In Quellenschriften, Unkunden, und Nichtamtlichen Nachrichten* (Leipzig: Veit & Comp., 1899), 163.

14. Wiep van Bunge, "'Concordia Res Parvae Crescunt': The Context of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Radicalism," in *The Dutch Legacy: Radical Thinkers of the 17th Century and the Enlightenment*, ed. Sonja Lavaert and Winfried Schröder (Leiden, 2017), 16–34.

15. Spinoza, *Principia philosophiae cartesianae* (Amsterdam: Rieuwerts, 1663).

16. In his response to Thomasius's letter on April 20/30, 1669, Leibniz mentions the name of Spinoza along with other Cartesians such as Andreae and De Raey. See Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (see above, n. 7), 11.1: 24.

17. Josef Bohatec, *Die cartesianische Scholastik in der Philosophie und reformierten Dogmatik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1912); Caroline L. Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands cartesianisme, avec sommaire et table des matières en français*, ed. Theo Verbeek (Utrecht, 1989); Thomas A. McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands, 1639–1676: The New Science and the Calvinism Counter-Reformation*, Ph.D. diss. (University of Pennsylvania, 1976); Alexander X. Douglas, *Spinoza and Dutch Cartesianism: Philosophy and Theology* (Oxford, 2015).

18. Jeongwoo Park, "Communicatie bij Clauberg en Spinoza," in *Spinoza en het Nederlands cartesianisme*, ed. Gunther Coppens (Leuven, 2004), 39–45; Idem, "La critique du Medium dans les *cogitata metaphysica* et l'invention d'une onto-épistémologie spinozienne dans le débat néerlandais," in *Spinoza et ses scolastiques: Retour aux sources et nouveaux enjeux*, ed. Frédéric Manzini (Paris, 2011), 85–96. Others have focused on logic. See Jacqueline Lagrée, "Clauberg et Spinoza: De la logique novantique à la puissance de l'idée vraie," in *Méthode et métaphysique chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1989), 19–45; Aaron V. Garrett, *Meaning in Spinoza's Method* (Cambridge, 2003), 151–156.

a closer relationship between the two. Focusing on their physics, Daniel Garber argues that the early Spinoza had many things in common with Clauberg and the Calvinist Cartesians. According to Garber, Spinoza was “a card-carrying member in the early circle of Dutch Cartesians” and his radical notion of substance, in fact, could be an outworking of what Clauberg had previously suggested.<sup>19</sup>

Following Garber but from a slightly different angle, I argue that even though Clauberg’s intention was not to deviate from, but to remain within the limits of Christian orthodoxy, his actual position turned out to be much more radical and even foreshadowed Spinoza’s. In other words, though we should not doubt its authenticity, Clauberg’s religious commitment did not quite match the substance of his thought. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that the goal of the present paper is not to demonstrate Clauberg’s influence on Spinoza, but only to show Clauberg’s radicalism regarding a given topic: the relationship between God’s operation and the world’s motion in general and the question of miracles in particular. To do so, let us first have a look at Clauberg’s interpretation of Descartes’s text, in which the French master explains God as the cause of the same quantity of motion in the world. We shall then examine how Clauberg tries to defend the notion of miracles. Next, we shall examine how Spinoza deals with the same text in Descartes and see how, in a way resembling Clauberg’s, he ended up attacking the notion of miracle.

## 2 Clauberg and Divine Motion

In the eighteenth disputation of his *Physica contracta*, Clauberg elaborates on the following proposition: God is the primary cause of motion and always conserves the same amount of motion in the world.<sup>20</sup> The proposition is more or less a summary and elaboration of article 36 of the second part of Descartes’s *Principia*.<sup>21</sup> Clauberg begins his discussion by defining the cause of motion. He warns his readers that he does not use the word “cause” in the Aristotelian sense. Aristotelians, in general, argue that substantial forms provide the inter-

19 Daniel Garber, “The Clauberg Connection: Descartes, Spinoza, and The ‘Elegant Analogy,’” in *Descartes: Reception and Disenchantment*, ed. Yaron Senderowicz and Yves Wahl (Tel Aviv, 2000), 13–24.

20 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII (see above, n. 12), 167–177.

21 René Descartes, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, vol. 8–1, ed. Charles Ernest Adam and Paul Tannery, 3rd ed. (Paris, 1996), 61–62. Adam and Tannery’s edition of Descartes’s *Oeuvres* will hereafter be abbreviated *AT*, followed by volume number and page number.

nal cause of motion in matter. Each substantial form is also endowed with a purpose or goal so as to realize its fullness of being. Because Clauberg accepts Cartesian mechanicism, he rejects the theory of substantial forms, recognizing no internal principle of motion in matter. Nor does he recognize the final cause of motion, because the end or *telos* of each material object is wholly unknown to human reason.<sup>22</sup> This knowledge, Clauberg argues, belongs only to God. Matter, therefore, has no formal or teleological cause within itself; it is merely a passive object, which is perpetually inert and at rest (*iners et otiosa*).<sup>23</sup> So the cause of motion, for Clauberg, has to be strictly external, forcing an object to move. He calls this type of cause the *causa efficiens*.

According to Clauberg, there are two kinds of efficient causes.<sup>24</sup> The first is the universal and primary one that enables all motions. Its effect is the motion of the entire universe. The others are given by the particular and secondary causes whose effect is some motion in this or that part of the universe. In this proposition, Clauberg is mainly interested in the first type of efficient cause, for the second is the subject of special physics (*physica speciali*). We must be careful not to think that these two kinds of efficient cause are really different but are distinguished for the sake of understanding.<sup>25</sup> There is only one agent that moves all bodies in the world.

So then, what is this one agent that causes the motion of the entire world? Clauberg says that it is God. According to Clauberg, God is the universal cause of all motions because of his perfection and power.<sup>26</sup> God is supremely perfect, so there is nothing good and true that does not come from God. If there was, there would be other sources of the good and the true, and God would not be supremely perfect. Clauberg applies the same line of argument to motion. Because God is supremely perfect, there is no motion that does not stem from God. Therefore, God is the universal cause of all motion in the world.<sup>27</sup> In addi-

22 Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality* (see above, n. 1), 136–137, 139–142.

23 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII, § 4 (see above, n. 12), 168.

24 *Ibid.*, 168.

25 Some interpreters really distinguish these two causes and argue as though there are in fact two different agents that cause universal and particular motion. See Tad M. Schmaltz, *Early Modern Cartesianisms: Dutch and French Connection* (Oxford, 2016), 169–170, 177. In contrast, Clauberg here argues that there is only one agent of motion without rejecting the existence of secondary causes. Thus, I take the position that Clauberg follows a type of interpretation of Descartes made by scholars like Daniel Garber, who argue that bodies cannot be genuine causes of change in the physical world of extended substance. See Daniel Garber, *Descartes Embodied: Reading Cartesian Philosophy through Cartesian Science* (Cambridge, 2001), 205.

26 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII, § 10 (see above, n. 12), 169.

27 For different types of occasionalism, see Ursula Renz and Han van Ruler, “Okkasionalis-

tion to being supremely perfect, God is also omnipotent. Because of his power, God can cause all kinds of motion and rest in the world, such as the movement of heavenly bodies, the oceans, or the earth.

Based on God's perfection and power, Clauberg argues that God does not merely provide the power for all things to move, but he also moves material objects directly. Clauberg regards the first act as creation and the latter as conservation. Traditionally, the processes of creation and conservation had been distinguished. Clauberg, however, ends up arguing that it is simply the same God who creates and conserves all motion in the universe.<sup>28</sup> God first creates material things with motion and rest by impelling some parts and slowing down others. He then continues to conserve the same motion and rest, for things would not continue to be otherwise. Clauberg calls this divine act of conservation the "continual creation."<sup>29</sup>

Summing up the argument, Clauberg states:

It is, therefore, most agreeable to reason that we state the following: God now conserves just as much motion and rest in the total material reality of the universe as he put at the beginning of things and of time, and he does so by his regular operation as he did at the beginning of creation with his regular operation alone, with which he is near and present in all things.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to note that Clauberg follows Descartes's text almost verbatim except for one word. In the *Principia*, Descartes had stated that

[I]n the beginning, he created matter, along with its motion and rest; and now, merely by his regular concurrence, he preserves the same amount of motion and rest in the total material reality as he put there in the beginning.<sup>31</sup>

In comparison, Clauberg replaces the word "concurrence" (*concursum*) with "operation" (*operatio*). The modification seems insignificant, but it has wider implications once we realize that Descartes's use of the word "concurrence"

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mus," in *Enzyklopädie Philosophie*, 3 vols, ed. Hans Jörg Sandkühler (Hamburg, 2010), II: 1843–1846.

28 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII, § 12 (see above, n. 12), 169.

29 Ibid., disp. XVIII, § 14, 169: "continua creatio."

30 Ibid., disp. XVIII, § 15, 169–170.

31 Descartes, *Principia*, AT VIIIA, 61.

had stirred some violent reactions among conservative theologians of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

The concept of concurrence was developed initially by the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) and then became a part of the Reformed tradition.<sup>32</sup> According to Suárez and the Reformed theologians, God is the efficient cause of the universe in three ways: creation, conservation, and concurrence.<sup>33</sup> In the first two, God alone is the cause. But in the third, God cooperates with material things, which are endowed with substantial forms. Material objects, in other words, can play active roles in their operation and motion. In contrast, when Descartes uses the concept of concurrence, he denies any causal and active role to material objects because they are entirely passive beings stripped of substantial forms. He instead regards God as the sole factor responsible for maintaining the same amount of motion and rest in the universe.<sup>34</sup>

Descartes's view did not sit well with Reformed theologians. Gisbertus Voetius, for example, was aware of the danger that the mechanistic worldview might create for the concept of concurrence even before Descartes had published his works.<sup>35</sup> According to Voetius, a substantial form cooperates with God and therefore functions as the secondary cause of motion. But mechanistic philosophers rejected the theory of substantial forms. When this theory is rejected, there would be no other cause of motion besides God in the universe. In consequence, all sorts of absurdities might follow. If God is the sole and direct cause of motion, the separation between God and material reality vanishes. As a result, God would no longer be simple due to his direct involvement with material reality. Besides, there would be no essential differences among material things because all differences, without the substantial form, would only be accidental.

The Leiden theologian Jacob Revius (1586–1658) offers a similar criticism when he comments on the fifth part of Descartes's *Discourse of the Method*. In the text, Descartes equates divine conservation and concurrence and denies

32 Peter Machamer & James E. McGuire, *Descartes's Changing Mind* (Princeton, 2009), 37–45; Tad M. Schmaltz, ed., *Efficient Causation: A History* (Oxford, 2014), 83–131, 139–164; J.A. van Ruler, “New Philosophy to Old Standards: Voetius' Vindication of Divine Concurrence and Secondary Causality,” *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 71 (1991), 58–91.

33 Schmaltz, *Efficient Causation* (see above, n. 32), 148–149.

34 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII, § 15 (see above, n. 12), 169–170; Descartes, *Principia*, AT VIII A, 61.

35 Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectarum disputationum theologicarum pars prima* (Utrecht: Waesberge, 1648), 873–874. Cf. Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality* (see above, n. 1), 284–285. The disputation against the new philosophy of Descartes was held at Utrecht University on December 23 and 24 in 1641.



any agency of motion to created reality. Revius is perplexed as to why Descartes keeps using the word “concurrence” if he rejects its traditional meaning. For according to Revius, when bodies are deprived of an active power of motion, there cannot be any concurrence between God and bodies.<sup>36</sup> Revius furthermore warns that when conservation and concurrence are equated, it would eventually end up compromising God’s work. He states:

I will only ask the next question: how can the secondary cause be said to cooperate with the primary cause in conservation as well as in creation without doing any injury to the miracle of creation?<sup>37</sup>

Revius argues that by confusing divine conservation with concurrence, Descartes has left room for cooperation even in divine conservation and creation. According to Revius, if there is any cause besides God that is responsible for divine conservation and creation, it would violate the work of God. Even the act of creation, which is extraordinary and miraculous, would then be deemed as a form of cooperation between God and material reality.<sup>38</sup>

Clauberg must have been aware of the debate regarding the concept of concurrence.<sup>39</sup> He knew that if he affirmed the role of God as the universal cause of motion while maintaining divine concurrence, he would fall prey to the criticism of conservative theologians. So, he decided to avoid the term and instead use the term “operation” to simplify the description of divine causation. In this way, Clauberg can safely claim—without agitating theologians—that through divine operation, God is present in all things. After putting the complicated problem of divine concurrence aside, Clauberg concludes that God is the sole universal cause maintaining the same amount of motion and rest in the world from the beginning of creation until now.<sup>40</sup>

But how is it possible to know that God maintains the same amount of motion and rest in the universe? To be certain of the claim, we must first know whether the amount of motion and rest are quantifiable. Clauberg states that because God creates all material objects with a certain weight, number, and measurement, the intensity of motion can easily be calculated once its veloc-

36 Jacob Revius, *Statera philosophiae cartesianae* (Leiden: Petrus Leffen, 1650), 72–73; Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality* (see above, n. 1), 274–277; Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part V, *AT* VI, 45.

37 Revius, *Statera* (see above, n. 36), 73.

38 *Ibid.*, 72.

39 Clauberg’s *Defensio cartesiana*, for example, was a critical response to Revius’s *Statera*.

40 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII, § 15 (see above, n. 12), 169–170.

ity is known. For Clauberg, God's mathematical knowledge of material things undergirds the actual quantity of motion and rest in the universe. Having established the quantifiable nature of motion, Clauberg then goes on to argue that the amount of motion and rest remains constant in the universe. He tries to prove the claim by using the analogy of a large city. Clauberg states that within the city the total amount of money always stays the same, even when some citizens may become richer and others poorer.<sup>41</sup> He also reasons analogically by comparing the quantity of motion with that of matter. He states that because the total amount of material reality stays the same even after countless series of generation and corruption, the amount of motion and rest must also stay the same.<sup>42</sup>

However, both arguments are not very convincing, for they rely on analogy. In fact, Clauberg is aware that the demonstration is impossible because of the limitations of human reason. There is, in other words, no way of establishing its truth except by presupposing it. The presupposition, in turn, must be based on the discussion of divine reality, for the claim has more to do with the nature of God than with the nature of the universe.<sup>43</sup> Clauberg, therefore, turns to a theological argument to establish his claim.<sup>44</sup>

Clauberg generally follows Descartes's theological discussion on this point. The French philosopher had argued that the amount of motion in the world is always constant: "[f]or ... God's perfection involves not only his being immutable in himself, but also his operating in a manner that is always utterly constant and immutable."<sup>45</sup> According to Descartes, God is not only immutable in his essence but also immutable in his operation with respect to physical reality. Because God operates on material processes in a consistent manner, the world can maintain the same amount of motion and rest. He says that this immutable operation expresses God's perfection. Similarly, Clauberg states:

Certainly, we will affirm that the contemplation of divine wisdom and consistency requires that we judge the same quantity of motion is effected by him in the universe of things, so that we might not seem to detract from the praise due to God on account of his omnipotence or wisdom and perfect consistency, by considering him to create and conserve sometimes

41 Ibid., § 20, 170.

42 Ibid., disp. XVIII, § 25, 171. Clauberg bases his argument on the standard philosophical doctrine: "nil fieri ex nihilo, in nihilum nil posse resolvi."

43 Ibid., disp. XVIII, § 33, 172.

44 Ibid., disp. XVIII, § 31, 172.

45 Descartes, *Principia*, AT VIII A, 61.

more, and sometimes less motion in the world, adding something to his work now and taking something away at another time.<sup>46</sup>

In this text, Clauberg calls upon the contemplation of God's wisdom and consistency, which in turn function as the basis for the idea that the same amount of motion always remains in the world.

But if Clauberg is allowed to use the concept of divine wisdom and consistency to prove his claims with respect to the amount of motion, can others just as well pick different attributes of God to disprove his claim? For example, could one argue that because God is absolutely free, he might create more things and therefore bring more motion into the world?<sup>47</sup> Clauberg responds to this objection by emphasizing the importance of understanding a particular attribute of God in relation to the rest of his attributes. One should not, in other words, focus solely on the attribute of divine freedom. Furthermore, Clauberg's claim regarding the amount of motion does not merely concern the parts, but equally the whole of the universe. God does not manifest his attribute here or there, but he manifests his perfection in the totality of the universe. That is why Clauberg warns that even when we observe God adding more motion here and taking away there, we should not deem God to have lost his wisdom and consistency. Instead, we must say that God maintains the same amount of motion and rest in the universe at all times by exercising his freedom as well as his wisdom.

Clauberg's emphasis on taking account of the full range of divine attributes is also a correction to Descartes's argument. In his attempt to explain the constancy of the total amount of motion in the world, the French philosopher had based his claim solely on the attribute of immutability. But if one overemphasizes the concept of divine immutability, material reality as such could also end up being deemed as immutable. If so, the existence of motion might be denied.<sup>48</sup> As this conclusion is utterly absurd, Clauberg instead suggests that rather than focusing on divine immutability alone, other critical attributes such as freedom must be held in view at the same time. He argues as follows:

Indeed, it is because we emphatically assert that not only the freedom of God is demonstrated in such mutability and diverse change of all things, but also the perfection of the divine nature is demonstrated as it remains one and the same. This is the eternal constancy of God and immutability,

46 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII, § 35 (see above, n. 12), 173.

47 Ibid., disp. XVIII, § 36, 173–174.

48 Ibid., disp. XVIII, § 41, 175.

in which the same quantity and measure of motion and of variation in the whole world is perpetually conserved.<sup>49</sup>

According to Clauberg, while God's freedom secures the world's diverse changes, God's immutability secures the constancy of the amount of motion and change. In this way, Clauberg can explain the constancy and diversity of the universe more fully than Descartes.

### 3 Clauberg's Miracles

At the same time, Clauberg's explanation of the universe is not without problems. By basing his argument on a range of divine attributes, he is indeed able to provide a more complete account of the order of nature. But the problem is that the account is too complete. His account leaves no space for God's operation beyond the order of nature. Because God's freedom is equated with the world's diversity and his immutability with its constancy of motion, there is no attribute that guarantees extraordinary and supernatural operations of God beyond the operation of the world. In such a world, miracles cease to exist. This conclusion goes directly against the theological tradition of orthodox Christianity. The claim, therefore, falls prey to the criticism of conservative theologians who might be eager to point out the dangerous tendency of Cartesian philosophy to reject the notion of miracles.<sup>50</sup>

Perceiving the danger, Clauberg warns his readers:

In this way, we still do not destroy the miraculous works of God, which divine revelation bids us to believe. But we only deal with those things which take place according to the order of nature, and are physical as well as natural.<sup>51</sup>

Clauberg warns his readers that in his *Physica contracta*, he is only discussing issues concerning material objects and their operations, which fall under the subject of natural philosophy in general and physics in particular. He, accordingly, does not negate the divine work of miracles, which fall under the subject

49 Ibid.

50 Petrus van Mastricht, *Vindiciae veritatis et auctoritatis Sacrae Scripturae* (Utrecht: Waesberge, 1655), 40–42; Adrien Baillet, *La vie de Monsieur Descartes* (Paris: Horthemels, 1691), 2:146.

51 Clauberg, *Physica*, disp. XVIII, § 43 (see above, n. 12), 176.

of divine revelation. Clauberg goes on to quote Maimonides's texts, where the Jewish philosopher explains the distinction between the natural and supernatural works of God. According to Maimonides (1135/38–1204), even though miracles such as a stick changed into a serpent, water turned to blood, and a hand that becomes white as snow may seem to interrupt the order of nature, such examples do not impact the permanence of the order.<sup>52</sup> Instead, they are only interruptions of the order because they are performed without any natural cause. Clauberg refers to Maimonides to demonstrate that he, in no way, negates miracles, even though he emphasizes the constancy of the world's motion as it is based on divine attributes. In this way, Clauberg tries to secure the metaphysical ground for Cartesian physics without jeopardizing God's ability to work beyond the order of nature. But his solution still does not provide an adequate theological or philosophical basis for miracles. Instead, it seems to demand a leap of faith to believe in the extraordinary works of God in spite of philosophical conclusions.

A similar ambiguous stance on miracles is seen elsewhere in Clauberg's works. For example, he discusses the topic of miracles and supernatural phenomena in exercise 78 of his *De cognitione Dei et nostri*, a section entitled "On wonderful invisible and supernatural things" (*De rebus admiralibus invisibilibus et hyperphysicis*).<sup>53</sup> The section is found in a series of eight exercises dealing with various aspects of wonder, which in turn are commentaries on articles 70 through 78 of Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*.<sup>54</sup> While Descartes mainly discusses the nature of wonder in relation to human knowledge, Clauberg here elaborates on the affection in relation to divine and supernatural things. Following Descartes, Clauberg argues that because wonder is a sudden occupation of the soul, which brings it to attentive consideration of objects that are seemingly rare and extraordinary, people are usually not moved to admiration by usual and common things (*vulgari et usitata*).<sup>55</sup> So what people find wonderful and admirable are usually things that are foreign to them, or ancient in respect of their occurrence.<sup>56</sup> Clauberg applies this general principle to miracles as well. According to him, what seems miraculous to people are the things

52 Ibid.; Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 2 vols., trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, 1963), part II, chapter 29, 345. The references to miracles come from the book of Exodus.

53 Clauberg, *De cognitione Dei et nostri*, LXXVII (see above, n. 10), 512–523.

54 Ibid., LXXV–LXXXII, 499–544.

55 Ibid., LXXV§ 9, 503; Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme*, AT 4:380; Descartes, *Passiones animae* (Amsterdam: Elzevir, 1650), 80.

56 Clauberg, *De cognitione Dei et nostri*, LXXVII, § 7 (see above, n. 10), 516.

people perceive to be rare and extraordinary.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, people often wonder at God's extraordinary works (*extraordinaria Dei opera*), which they call miracles because they are rare and uncommon. In contrast, what is more wonderful, according to Clauberg, is the effect of ordinary divine power (*ordinarii divinae potentiae effectus*), for its regularity demonstrates God's wisdom.<sup>58</sup> But unfortunately, because of the human predisposition to marvel at rare things, and because sometimes false things are more wonderful, people are unwilling to pay great attention to the true miracles of God's daily operation or management of the world. In this way, though Clauberg in no way denies miracles, he puts more emphasis on the importance of the ordinary works of God. By doing so, he focuses on the order of nature rather than on the extraordinary works of God that transcend the order.

At the same time, Clauberg is more straightforward in his affirmation of miracles elsewhere in his works. For example, in various places of his *Ontosophia* (1664), he refers to the works of God that transcend the movements of material objects and laws of nature. For example, in the section on "existence" (*existentia*), Clauberg speaks of the power of God, who creates all things out of nothing, citing Paul's letter to the Romans.<sup>59</sup> In the same passage, he also refers to various passages of the Gospel of Matthew and Psalms and explains how God works in the universe through his *logos*. His point is that God comprehends all created things in his intellect and can bring them into existence at any time and place. Such works of God are not simply limited to natural phenomena and movement within the universe but also include those beyond the regular workings of the universe.<sup>60</sup>

Although his stance is rather ambiguous, the fact that Clauberg at various occasions discusses the topic of miracles is noteworthy, especially when Descartes, though not denying its validity, did not feel pressed to elaborate on it.<sup>61</sup> As mentioned above, some have pointed out the possibility of Cartesian physics denying miracles. Others have also pointed out that it compromises

57 Many of the examples Clauberg uses are from the Bible such as Sarah's reaction to the prophecy of the birth of Isaac or Mary's reaction to Gabriel's annunciation. See Clauberg, *De cognitione Dei et nostri*, LXXV, § 4 (see above, n. 10), 501.

58 Ibid., LXXVIII, § 4, 525.

59 Clauberg, *Metaphysica de ente*, § 87 (see above, n. 11), 20.

60 Ibid., § 258, 63–64.

61 Descartes affirms the miracle of transubstantiation though he does so in his own peculiar manner. See Steven Nadler, "Arnauld, Descartes, and Transubstantiation: Reconciling Cartesian Metaphysics and Real Presence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49 (1988): 229–246.

divine transcendence.<sup>62</sup> Traditionally, God is thought to be the cause of motion, but not in a direct manner. Instead, there is a multitude of intermediaries that intercede between God and the physical universe. By connecting God's attributes to the universe and its motion, it seemed to many conservative theologians that Cartesian physics was denying, if not the distinction between God and the universe, at least God's transcendence.

Descartes may have seen this possibility, trying to solve it by coming up with the theory of the creation of the eternal truths.<sup>63</sup> According to the theory, God is absolutely free. Hence, the existing order is only a result of one of his choices. In this choice, God's freedom is secured. Thus, while admitting the constant operation of the universe, Descartes evades the possibility of limiting God's essence to the present order of nature. Clauberg, in contrast, does not use the theory. He even employs God's freedom to explain the variety of changes in the world. This is why Clauberg's solution implies the need for a separate discussion of the role of God's extraordinary and supernatural work. But he relegates and limits the discussion of miracles mainly to the realm of revelation. Therefore, insofar as philosophy is concerned, though it does not deny miracles, it still posits that God's essence and operation are rather intimately connected with the universe, endangering divine transcendence. Moreover, even when discussing the topic of miracles, Clauberg emphasizes the importance of God's ordinary operation, which can be seen in the order of nature. In this way, though he wants to harmonize Cartesianism with orthodox Christianity as well as philosophy with theology, Clauberg instead ends up actually widening the divide. His solution, in other words, seems to demand a leap of faith or a form of fideism.

Is there any way to avoid this fideism? To do so, Clauberg must give up his desire to maintain his theological orthodoxy. Spinoza will do just that. He has no concern for orthodoxy and offers a much more radical reading of Descartes's philosophy than the one that was open to Clauberg. But at the same

62 Voetius, *Selectarum disputationum theologicarum pars prima* (see above, n. 35), 873; Revius, *Statera* (see above, n. 36), 72–73. Cf. Van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality* (see above, n. 1), 274–277.

63 See Descartes's letter to Mersenne on May 6, 1630. *AT* 1:149–150. Some Reformed ministers such as Frans Burman accepted the theory. See Aza Goudriaan, "Descartes, Cartesianism, and Early Modern Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600–1800* (Oxford, 2016), 53–49, 541. On the general discussion of the topic, see Harry Frankfurt, "Descartes on the Creation of the Eternal Truths," *The Philosophical Review* 86 (1977), 36–57; Steven Nadler, "Scientific Certainty and the Creation of the Eternal Truths: A Problem in Descartes," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 25 (1987), 175–192; David Cunniff, "Descartes and the Immutability of the Divine Will," *Religious Studies* 39 (2003), 79–92.

time, the Jewish philosopher, strangely enough, follows a line of argument quite similar to Clauberg's.

#### 4 Spinoza and the Naturalistic Solution

Spinoza's interpretation of article 36 of the second part of Descartes's *Principia* is found in the eleventh through thirteenth propositions of the second part of his *PPC*. Spinoza follows Descartes's discussion, elaborating on general and particular causes, God as the universal cause of motion, and on divine concurrence in the sense of maintaining the same quantity of motion and rest. What is interesting in Spinoza's discussion is found in the scholium to proposition thirteen. In it, Spinoza elaborates on the relationship between philosophy and theology. As he says:

In theology, God is said to do many things at [his] goodwill to show his power to human beings. But those things which depend on his goodwill alone cannot be known except through divine revelation. In philosophy, therefore, where that which reason dictates is sought, they should not be admitted, in order that philosophy might not be confused with theology.<sup>64</sup>

According to Spinoza, theology mainly deals with things that depend on God's goodwill (*beneplacitum*). Traditionally, the concept of *beneplacitum* is used to explain both the ordinary and extraordinary works of God.<sup>65</sup> It means that God does all things out of his pleasure. But Spinoza redefines the concept and uses it mainly to refer to God's extraordinary activities. He then restricts the means to know these activities only to divine revelation. This, accordingly, leaves no room for philosophy to discuss God's extraordinary activities or miracles. In this way, Spinoza establishes the strict separation of philosophy and theology.

Spinoza's separation of philosophy and theology is absolute. That is to say, he allows no interaction between philosophy and theology. Such understand-

64 Spinoza, *PPC*, Pars II, PXIII, Scholium I in *Spinoza Opera*, 4 vols., ed. Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg, 1925; henceforth abbreviated as "G" followed by volume and page numbers), 1:201. All translations are mine, but I have sometimes consulted the English translations of Spinoza's works: Edward Curley, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1985–2016).

65 See a few of theological usages, Dolf te Velde, ed., and Riemer A. Faber, trans., *Synopsis of a Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation: Disputations 1–23* (Leiden, 2014), 190 (on the Trinity), 254 (on the creation), 264 (on divine providence).



ing was rare at the time. Even though Calvinist Cartesians, as we have seen in the example of Clauberg, recognized the independence, or the freedom, of philosophy (*libertas philosophandi*), they did not doubt that the truth of Christian theology formed its foundation.<sup>66</sup> We might well say that Spinoza inherits the claim of the independence of these disciplines, but rejects the Cartesians' attempt to construct a philosophy that is harmonious with traditional theology. Alternatively, one might say that Spinoza tries to get rid of all the theoretical tensions that result from a forced union between Cartesian philosophy and Christian theology. Because philosophy, according to the Jewish thinker, recognizes none of the presuppositions demanded by theology.

While the Calvinist Cartesians accept the theological presuppositions of the Reformed Church, which they draw from the Bible, Spinoza, on the other hand, rejects these. According to the Jewish philosopher, the Bible, whence theologians draw their truths, provides no foundation for philosophy, as it uses a manner of speech only suitable to the masses. He elaborates on this point in the eighth chapter of the second part of the *CM*, where he deals with divine will. There, Spinoza states that "it is drawn sufficiently from Scripture itself that God is not angry with anyone, nor loves things in the way the masses convince themselves" that he does. He also writes that "Scripture cannot teach such trifles as the masses commonly establish." The biblical accounts of God, in other words, are constructed in a way that the ordinary people can easily misinterpret. Instead, God's will and decree are most clearly known through the knowledge of the order of nature. For Spinoza, God's intellect, power, and will are one with the order of nature. He says that "we perceive clearly and distinctly that God's intellect, power, and will, by which he creates, understands, conserves, or loves, are in no way distinguished among themselves, but distinguished only in respect to our thought." So even though in the Bible, God is described as doing many things at his goodwill in order to show his power to human beings, his action does not deviate from the order of nature at all.<sup>67</sup>

The same point is elucidated elsewhere in *CM*, where Spinoza deals with the topic of the divine decree. In the third chapter of the first section, Spinoza states

66 See, for example, Christoph Wittich, *Theologia pacifica* (Leiden: Arnold Doude, 1671), "Praefatio ad Ecclesias Reformatas Foederati Belgii," and Clauberg, *Defensio* (see above, n. 8), 244.

67 Spinoza, *CM*, II: 8, G (see above, n. 64), 1: 264–265. In the Dutch translation of the work, the translator adds an introductory paragraph (as suggested probably by Spinoza himself) to chapter seven through nine. There he says, "God's will is supremely clear to us when we conceive things clearly and distinctly." On Spinoza's knowledge of nature in relation to the Bible, see Steven Nadler, "Scripture and Truth: A Problem in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74 (2013), 623–642, esp. 628.

that the existence, essence, and nature of created things (*res creatae*) depend on God's decrees (*decreta*).<sup>68</sup> On the surface, it appears that Spinoza uses the theological language of Calvinism. But he does not. By the decree of God, he does not mean that the all-wise divine being organizes and orchestrates all the events that come to pass. Instead, "decree" in this sense cannot refer to anything other than what happens in reality. More precisely, the divine decree, in Spinoza's terms, is realized necessarily as the order of nature. Therefore, no contingency in nature nor any deviation from its order is permitted.<sup>69</sup> In such a world, no miracle is possible.

Spinoza further elaborates on the issue of miracles as he discusses the concept of God's absolute power (*potentia absoluta*) and extraordinary power (*extraordinaria potentia*). His explanation of these concepts differs significantly from how they were understood in their original theological context. Traditionally, God's power was described in a twofold manner: his ordained or ordinary power (*potentia ordinata*, or *potentia ordinaria*), which secures the order of nature, and his absolute and extraordinary power, which suspends the regular course of nature.<sup>70</sup> By the first power, God maintains the regular order of nature, and by the second, God intercedes miraculously in the created world. However, in chapter nine of the second part of *CM*, Spinoza states that:

Extraordinary power is the power by which God acts away from the order of nature, that is, all miracles, such as an ass speaking, angels' appearing, and similar things. Yet with regard to these latter things, we might, not without reason, have grave doubts. For it seems to be more miraculous that God always rules the universe according to one and the same immutable order, rather than that God, on account of human stupidity, suspends the laws, which (as only one thoroughly blind could deny) he has determined in nature in an optimal way and according to his sheer freedom.<sup>71</sup>

Spinoza here emphasizes the miraculous nature of the regularity and order of the universe. His line of argument is very similar to Clauberg's. As we saw

68 Spinoza, *CM*, I: 3, G (see above, n. 64), 1: 241.

69 Ibid., *CM*, I: 3, G 1: 242. He does not even allow Descartes's doctrine of the creation of eternal truths since the order of nature is necessarily connected with the eternal essence and operation of God.

70 William J. Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power* (Bergamo, 1990); Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, 2003), 3: 533, 537.

71 Spinoza, *CM*, II: 9, G (see above, n. 64), 1: 267.

above, Clauberg exhorts his readers to focus not on miraculous incidents that seem rare and uncommon to their perception, but more on the regularity of the universe, in which divine wisdom may be observed more clearly. In the end, Clauberg did not negate God's miracles, especially the ones found in the Bible such as *creatio ex nihilo* or the virgin birth, even if belief in them demands a leap of faith. Spinoza follows Clauberg's argument up to the point at which he deviates from him by not allowing for the extra escape route of revealed religion, thereby rejecting all possibility of miracles that go against the regular course of nature.

In addition to his discussion in *PPC/CM*, Spinoza devotes a whole chapter to the issue of miracles in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.<sup>72</sup> In chapter six of the book, he first elaborates on the mentality of the masses (*vulgus*). He there offers a similar line of argument as Clauberg, who elaborates on the human tendency to find rare and uncommon things admirable. According to Spinoza, the masses regard things the causes of which are unknown to them as the work of God or miracles. For it is customary for them to recognize the power and providence of God only when unusual events take place. Because this has become the habituated way of thinking in the minds of most people, it is difficult for them to worship God unless they witness that God disrupts the order of nature. Against this prejudice, Spinoza argues that there is nothing that deviates from the order of nature.

Spinoza first suggests that God's will is necessary and is in harmony with his intellect. Because God does nothing that deviates from the eternal essence and perfection of his being, his actions are always in harmony with the necessary truths. Laws of nature, moreover, are part of these necessary truths. Therefore, his actions never deviate from the laws or the order of nature. So, if anything is said to deviate from it, this goes against God's decree, intellect, or even essence. If anyone says that God acts against the laws of nature, he or she admits that God can act against his own nature. According to Spinoza, such statements are contradictory and hence absurd. He summarizes the point as follows:

72 Jacobus Batelier (1593–1672), one of the earliest critics of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, dealt primarily with book six and the topic of miracles in his *Vindicae miraculorum* (Amsterdam: Waesberge, 1673). See Van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza* (see above, n. 2), 113–114. Incidentally, a relatively early reaction in England regarding Spinoza's philosophy also dealt with the issue of miracles. See Charles Blount, *Miracles, No Violation of the Laws of Nature* (London: Robert Sollers, 1683). On the English reaction, see Luisa Simonutti, "Spinoza and the English Thinkers: Criticism on Prophecies and Miracles: Blount, Gildon, Earbery," in *Disguised and overt Spinozism around 1700*, ed. Wiep van Bunge and W. Klever (Leiden, 1996), 191–211.

Therefore, nothing takes place in nature that contradicts its universal laws. Nor is there anything that does not coincide or result from them. For whatever exists exists by God's volition and eternal decree. That is to say, as we have shown, whatever exists exists according to laws and rules, which involve eternal necessity and truth.<sup>73</sup>

In this way, Spinoza establishes the perfect harmony between God's will and the order of nature.

By equating God's will and the order of nature, Spinoza gets rid of the traditional understanding of miracles as being wrought by God's extraordinary will. According to him, the latter is a misperception on the part of the vulgar masses. For the mob only see divine works in significant deviations from what they know to be the order of nature. But they, in fact, are unaware and unwilling to understand the real order of nature. So, once a proper understanding of nature becomes possible, any belief in the extraordinary works of God or in miracles is no longer possible. Spinoza, in this way, completes the separation of philosophy and theology and makes the latter incapable of influencing the former's domains.

## 5 Conclusion

With regard to the question of how to relate God's essence and operation to the order of nature, Descartes's text indeed left some problems to be solved. In his physics, the divine being plays a central role, providing a metaphysical foundation. God's immutable essence and operation, according to Descartes, should be regarded as the basis on which the claim regarding the constancy of the quantity of motion in the world can be established. Besides God, there are no such conceptual means to establish this claim. However, a conceptual difficulty emerges primarily because the god who is immutable in essence and operation is also the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If God, who is the universal cause of motion, is also the god of the Bible, how can we explain the apparent contradiction between the order of nature and the miracles that the Bible tells us disrupt such an order? Clauberg's interpretation of Descartes's text employs several divine attributes to secure a more stable foundation for the order of nature. By doing so, he can offer a better and more complete model of the world. At the same time, because he brings the order of nature closer to God's essence,

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73 Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, G (see above, n. 64), 3: 83.

he has a more difficult time explaining divine miracles. Even when elaborating on miracles, Clauberg offers a psychological account of why the masses tend to think something miraculous. He also emphasizes the ordinary work of God, which is the order of nature, rather than the extraordinary work of God. How can he get out of this predicament? His solution is to state that though philosophy does not deny miracles, they must be dealt with in the realm of theology. However, by stating this, Clauberg puts the Calvinist Cartesians' project to harmonize the Frenchman's philosophy with the Reformed theology in danger. For their commitment to the Reformed tradition now becomes a type of fideism, lacking in rational ground or explanation.

Clauberg's radicalism becomes evident when placed next to Spinoza. It is of course true that Spinoza goes beyond where Clauberg tried to remain. The Jewish philosopher ignores the option of fideism since he has no prior commitment to the theological tradition of the Reformed Church, or any other for that matter. Furthermore, Spinoza develops Clauberg's psychological account of miracles much more extensively and regards the Bible as a collection of vulgar accounts that consist of no rational truths. Doing so, Spinoza makes a leap of faith toward Christian orthodoxy utterly impossible. So, while Clauberg still leaves some room, however slightly, for the Bible as the source of natural truth beyond philosophical rationality, Spinoza discards all biblical accounts as unenlightened and vulgar. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the basic structure of their arguments is very similar. Both Clauberg and Spinoza argue that by utilizing human reason, there is no way to conceive that God works against the order of nature. According to them, rather than thinking God's miraculous power may be observed in extraordinary works of nature, God's freedom and wisdom are seen in a more perfect way in the immutable and steady order of nature. Furthermore, both philosophers agree that the so-called "miracles" are generally products of the vulgar mind, not of the philosophically trained one. In this way, the Calvinist Cartesian Clauberg can be said to embrace a radical position on miracles, foreshadowing the scandalous and theologically troublesome position of Spinozism.

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