

**The “Death” Of Monads:
G. W. Leibniz On Death And Anti-Death**

Markku Roinila

Post-print version

In his *Monadology* (Mon.), §73 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) argues:

There is never total generation nor, strictly speaking, perfect death, death consisting in the separation of the soul. And what we call *generations* are developments and growths, as what we call deaths are enfoldings [*developpemens*] and diminutions [*accroissemens*]¹

This account is very strange. So there is no “perfect” death at all? What are these enfoldings and diminutions? It is not immediately clear at all what Leibniz means by these cryptic terms. And it gets even more peculiar when we look at the previous section of the text:

The soul changes body only little by little and by degrees, so that it is never stripped at once of all its organs. There is often metamorphosis in animals, but there is never metempsychosis nor transmigration of souls; there are also no completely *separated souls*, nor spirits without bodies. God alone is completely detached from bodies.²

¹ GP VI, p. 619; AG, p. 222. I refer to the following editions of Leibniz’s texts: A=*Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, AG=*Philosophical Essays*, DSR=*De summa rerum*, GP=*Die Philosophischen Schriften*, H=*Theodicy*, L=*Philosophical Papers and Letters*, LGR=*Leibniz on God and Religion*, LTS=*Leibniz and The Two Sophies*, PW=*Philosophical Writings*, RB=*New Essays on Human Understanding*.

² GP VI, p. 619; AG, p. 222.

These passages clearly refer to some kind of fundamental change in the course of a creature's life. What would that be? Explaining Leibniz's reasons for this view is the topic of my paper.³ I will start with some metaphysical preliminaries and then continue to discuss the anti-deaths of animals and human beings. In addition, I will reflect on Leibniz's views on the afterlife and present a naturalistic reading of his views concerning man's existence after death.

Some Metaphysical Considerations

Let us start with some relevant basics of Leibniz's metaphysics. Each possible world (our world, Leibniz argues, is the best of all possible worlds) consists of an infinite number of simple, but dissimilar substances which Leibniz in his later philosophy calls monads. The monads, which change constantly according to dynamical laws, but have no parts, are "windowless" (Mon. §7 & 10): that is to say, they have no direct interaction with each other. Instead, they express or "mirror" each other in accordance with the pre-established harmony of substances, established by God in creation. It is essential to note that monads can begin only by creation and end by annihilation (Mon. §19).⁴ Therefore Leibniz's metaphysics does not allow death in the sense that a substance is destroyed. This is consistent with the pre-established harmony, as the harmony would be disturbed or arguably even destroyed if some substances were eliminated.

The pre-established harmony is also the key element in Leibniz's psychophysical parallelism. The interaction of the mind and the body is founded on the pre-established harmony, so that each perception of the body affects the mind, and conversely, all

³ Thanatology has not been a popular topic in Leibniz -studies, but in recent years a new interest in his biology has created some interest in his views on the cycle of life concerning beings of nature.

⁴ See also, for example, *Theodicy*, §396 (H, p. 365), *Metaphysical Consequences of the Principle of Reason*, §12 (PW, p. 177) and *A Specimen of Discoveries* (PW, p. 81).

mental functions, such as emotions and volitions, have an effect on the human body.⁵ The body is an aggregate of monads, dominated by one higher level- monad, the mind, which is able to perceive distinctly in contrast to the other monads, and therefore it is able to reach truths of reason and have a self-consciousness (Mon. §70-72, 82-83). In animals, the dominating substance is an animal soul, capable of sensation and memory, but not reasoning.⁶

According to Leibniz's late views, in all monads there are only two functions: perception and appetite (Mon. §14–15, 17).⁷ Perception is “a passing state which involves and represents a multitude in the unity [monad]”.⁸ In other words, perceiving is representing the constant changes in the other monads that comprise the external world. Also, each substance has an internal principle of change, which Leibniz calls appetite or substantial form. This principle consists of primitive active force comparable to Hobbesian or Spinozian *conatus*.

The rational soul's appetite is directed towards goodness, activity and perfection, but the appetite of animal souls and entelechies or simple monads is directed to clearer perceptions. An essential distinction between the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of nature is related to this division between rational and non-rational being (Mon. §87). The kingdom of grace consists of rational souls, or spirits, and God, and the kingdom of nature consists of living souls, that is, animals and plants, and entelechies or souls. The relationship between the two kingdoms is again defined by the pre-established harmony.

⁵ See *New System of Nature*, AG, pp. 138-145.

⁶ *New Essays on Human Understanding* (NE), Preface, A VI 6, pp. 50-51.

⁷ The late view presented in *Monadology* has raised a long-standing discussion among the commentators as to whether the view, according to which all substances are mental is representative of his philosophy at all times. I will have to ignore the discussion here.

⁸ Mon. §14; AG, p. 214.

Transformations of Animals

Leibniz's description of death as a sort of enfolding or diminution applies to both human beings and animals. With respect to the composite substances of animals, this can be understood as both in organic and cognitive terms. Let us start with cognition.

In the animal the highest monad is an animal soul which communicates with its related body (consisting of lower level-monads) through the pre-established harmony. We saw above that the animal souls are capable of sensations and memory. The animal is capable of clearer perceptions than non-living beings such as plants. In addition, they can have memory and therefore the animals can be called souls (Mon. §19).⁹ Besides sensations and memory, animals can also have feelings (*Theodicy*, §250).

Compared to human beings, the cognitive capability of animals is limited, as they cannot reach distinct perceptions which are the foundation of reasoning and self-consciousness. At most they can have clear, but confused perceptions which are such that one "cannot enumerate one by one marks sufficient for differentiating a thing from others, even though the thing does indeed have such marks and requisites into which its notion can be resolved".¹⁰ Examples of these kinds of perceptions are colors, smells, tastes and other subjective sensations. Much more common perceptions in both animals and human beings are insensible, "little" perceptions which are fleeting, confused cognition.

When the animals "die" or are "unclothed" (PNG §6), their cognitive level is reduced to the level of these confused, minute perceptions and they simply stop having any higher -level perceptions for a time. This state is not eternal. After a certain time

⁹ Leibniz was consistently critical against Descartes's view that animals are mere machines (*Principles of Nature and Grace, based on Reason* (PNG) §4).

¹⁰ *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas*, A VI, 4, p. 586; AG, p. 24.

(Leibniz is not clear how long the “death” lasts¹¹) they start to have higher -level perceptions again (are ”re clothed” (PNG §6)) and start another stage of their lives. It is evident, then, that Leibniz thinks that living beings will “wake up” or generate from death, which is really a kind of stupor, a state of confusion where only minute perceptions are present.

In organic terms, the animal or natural machine, as Leibniz calls them in *New System of Nature*, is ensouled and its striving is founded on a substantial form or law-of-the-series which includes all its history. In death, the body of an animal folds up, compresses, concentrates or withdraws, but the substantial form continues to exist and guarantees the identity and unity of the organic body.¹² So when the animal “wakes up” and its organs start to grow again, it is the same animal although its appearance may be different.

The body never perishes totally, but persists in tiny particles and transforms into another one. Leibniz argued against the Platonic view of transmigration of souls, that a soul moves from one body to another one when the organic body it is connected to is destroyed. He says that there may be metamorphosis (as, for example, when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly), but no metempsychosis or transmigration.¹³ In the Preface of NE Leibniz says:

The misconception...that preservation of the souls of beasts would lead one to metempsychosis and to their

¹¹ It seems to be a long period. In PNG, §4 Leibniz says that the Cartesians have confused a *long stupor* which arises from a great confusion of perceptions with *death strictly speaking*, in which all perceptions cease (AG, p. 208). In NE II, xxvii Leibniz says: “Perceptions which are at present insensible may grow some day: nothing is useless, and eternity provides great scope for change” (A VI, 6, 242; RB, 242).

¹² Lamarra 1996, pp. 88–89. See also *New System of Nature*, AG, pp. 140–142.

¹³ *New System*, AG, pp. 140-151.

transmigration from body to body...has resulted, in my opinion, in their overlooking the natural way to explain the preservation of the soul. This has done great harm to natural religion, and has led some to believe that our immortality is just a miraculous gift from God.¹⁴

Related to this theory of metamorphosis is the theory of preformation, according to which bodies in nature are never produced from chaos or putrefaction, but always through seeds in which there is some preformation.¹⁵ When the pre-formed seeds are in place, no more is required than that bodies act in accordance with mechanical laws.¹⁶ Leibniz says:

The animal itself was there, and through conception this animal was merely prepared for a great transformation, in order to become an animal of another kind. Something similar is seen outside generation, as when worms become flies, and caterpillars become butterflies.¹⁷

In this mechanical development the organic and cognitive changes are related, as Leibniz argues in *Reflections on the Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit*:

When an animal is deprived of organs capable of giving it sufficiently distinct perceptions, it does not follow that the animal has left no smaller and more uniform perceptions or that it is deprived of all its organs and all its perceptions. Its organs are merely enveloped and reduced to a small volume, but the order of nature requires that everything be developed again sometime and return to a noticeable state and that there

¹⁴ A VI, 6, 59; RB, 59.

¹⁵ On preformation theory, see Phemister 2015. See also Mon. §74-76.

¹⁶ Phemister 2011, p. 43. See also *On Nature Itself*, §2 (AG, p. 156).

¹⁷ Mon. §74; AG, p. 222.

be a definite well-regulated progression in its changes which helps to bring things to fruition and perfection.¹⁸

Death of Rational Souls

Transformation or metamorphosis concerns only animal soul, not rational soul, that is, man, who “must in this regard have special prerogatives for safeguarding his personhood”.¹⁹ In this section I will discuss how death takes place in human or rational souls.

In cognitive terms, the death of human beings does not differ very much from the death of animals, except that the cognitive change is far greater in scope. For human beings, perceptions vary from confused, minute perceptions to clear and distinct ones and beyond, all the way to adequate and even intuitive cognition.²⁰ Some of the perceptions are conscious, that is, clear and distinct perceptions. We are able to reflect on them, “perceive that we are perceiving” or have an apperception as Leibniz says in Mon. §14. Despite the human ability for clear and distinct perceptions, reasoning is always limited by minute perceptions which mingle with the higher level -perceptions.²¹

The mind is in constant change due to the substantial form and its striving is founded on the stimuli provided by the perceptions of which most are minute, confused ones.

There are hundreds of indications leading us to conclude that at every moment there is in us an infinity of perceptions, unaccompanied by awareness or reflection; that is, of alternations in the soul itself, of which we are unaware

¹⁸ GP VI, pp. 534-535; L, pp. 557-558.

¹⁹ NE, Preface; A VI, 6, p. 55; RB, p. 55.

²⁰ For Leibniz’s hierarchy of perceptions, see *Meditations on Cognition, Truth and Ideas*, A VI, 4, pp. 585-592.

²¹ The minute perceptions have also positive functions in Leibniz’s philosophy. See NE, Preface, A VI, 6, pp. 53-58.

because these impressions are either sufficiently distinctive on their own.²²

The minute perceptions play a special role in forming the personal identity despite the fact that the metaphysical foundation of the identity of a person is provided by the substantial form (NE II, xxvii).

These insensible perceptions also indicate and constitute the same individual, which is characterized by the vestiges or expressions which the perceptions preserve from the individual's former states, thereby connecting these with his present state...that is why death can only be a sleep, and not lasting one at that: the perceptions merely cease to be sufficiently distinct.²³

Leibniz suggests that death of a man in cognitive terms is comparable to animals. It is not real, but only a case where the clarity and distinctness of perceptions are reduced to the level of confused, minute perceptions for a period of time. He wrote to Sophia Charlotte, Queen of Prussia:

In death, or rather the appearance of death, since I take it only for an envelopment, we do not lose life, sensation or reason, but what prevents us from noticing that for a time is the confusion, that is, the fact that at that time we have an infinity of little perceptions all at once, in which there is no single one which is clearly distinguished from the others.²⁴

The cognitive change can also be seen as a change of place in the hierarchy of monads: the rational soul loses its place and descends to the level of a simple substance. In the letter to Sophie Charlotte Leibniz again refers to sleep, and it is clear that this state of confusedness is only temporary. Therefore death does not annihilate memory, so traces of our perceptions are preserved until

²² NE, Preface, A VI, 6, p. 53; RB, p. 53.

²³ NE, Preface, A VI, 6, p. 55; RB, p. 55.

²⁴ GP VI, p. 522; LTS, p. 296.

the next stage when we eventually start to perceive clearly and distinctly again. Leibniz explains sleep in the same way, so death can be compared to dreamless sleep.²⁵

The Afterlife

I will return to the organic aspects of death of human beings in a moment. First it is useful to discuss the spiritual state of human beings after death. Death and anti-death is essentially related to Leibniz's distinction between the kingdoms of grace and nature. Because of their ability of reasoning, human beings are moral creatures whereas animals act instinctively. They are part of nature and have an instrumental value for higher beings, that is, human beings and God. Human beings are ends in themselves, as they are capable of knowing the system of the universe (Mon. §83). In *A Specimen of Discoveries* (1686) Leibniz leaves no doubt about the superiority of human beings in the hierarchy of substances:

It is clear that the minds are the most important part of the universe, and that everything was established for their sake; that is, in choosing the order of things, the greatest account was taken of them; all things being arranged in such a way that they appear the more beautiful the more they are understood.²⁶

²⁵ In his early fragment on dreams (L, pp. 113-115) Leibniz follows Descartes in thinking that in dreams we are disconnected from the world in the sense that our thoughts are confused and do not follow the common logic of our waking state. Waking up is remembering oneself and being able to connect the present state to other events in life (L, p. 114).

²⁶ GP, VII, p. 316; PW, p. 83. In *Metaphysical Consequences of the Principle of Reason*, §12 Leibniz says that the kingdom of nature serves the kingdom of grace (PW, 177). As examples he gives silkworms which weave and bees that make honey (PW, p. 84). However, much later in PNG §15 he argues that “Nature itself leads to grace, and grace perfects nature by making use of it” (AG, p. 212).

However, the elevated position of human beings presupposes moral responsibility to divine justice, as Leibniz argues in NE II, xxvii, §9:

I also hold this opinion that consciousness or the sense of *I* proves moral or personal identity. And that is how I distinguish the incessancy of a beast's soul from the immortality of the soul of man: both of them preserve real, physical identity; but it is consonant with the rules of divine providence that in man's case the soul should also retain a moral identity which is apparent to ourselves, so as to constitute the same person, which is therefore sensitive to punishments and rewards.²⁷

The rationality of human beings makes them images of the divinity itself, that is, moral beings. They have access to God in a special way: through their reason they are able to imitate his actions, as there is only a difference of degree between human beings and God. They enter into a society with God and are citizens of the kingdom of grace (where final causes determine their actions) while non-rational animals and bodies of human beings remain the citizens of the kingdom of nature which is the realm of mechanical laws (Mon., §79 & §83; PNG §15).

In the context of the Lutheranism of Leibniz's time his view is quite natural – human beings should be responsible for their moral conduct to God, otherwise there would be no motivation for them to act virtuously in this life. But what exactly happens to the rational soul after “death”? We have seen that death is a sort of sleep and that one can “wake up” from this sleep. Human beings can preserve their moral identity which exists as the substantial form and either be citizens of the city of God as a reward of their virtuous life or suffer from a punishment if they have been evil.

Let us first look at the destiny of the virtuous human beings. Leibniz describes the city of God (named after the famous work of Augustine) in *Monadology* §83-84.:

²⁷ A VI, 6, p. 236; RB, p. 236.

Minds are also images of the divinity itself, or the author of nature, capable of knowing the system of the universe, and imitating something of it through their systematic representations of it, each mind being like a little divinity in its own realm. That is what makes minds capable of entering into a kind of society with God, and allows him to be, in relation to them, not only what an inventor is to his machine (as God is in relation to the other creatures) but also what a prince is to his subjects, and even what a father is to his children.²⁸

Leibniz does not say exactly what awaits human beings in this society with God, but relies on Christian arguments. For example, in PNG §16 he says:

Although reason cannot teach us the details of the great future, which are reserved for revelation, reason itself assures us that things are made in a way that surpasses our wishes.²⁹

However, later in the same section Leibniz characterizes the citizens of the city of God. They feel intellectual passions such as joy, hope and especially pure love (which is taking pleasure in the beloved). Pure love towards God lead us to find our pleasure in his perfections, as Leibniz lavishly declares in the last section of *Monadology* (§90).³⁰

Under this perfect government, there will be no good action that is unrewarded, no bad action that goes unpunished, and everything must result in the well-being of the good, that is, of those who are not dissatisfied in this great state, those who trust providence, after having done their duty, and who love and imitate the author of all good, as they should, finding pleasure in the consideration of his perfections according to the nature of genuinely *pure love*, which takes pleasure in the

²⁸ GP VI, p. 621; AG, pp. 223-224.

²⁹ GP VI, p. 605; AG, p. 212.

³⁰ Of feeling universal perfection and knowing how to promote it, see Roinila 2016.

happiness of the beloved. This is what causes wise and virtuous persons to work for all that appears to be in conformity with the presumptive or antecedent divine will...³¹

In PNG §18 Leibniz says that “the love of God also fulfills our hopes, and leads us down the road of supreme happiness.”³² Thus, loving God produces a kind of well-being or blessedness for the virtuous man in the city of God. However, in the same section Leibniz warns that happiness is never complete, but “must consist in a perpetual progress to new pleasures and new perfections”.³³ It is activity, a systematic striving to promote perfection, which is also related to development of cognitive abilities (NE II, xxi, §72). This process-like nature of happiness suggests that our striving in the afterlife will not end, however virtuous we have been in our lifetime. Loving God requires that we systematically seek his satisfaction.

In the citation from *Monadology* above, Leibniz discusses God’s presumptive or antecedent will. It is indeed a challenge for human beings to predict what God would want us to do. However, the general guidelines have already been given – loving our fellow human beings and God will lead us to the right direction. In addition, in some of his writings Leibniz argues that a good intention is essential in our moral conduct. For example, in §4 of *Discourse on Metaphysics* he writes:

In order to act in accordance with the love of God, it is not sufficient to force ourselves to be patient; rather, we must truly be satisfied with everything that has come to us according his will...we must act in accordance with what we presume to be the will of God, insofar as we can judge it, trying with all our might to contribute to the general good and especially to the embellishment and perfection of that which

³¹ GP VI, p. 622; AG, pp. 224-225.

³² GP VI, p. 606; AG, p. 213.

³³ Ibid.

affects us or that which is near us, that which is, so to speak, in our grasp.³⁴

What then, can we presume to be the will of God? As God is the architect of both kingdoms of grace and nature, it is safe to say that nature reflects his perfections.³⁵ So when we see a rainbow, for example, we can marvel at the perfections of its creator. Therefore scientific study of nature gives us some idea of the essence of God and his ways. Leibniz was active in promoting cooperation of scientists and founding of scientific academies for just this reason – a Leibnizian wise man promotes science as a method to please God, for increase of knowledge is useful in number of ways, for example in medicine.

However, being virtuous and reaching happiness in one's lifetime is not an easy task as Leibniz explains:

If we are to make good use of the art of inference, we need an art of bringing things to mind, another of estimating probabilities, and, in addition, knowledge of how to evaluate good and ills; and we need to be attentive, and, on top of all that, to have the patience to carry our calculations through. Finally, we need to be firmly and steadily resolved to act on our conclusions; and we need skills, methods, rules of thumb, and well-entrenched habits to make us true to our resolve later on, when the considerations which led us to it are no longer present in our minds.³⁶

This is a very demanding program and it is not uncommon that one fails to reach the ideal of a Leibnizian wise man. In *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §4 Leibniz says that “those who are not satisfied with what God does seem to me like dissatisfied subjects whose attitudes are not much different from those of rebels”.³⁷ Therefore Leibniz is prepared to be harsh in order not to allow “happy

³⁴ A VI, 4, pp. 1535-1536; AG, pp. 37-38.

³⁵ See *Tentamen anagogicum*, GP VII, pp. 270-279.

³⁶ NE II, xxi, §66; A VI, 6: p. 207; RB, p. 207.

³⁷ A VI, 4 p. 1535, AG, p. 37.

sinner” – those who sin without remorse, to ruin the increase of perfection in the best of all possible worlds.

It can also be added that failing to develop oneself and acquiring knowledge is a key feature of a sinner – Leibniz argues in a book review that ignorance is the mother of crimes.³⁸ He also adds that grace is needed for salvation:

We should not have any presumption of our powers...we should labor diligently in that which concerns our salvation, since it is very true that the path is narrow, and that we would not be able to walk it without the assistance of grace.³⁹

God by no means punishes or rewards his subjects randomly. In Leibniz’s metaphysics, God knows in advance the whole history of the spirits from their substantial forms and is therefore able to administer his subjects according to perfect justice.

Opinions vary as to whether Leibniz supported the traditional Christian view, according to which the sinners will burn eternally in hell.⁴⁰ It seems that he was stricter in his earlier philosophy (for

³⁸ LGR, p. 89.

³⁹ *On the Certainty of Salvation*, LGR, p. 240.

⁴⁰ See Strickland 2009 and Coudert 1995. Strickland argues that Leibniz held to the traditional doctrine while Coudert holds that in his later philosophy Leibniz supported a doctrine of universal salvation. Strickland argues, however, that this is to be seen as merely a rhetorical trick. Rather, that kind of doctrine would be harmful as men would expect salvation to take place without any effort of their own (Strickland 2009, pp. 330-331). Paul Lodge (2016) has challenged Strickland’s reading, ending up at the conclusion that there is no conclusive evidence for Leibniz’s commitment to the doctrine of eternal punishment – rather, he seems to have been neutral concerning the topic, pragmatically accepting both the doctrine of eternal punishment and universal salvation in a proper context (Lodge 2016, p. 13). However it may be, as Leibniz does regularly discuss of God’s punishments and rewards, I will in this paper suppose that at least a time in

example in *Discourse on Metaphysics*), but he was never quite traditionally Christian in his views. For example, in *Philosopher's Confession* he holds a view according to which the quantity of sins rather than severity of a sin is the reason why a wicked person can be punished with damnation. This suggests that Leibniz thought that only those that keep on sinning eternally, disliking God and his creation, should be eternally punished; and this view is repeated in many of his other writings.⁴¹ I think this reading fits well with the description of a sinner being a rebel in *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §4. As we saw above, God can verify the number of sins from the complete notion of each substance. As the death is only apparent, “dying” does not stop the hating, but it goes on and on, eternally. However, Strickland argues that it is likely that Leibniz held a view according to which the damned are far less in number than the blessed.⁴²

Before we turn to the organic human body in death, I would like to discuss a point rarely found in Leibniz-studies. Leibniz seems to think that human beings can have a glimpse of the afterlife already in their lifetime before judgement day. Leibniz hints at this direction in, for example, a draft called *Can the bad outcomes of wicked actions be ascribed to wickedness?*

God punishes evils and metes out rewards naturally, that is, according to reasons of wisdom, or according to certain universal principles (which perform the same role in moral matters as laws of motion in physics), and he does so immediately, at least if this is permitted by the greater

purgatory if not hell is the fate of the evil men after death. If all men eventually receive universal salvation, as Coudert argues, it seems to be clear that for some this takes longer than for others.

⁴¹ Strickland, op. cit. pp. 310-311, 313. According to Strickland the same view can also be found implicitly in the late work *Theodicy*. See op. cit., pp. 316-317.

⁴² Strickland, op. cit., pp. 318-320. I cannot here discuss the implications of the view that one or more men are damned to Leibniz's doctrine of the best of all possible worlds.

reasons that should be pursued as a result of the concurrence of other moral matters: moral, I say, not natural.⁴³

The context in the passage above is divine justice or theodicy, but if we take the point of view of the moral agent or mortal man, I would think the immediate reward would follow naturally. Happiness or unhappiness is related to virtue and intellectual pleasure or their opposites. When we find perfection in other persons, we come to love them, and the highest form of this love of perfection in others is love of God.⁴⁴ So loving others gives us pleasure, and the source of that pleasure is God.⁴⁵ For Leibniz, feeling perfection is an intellectual feeling of love and joy (as Leibniz defines joy as pleasure of the mind in NE II, xx, §7) and provides us with a motivating instant reward, a foretaste of the city of God or heaven, which can even extend as far as general well-being of both soul and body. This is a sort of salvation in this life as Leibniz notes in *On the Imagination of the Future Life*:

This imagination [of future life] together with assent, in which in [matters of] faith St. Thomas calls a pious affection, also includes the love of God above all things, along with contrition, and hence certain salvation.⁴⁶

⁴³ LGR, p. 285.

⁴⁴ According to Leibniz, “pleasure is the feeling of a perfection or an excellence, whether in ourselves or in something else” (GP VII, p. 86; L, p. 425).

⁴⁵ *Elementa juris naturalis*, A VI, 4, p. 464; L, p. 137. On pure or disinterested love, see Roinila 2013.

⁴⁶ LGR, p. 321. It is more difficult to say what would be an anticipation of punishments in this life. In a forthcoming article Lloyd Strickland (2016) argues that unlike many of his contemporaries, Leibniz did not support the view that sins are always punished directly in this life (as misfortunes following from wicked actions), but punishments are reserved mostly for the afterlife.

The Human Body in Afterlife

We have seen that at least according to one interpretation, God can send human beings to eternal damnation despite the fact that they have an immortal soul. But what happens to the organic body in the afterlife? The following questions are bound to arise: 1) where exactly is the city of God/hell? 2) do human beings enter the afterlife with their bodies or without them?

Let me start with the latter question. Already in his earliest writings Leibniz was keen to follow the tradition in demonstrating the immortality of the soul,⁴⁷ and we saw in the beginning of this paper that Leibniz did not accept separation of mind and bodies (Mon. §72). In a memoir called *Reflections on the Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit* he gives a more explicit description of his views:

As far as the complete separation of soul and body, I can say nothing about the laws of grace, and about the ordinances of God in regard to human souls in particular, beyond what the Holy Scriptures say, since these are things which cannot be known by reason, being dependent on the revelation of God himself. Nevertheless, I see no reason, either religious or philosophical, which compels me to abandon the doctrine of the parallelism of soul and the body and to admit a perfect separation. For why cannot the soul always retain a subtle body organized after its own manner, which could even some day reassume the form of its visible body in the resurrection, since a glorified body is ascribed to the blessed, and since the ancient Fathers have ascribed a subtle body to angels?⁴⁸

Thus it seems that human beings do in fact preserve their bodies in some form after death: the organic body is transformed into another, glorified or subtle form comparable to the bodies of angels. In a very early memoir *On the resurrection of bodies*

⁴⁷ See, for example, *De Summa rerum*, DSR, p. 61.

⁴⁸ GP VI, p. 533; L, pp. 556-557.

Leibniz gives a rather more mundane description of this transformation:

Let us...maintain that the flesh and bones remain. But how are they constituted?...it is known that in each thing there is a certain seminal center which diffuses itself, and contains as it were the tincture and preserves the specific motion of the thing. This is established from the regeneration of plants from seeds...it is likewise in the bones: in our flesh...a subtler part lies hidden in the spirits. When a member is cut off or rots away, this subtler part returns to the fountain of life, to which the soul itself is implanted. This is evident, for instance, in the experience of those who have had a hand or a foot cut off: they often feel these members as though they were still present: they seem to be pinched, tickled and hurt, for no other reason than this subtle spirit, in which the substance of the member was contained, as it were, is still present and exercises the same movements even now.⁴⁹

These passages suggest that while the soul remains as it is in its lifetime, capable of retaining its memory when it is eventually restored to its pre-death state and having the same moral identity, the organic body shrinks to a subtle, kind of atomic form. Leibniz's doctrine (titled "Flower of substance") is that the soul is implanted into a single point of matter, and it stays that way permanently. However, Leibniz held this doctrine only briefly, from 1671 to 1676 (mentioning it in 1686). In his later texts, he claimed that the soul is also accompanied by a body, but that the matter of this body is in flux.⁵⁰ Therefore the body stays with human beings. From this can be concluded that the city of God

⁴⁹ LGR, pp. 306-307.

⁵⁰ This view was stated by Lloyd Strickland in a private discussion and later with written notes to the first version of this paper. A similar opinion was presented also by Robert Adams: "The monad always has its body...even in death, it does not cease to exist, it does not cease to be organic; it just undergoes sudden, drastic reduction in size and a change in its operations." Adams 1994, p. 266.

and hell are not some distinct locations, but around us, in another state of the soul (of happiness or unhappiness). They are sort of mental stages or theaters rather than some far-off location among the clouds or deep in the ground.

In a recent talk Pauline Phemister argued that human beings subsist in the world after their death, mirroring the world around them. Therefore they are capable of reflection, loving God and ultimately happiness – this does not of course apply to the period when they are “dead”, that is, in stupor, having only confused perceptions.⁵¹ In private discussion, Phemister also added that subsisting in the world would apply also to those in hell who suffer from the eternal torment. As we saw above, happiness as well as unhappiness are processes which require systematic efforts. I think Phemister is right – happiness in a city of God, wherever that is, requires maintenance as it is a (natural) reward in itself. One could say the same thing about punishment – perhaps it is a natural consequence of failure to turn the process of increasing displeasure and sorrow around and strive for the good?

One may argue that subsisting after death in the world presupposes bodily sensations. But feeling perfection or imperfection is an intellectual pleasure, so perhaps the rational soul is all that is needed and the organic or rather glorified body is unnecessary? I think this view would be incompatible with the passage in in *Reflections on the Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit* above, as it would signify total separation of mind and body. So perhaps even some bodily pleasures or pains can be supposed to be had in the afterlife? The common man dreams about the joys of heaven not only in the spiritual sense, but also as a release from hunger and sickness while the common picture of hell is related to physical pain. I have not found any textual evidence on this question, but I have argued elsewhere that Leibniz’s views on bodily well-being are similar to those of Spinoza.⁵² Applying my train of thoughts to this question, the case would look like the following: as the pre-established harmony between the mind and

⁵¹ Phemister 2016.

⁵² See Roinila 2011, pp. 935-936.

the body is likely to function in similar manner in one's lifetime and in the afterlife (with respect to glorified bodies), the activity of the mind is felt as bodily pleasure, a kind of physical energy or well-being in the body. Similarly, displeasure is felt as inactivity and imperfection in the body. Respectively, bodily pleasure or pain is felt in the mind as either joy or sorrow.

Finally, I would like to give an alternative naturalistic reading of Leibniz's views of afterlife which is founded on the views presented above. I have suggested that happiness is a process which is in principle similar both in this life and afterlife. As lasting joy, happiness does not allow human beings the possibility to rest on their laurels, for the loving relationship with God requires that we maintain our virtue and intellectual activity. If we ignore the common reading of Leibniz as a Lutheran for a moment, we may find an interesting consequence from this conjecture: perhaps the rewards given by God on judgement day are natural in the sense that they are similar to what the wise man can attain already in this world.

Reflecting God's perfections and the joy that follows from loving him are by nature similar in this world and in the city of God. The difference may be that the perceptions of our body affect us less than in earthly life, as the body turns into a glorified form. So perhaps the natural reward of God for virtuous human beings in death is that they are less disturbed by minute perceptions which stem from the bodily needs and are able to have more distinct perceptions, which makes them more supremely happy and in this sense more like God. As I argue above, the activity of the mind is felt as a kind of well-being of the body.

But what about God's punishments? An opposite case would emphasize the role of the bodily sensations. The body of a sinner also changes to a subtle one, but perhaps the bodily perceptions, that is, confused cognition, would dominate over clear and distinct ones, which makes us feel sorrow. In Christian tradition the demons torture the inhabitants of hell – perhaps the natural punishment for the wicked in Leibniz's hell is being oversensitive to bodily, confused sensations and consequently not being able to

reflect God's perfections properly. This feeling of imperfection and distance from God would surely lead to unhappiness.

These reflections are rather speculative and there is no direct textual evidence for this reading, though I think the texts I have discussed and the fact that Leibniz was known to support natural theology and religion in a number of his writings⁵³ support it. But arguing for this interpretation properly requires another paper.

Concluding remarks

We have seen that there is no death in a proper sense in Leibniz's philosophy. Because the monads cannot be destroyed naturally, their "deaths" are periods of the substance's life when they cannot perceive clearly or distinctly.

While Leibniz is usually thought to follow the Lutheran doctrines in his discussion of death of human beings (with some original insights), his views on the death of animals are more original and rather eccentric from the contemporary point of view. However, it is well known that Leibniz was strongly influenced by microscopic studies of his time and his views on the death of animals are clearly influenced by them. For instance, he wrote to Arnauld in 1687:

Mr. Leeuwenhoek holds opinions very close to mine, in that he believes that even the largest animals arise through a kind of transformation. I do not venture either to approve or to reject the details of his opinion, but I hold this to be true in general, and Mr. Swammerdam, another great investigator and anatomist, gives enough evidence of also inclining toward it.⁵⁴

Cognitively, the deaths of human beings and animals are fairly similar: the level of cognition is reduced to confused perceptions

⁵³ See, for example, *Dialogue Between Poliander and Theophile*, A VI, 4, pp. 2219–2227.

⁵⁴ L, p. 345.

and it is a kind of sleep which is only temporary. After death, they return eventually to their former state with increasing clarity of perceptions.

The change in the level of perceptions is related to changes in the accompanying body. In *Reflections on the Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit* Leibniz argues that losing organs reduces the level of cognition in animals (as they change their organic bodies little by little). This can be supposed to be the case in human beings as well – in his later philosophy Leibniz argues that matter in the accompanying body is in flux (Mon. §72), so one might think that temporary change in the number of organs affects the cognitive ability of a man in a similar way as in animals.

The most significant difference between the animals and human being is the fact that the latter can have afterlife and the former cannot. The animals transform to other animals and this cycle of life apparently goes on infinitely, while human beings have a special role in the world as rational beings and potential citizens of the city of God.

Leibniz is famous for his labyrinth of continuum, a view that everything is continuous in nature. In this respect, the strict distinction between kingdoms of grace and nature is curious, as it marks a significant difference between the deaths of human beings and animals. However, the obvious answer to this problem is that Leibniz was a Lutheran theologian, among other things, although not an orthodox one. The debate on the impact of Lutheranism to Leibniz's views on afterlife continues and I have discussed some interpretations in this paper.

In addition, I have presented a non-Lutheran naturalistic reading of Leibnizian afterlife where this life and afterlife are not very different from each other. We strive for essentially the same goals in both, but our striving for the good in the city of God is less affected by our body than in earthly life. Failing to appreciate

God and the general good is punished after death in the form of being over-sensitive to bodily affections.⁵⁵

Bibliography

Adams, Robert Merrihew (1995). *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Coudert, Allison P. (1995). *Leibniz and the Kabbalah*. Kluwer, Dordrecht.

Lamarra, Antonio (1996). "Substantial Forms and Monads. The 'Système nouveau' in Comparison with the 'Principes de la nature et de la grâce', in Roger S. Woolhouse, *Leibniz's 'New System'* (1695). Leo S. Olschki Editore, Firenze, pp. 83-95.

Leibniz, G. W. (1992). *De summa rerum. Metaphysical papers 1675-1676*. Translated with an introduction by G. H. R. Parkinson. Yale University Press, New Haven. (DSR)

Leibniz, G. W. (2011). *Leibniz and the Two Sophies: The Philosophical Correspondence*. Edited and translated by Lloyd Strickland. Iter, Toronto. (LTS)

Leibniz, G. W. (2016). *Leibniz on God and Religion. A Reader*. Translated and edited by Lloyd Strickland. Bloomsbury, London. (LGR)

Leibniz, G. W. (1997). *New Essays on Human Understanding*. Translated and edited by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1996). (RB)

⁵⁵ I would like to thank Pauline Phemister and Lloyd Strickland for inspiring discussions on the topic during the X. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress, Hannover, July 2016, and for useful comments to the first version of this paper.

Leibniz, G. W. (1969). *Philosophical Papers and Letters*. A Selection translated and edited, with an introduction by Leroy E. Loemker. 2nd ed. Reidel, Dordrecht. (L)

Leibniz, G. W. (1973). *Philosophical Writings*, edited by G. H. R. Parkinson, translated by Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson. Dent, London (1934) (PW).

Leibniz, G. W. (1961) *Die philosophischen Schriften I–VII*. Herausgegeben von G. I. Gerhardt. Olms, Hildesheim 1961. (G)

Leibniz, G. W. (1989). *Philosophical Essays*. Edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Hackett, Indianapolis. (AG)

Leibniz, G. W. (1923–) *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Reihe I–VII. Herausgegeben von der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Akademie, Berlin. (A)

Leibniz, G. W. (1996) *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*. Edited with an Introduction by Austin Farrer. Translated by E. M. Huggard. Open Court, La Salle (1951). (H)

Lodge, Paul (2016). “Eternal Punishment, Universal Salvation and Pragmatic Theology in Leibniz” (forthcoming in L. Strickland, E. Vynckier & J. Weckend (Eds.), *Universal Genius. Tercentenary Essays on the Philosophy & Science of G.W. Leibniz*, Palgrave Macmillan; preprint available in https://www.academia.edu/14460597/Eternal_Punishment_Universal_Salvation_and_Pragmatic_Theology_in_Leibniz)

Phemister, Pauline (2016). “Leibniz’s Mirrors: Reflecting the Past”, forthcoming in Wenchao Li et al. (Hrsg.), *Für unser Glück oder das Glück anderer. Vorträge des X. Internationalen Leibniz-Kongress*, Bd. VI, Olms, Hildesheim (forthcoming).

Phemister, Pauline (2011). “Monads and Machines”, in Justin E. H. Smith and Ohad Nactomy (Eds.), *Machines of Nature and Corporeal Substances in Leibniz*. Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 39-60.

Phemister, Pauline (2015). “The Soul of Seeds”, in Adrian Nita (ed.), *Leibniz’s Metaphysics and Adoption of Substantial Forms*. Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 125-141.

Roinila, Markku (2011). “Leibniz on Emotions and the Human Body”, in Breger, Herbst und Erdner, *Natur und Subjekt*. Vorträge 3. Teil (IX. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress, Hannover 2011). Leibniz-Gesellschaft, Hannover, pp. 927-936.

Roinila, Markku (2013). “Leibniz and the *Amour Pur* Controversy”, *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, vol. 2, (2) (2013), pp. 35-55.

Roinila, Markku (2016). “Leibniz’s Passionate Knowledge”, *Blityri IV* (1-2, 2016), pp. 75-86.

Strickland, Lloyd (2009). ”Leibniz on Eternal Punishment”, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2), pp. 307-331.

Strickland, Lloyd (2016). “Leibniz’s Harmony Between the Kingdoms of Nature and Grace”, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 98 (3), pp. 302-329 (forthcoming).