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Common Notions and Instincts as Sources of Moral Knowledge in Leibniz's *New Essays on Human Understanding*

Markku Roinila

Docent, Department of Philosophy, History and Art, University of Helsinki

Abstract: In his defense of innateness in *New Essays on Human Understanding* (1704), Leibniz attributes innateness to concepts and principles which do not originate from the senses rather than to the ideas that we are born with. He argues that the innate concepts and principles can be known in two ways: through reason or natural light (necessary truths), and through instincts (other innate truths and principles). In this paper I will show how theoretical and moral reasoning differ from each other in Leibniz, and compare moral reasoning and instincts as sources of knowledge in his practical philosophy. As the practical instincts are closely related to pleasure and passions, which are by nature cognitive, my emphasis will be on the affective character of instinctive moral action and especially deliberation which leads to moral action. I will argue that inclinations arising from moral instinct, which lead us to pleasure while avoiding sorrow, can direct our moral action and sometimes anticipate reasoning when conclusions are not readily available. Acting by will, which is related to moral reasoning, and acting by instincts can lead us to the same moral knowledge independently, but they can also complement each other. To illustrate the two alternative ways to reach moral knowledge, I will discuss the case of happiness, which is the goal of all human moral action for Leibniz.

Keywords: Common notions, innateness, instincts, practical reasoning, pleasure, Leibniz

Reason and Instincts as Ways of Innateness

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is often considered an ultra-rationalist who demanded rigorous demonstrations on all matters. When one looks at his *New Essays on Human Understanding* (1704, published 1765, henceforth NE), which is a detailed, dialogue-form commentary on John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690, henceforth *Essay*), this picture gets much more

nuanced. While Leibniz defends innate ideas against Locke in the first book of NE, his views on innateness are quite different from his English colleague. Leibniz attributes innateness to concepts and principles which do not originate from the senses rather than to the ideas that we are born with. He argues that the innate concepts and principles can be known in two ways: through reason or natural light, and theoretical and practical instincts. Their cognitive natures are very different: whereas reason analyses clear and distinct ideas, of which some are the common notions, the instincts are founded on confused cognition and affects, and are therefore not related to reasoning and common notions. Both are rational ways to know innate truths, however, as both are innate and natural functions of the soul; although reasoning gives us more certainty.

The two kinds of sources of knowledge are related to Leibniz's distinction between necessary truths of reason and contingent truths of fact, of which only the first can be demonstrated by finite minds. While reasoning can involve both kinds of truths, the instincts are related only to truths of fact. The related metaphysical principles are the principle of contradiction, according to which all propositions are either true or false (truths of reason), and the principle of sufficient reason, according to which nothing is true or real unless there is some sufficient reason that makes it so and not otherwise (truths of fact). While the distinction between the two kinds of truths is common in Leibniz's writings, the distinction between the natural light and instinct is distinctive to book I of *New Essays.*

In this paper I will show how theoretical and moral reasoning differ from each other in Leibniz and compare moral reasoning and instincts as sources of knowledge in Leibniz's practical philosophy. As the practical instincts are closely related to pleasure and passions, which are by nature cognitive, my emphasis will be on the affective character of instinctive moral action, moral psychology, and especially deliberation which leads to moral action. I will argue that inclinations arising from moral instinct, which lead us to pleasure while avoiding sorrow, can direct our moral action and sometimes anticipate the reasoning when conclusions are not readily available. Acting by will, which is related to moral reasoning, and acting by instincts can lead us to the same moral knowledge independently, but they can also complement each other. To illustrate the two alternative ways to reach moral knowledge, I will discuss the case of happiness, which is the goal of all human moral action.

While there has been a fair number of accounts of Leibniz's views on innateness, especially on his Platonism, much less has been written on his view of instincts. In general, Leibniz scholars have considered instincts as part of the appetite in the soul, without fully discussing their special characteristics, including the close relation between the practical instincts and affects. For example, in recent Leibniz scholarship Larry Jorgensen devotes a section of his book on Leibniz's philosophy

of mind to instinct and reason, where he discusses how we move naturally from sensations to ideas or to moral action, guided by instincts. But he limits himself to discussing epistemological issues, not taking seriously the affective role of instincts.[1] In her new book on agency, Julia Jorati considers instinctive action as non-voluntary action only, without referring to Leibniz's discussion on instincts in NE I, ii—she ignores them even in her discussion on "appetitions" or internal modifications of the monads.[2] The instincts have been discussed in more detail by Hans Poser[3] and Sabrina Ebbersmeyer,[4] among others, but my approach is different from all of the above. I aim to show how moral reasoning and instinctive action differ from each other in practical rationality while taking into account the affective and dynamic nature of the practical instincts. Thus my analysis complements Jorgensen's account with respect to bringing out the differences between instinct and reason.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, I will introduce Leibniz's views on innateness and the role of common notions in reasoning. The differences between theoretical reasoning (employing the principle of contradiction), and practical reasoning (employing the principle of sufficient reason) are also explained. The second section discusses the role of instincts in Leibniz's views on innateness and shows how they are different from reasoning by common notions. In the third section I will discuss the affective character of the practical instincts in detail and show how they can contribute to our moral knowledge. In the fourth section I show how moral reasoning and practical instincts have a role in Leibniz's dynamics of the mind and discuss their relations as initiators of moral action. The final, fifth section presents happiness as a case study of how we can arrive at the same moral goal by reasoning as well as by instincts.

1. Common Notions and Reasoning

Common notion (*koine ennoia*) is a Stoic term for notions that refer to most basic features of a perceived object. They rise naturally in the minds of all sensible men. The Stoics thought that

[1] Larry M. Jorgensen, *Leibniz's Naturalized Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 270–79.
[2] Julia Jorati, *Leibniz on Causation and Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 53, pp. 17–23.
[3] See, for example, Hans Poser, *Leibniz' Philosophie. Über die Einheit von Metaphysik und Wissenschaft*, ed. Wenchao Li (Hamburg: Meiner, 2016). There are also some older general overviews on instincts, such as José Maria Ripalda, "Instinkt und Vernunft bei G. W. Leibniz," *Studia Leibnitiana* 4, no. 1 (1972), to which Poser refers in his account, and Robert McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception & Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) which I find still useful.
[4] Sabrina Ebbersmeyer, "Leibniz on the Passions and the Dynamical Dimension of the Human Mind," in *Emotional Minds. The Passions and the Limits of Pure Inquiry in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Sabrina Ebbersmeyer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 139–59.

common notions are self-validating, self-evident concepts which are the starting points of all reasoning and investigation. A similar view was previously discussed by Aristotle and Euclid in a less organized manner. [5]

Another conception of common notions is related to Plato's doctrine of recollection (*anamnesis*) presented in his dialogues *Meno, Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. In *Meno* an uneducated slave-boy was led to the solution of a geometrical problem with right questioning and learns that he had the correct answer all along.[6] This shows that there are some innate principles or concepts in the mind which are revealed by attention and thought; sense perception in itself is not enough for true knowledge.

Leibniz discusses the common notions in several mathematical and logical texts, but also in some metaphysical works, such as *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686). Leibniz's most systematic discussion of the topic is, however, in the Preface to *New Essays*, where his disagreement with Locke is introduced:

> There is the question whether the soul in itself is completely blank like a writing tablet on which nothing has as yet been written—a *tabula rasa*—as Aristotle and the author of the *Essay* maintain, and whether everything which is inscribed there comes solely from the senses and experience; or whether the soul inherently contains the sources [*principes*] of various notions and doctrines, which external objects merely rouse up on suitable occasions, as I believe and as do Plato and even the Schoolmen...The Stoics call these sources *Prolepsis*, that is fundamental assumptions or things taken for granted in advance. Mathematicians call them common notions or *koinai ennoiai* ... these … reveal something divine and eternal: this appears especially in the case of necessary truths.[7]

Leibniz presents himself as a follower of Plato. For him, the sources or principles of notions and doctrines—that is, self-evident common notions—are innate in us, but require an external stimulation of the senses to bring them out; Leibniz even says that without the senses we would

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[5] Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyan Yu, eds., *Blackwell Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 120. See also Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. VI (Basel: Schwabe, 1984), p. 939.

[6] Charles Kahn, "Plato on Recollection," in *A Companion to Plato*, ed. Hugh B. Benson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 120–22.

[7] RB, pp. 48–49 & 50. See also McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception & Thought*, p. 118. RB has identical page numbers to A VI, 6, which includes the standard original text; and I will refer to the work by NE when I am referring to certain points of it, by A when I am referring to a certain page number of the standard text, and by RB when I am citing the English translation.

never think of them.[8] Later on Leibniz says that although Plato's doctrine of recollection is a "sheer myth," it is "entirely consistent with unadorned reason."[9] There are also further references to Plato's theory later in NE. For example, in I, i, Leibniz refers to *Meno* and says that the whole of arithmetic and geometry is contained within us in an implicit way, and we can find it within ourselves by attending carefully and methodically to what is already in our minds.[10]

In this sense Leibniz agrees with Descartes, who held that common notions like substance, identity, duration, freedom of will and God are available to everyone as inclinations or dispositions in the mind which can be found by natural light, but everyone is not necessarily aware of them as they are often blinded by preconceived opinions.[11]

Leibniz illustrates the dispositional theory of innateness with a metaphor. If the mind is thought as a block of marble, it cannot be modified to any kind of form according to the wishes of the artist, for it includes veins which determine the shape it is going to take (Leibniz's example is Hercules).

> This is how ideas and truths are innate in us—as inclinations, dispositions, tendencies, or natural potentialities, and not as actualities; although these potentialities are always accompanied by certain actualities, often insensible ones, which correspond to them.[12]

Leibniz thought that the "veins" of our understanding are present in our minds potentially—they are inclinations which are actualized by perceptions of external objects. These inclinations are often below our threshold of consciousness, as I will show later on. Even in these cases the common notions are innate and recognized by the natural light, but as they require the senses to become "activated," they should be distinguished from innate ideas, which are not related to the senses in

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[8] See also *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §26, where the argument is presented in a weaker form. Although it is clear that Leibniz follows Plato here, it is worth noting that selective attention has a central role in Aristotle's theory of abstraction as well. One focuses on an aspect, typically a general one and ignores the others. This happens in induction, for example. On Aristotle's theory, see Allan Bäck, *Aristotle's Theory of Abstraction* (Cham: Springer, 2014), 2, pp. 16–23.

[9] RB, p. 52. On Leibniz's Platonism in general, see Christia Mercer, "The Platonism at the Core of Leibniz's Philosophy," in Douglas Hedley & Sarah Hutton (eds.), *Platonism at the Origin of Modernity. Studies on Platonism and Early Modern Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), pp. 225–238, and on Platonism's relation to innateness in Leibniz, Nicholas Jolley, *Leibniz* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 109–12.

[10] A VI, 6, p. 77.

[11] On Descartes's views on common notions, see John Cottingham, *A Descartes Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 37–38, and on his dispositional theory Nicholas Jolley, *Light of the Soul: Theories of Ideas in Leibniz, Malebranche, and Descartes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 19–22.

[12] RB, p. 52. Leibniz uses several terms for the way innate ideas are in us. Unless I am quoting Leibniz, I will use term "inclination" for clarity.

any way.[13] Leibniz's list of first principles of thought includes not only the common notions, such as being, substance, identity, change, possibility, force, similarity, and so on,[14] but also indemonstrable principles of contradiction and sufficient reason.[15] Finding these notions and principles in the mind is not always easy:

> It would indeed be wrong to think that we can easily read these eternal laws of reason in the soul, as the Praetor's edict can be read on his notice-board, without effort or inquiry; but it is enough that they can be discovered within us by dint of attention: the senses give the occasion, and the results of experiments also serve to corroborate reason, somewhat as checks in arithmetic help us to avoid errors of calculation in long chains of reasoning.[16]

The two indemonstrable principles above are founded on the distinction between two kinds of truths. In *Monadology,* §33 he argues:

> There are also two kinds of truths, truths of reasoning and truths of fact. Truths of reasoning are necessary, and their opposite is impossible. Truths of fact are contingent, and their opposite is possible. When a truth is necessary, we can find the reason for it by analysis, breaking it down into simple ideas and truths until we reach the primitive.[17]

Both the truths of reason or necessary truths and truths of fact or contingent truths are analytic in a sense; but while the first can be reached by finite analysis, the latter require infinite analysis, that is, God's understanding. It should be noted, however, that both kinds of truths are occasioned by perceptions; they do not arise out of nowhere. Thus, while Leibniz says above that especially the necessary truths reveal something divine and eternal, contingent truths illuminate God's wisdom as well, as there is always a rational reason or cause to be found for any given thing. Practical knowledge involves the natural light and common notions as much as reasonings which are related to mathematics and logic.[18]

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[13] *On What is Independent of Sense and Matter*, GP VI, pp. 501–4. See also C. D. Broad, *Leibniz. An Introduction*, ed. C. Lewy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 139.
[14] On these concepts, see McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception & Thought*, pp. 89–97.
[15] In *Specimen dynamicum* I, 1, Leibniz admitted that in mechanics one cannot demonstrate everything by logical analysis (AG, pp. 124–25). On the different version of the principle of sufficient reason, see McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception & Thought*, pp. 103–110.
[16] RB, p. 50.
[17] L, pp. 646.
[18] See NE I, ii, §9, A VI, 6, p. 92. In NE I, ii, §2 Leibniz argues: "Certain rules of justice can be demonstrated in their full extent and perfection only if we assume the existence of God and the immortality of the soul…" RB, p. 89.

The two kinds of truths are also closely related to the two principles of reasoning: whereas truths of reason are employed in the principle of contradiction, truths of fact are related to the principle of sufficient reason. The principle of contradiction, according to which the proposition is either true or false, is essential in analysis of primitive ideas, and it plays a central role in Leibniz's theory of common notions. He deviates from the Platonic theory when he insists that although the common notions seem self-evident (as the Stoics and the Cartesians argued), Euclid was right in trying to demonstrate them.[19] When Locke questions the universality of the common principles, Leibniz points out:

> I do not rest the certainty of innate principles on universal consent; for I have already told you, Philalethes, that I think one should work to find ways of proving all axioms except primary ones.[20]

Leibniz refers here to primary axioms, identities like A=A, which are the only truths of reason he accepts without proofs.[21] This theme is also central in NE I, ii, §15–23 (representing *Essay* I, iii, §15–19), where we can find an interesting discussion on the views of common notions by Edward Baron Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648). He argues that the common notions are normative principles implanted by God in every person to make sure that they can distinguish what is true and good from what is false and bad.[22] Philalethes, representing Locke, presents a list of these normative, theological principles and argues that they are bad examples of common notions, for one can easily find many similar principles. Theophilus, representing Leibniz, grants that Herbert's principles are not innate, as they are not proved.[23]

Leibniz's demand on the need to demonstrate the common notions is not limited to *New Essays*. For example, the argument is central in his criticism of Descartes in *Critical Remarks Concerning the General Part of Descartes' Principles* (1692). Leibniz argues that instead of doubting everything (which will never end) and trusting in subjective clarity and distinctness of

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[19] RB, p. 50. Leibniz held this opinion systematically throughout his career. Herbert Breger, "The Proof of the Axioms," in *Leibniz selon les Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain*, ed. Francois Duchesneau and Jérémie Griard (Montréal: Bellarmin, 2006), pp. 49–50, 52.
[20] NE I, i, §4, RB, p. 75, see also A VI, 6, pp. 107–8.
[21] NE IV, ii, §1, A VI, 6, pp. 361–62. See also McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception & Thought*, pp. 110–11 and Margaret Dauler Wilson, "Leibniz and Locke on 'First Truths,'" in *Ideas and Mechanism. Essays on Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[22] On Herbert's views on common notions, see Sarah Hutton, *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 105–7.
[23] A VI, 6, p. 97. Leibniz's presentation of Locke's position is a little misleading as he first mentions the six common notions given in Herbert's *De Veritate*, and the five principles given are concluded from them.

perceptions, one should examine the reasons for every proposition. As positive examples, he mentions Apollonius, Euclid, and, in recent times, Roberval.[24]

Leibniz's emphasis on the need to demonstrate the axioms was at odds with the general opinion of the time. Most philosophers, such as Arnauld, thought that axioms can be proved but that it was not necessary since they were immediately self-evident.[25] For Leibniz, however, geometry can be perfect only when every axiom is demonstrated by a chain of definitions.[26] One can accept uncertain, provisional proofs (incomplete definitions, for example), but in the end strict demonstration of axioms is necessary to reach certainty. Leibniz was actually successful in providing some demonstrations with the new logical tools he developed, one of his favourites being the proof that the whole is bigger than the part.[27]

The demand to demonstrate the axioms is not possible for contingent truths of fact which are employed especially in practical sciences, such as moral philosophy. The contingent truths can be known with certainty only through infinite divine understanding; while for human beings, knowledge of truths of fact is more or less uncertain—we can only achieve moral certainty of them.[28] The contingent truths are therefore related to the principle of sufficient reason, according to which there is nothing without a reason.[29]

Moral reasoning is therefore different from reasoning in theoretical sciences. Instead of trying to logically reduce the propositions to primitives, we try to find a sufficient reason as a rational ground for moral action. In psychological terms, the moral reasoning is represented in the soul by will, which starts the action unless it is prevented. Although moral reasoning deals with clear and distinct ideas and common notions, the results of this reasoning are less certain than in theoretical sciences due to the fact that truths of fact are contingent.

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[24] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965; reprint, 1984), pp. 22–3. See also NE I, iii, §24 and IV, vii, §1. For similar criticisms against the Cartesians, see Vincenzo De Risi, *Leibniz on the Parallel Postulate and the Foundations of Geometry. The Unpublished Manuscripts* (Cham: Springer, 2016), pp. 25–7.

[25] De Risi, *Leibniz on the Parallel Postulate and the Foundations of Geometry*, p. 13.

[26] For an example, see *Primary Truths* (1686), AG, p. 31. De Risi notes that the proving of axioms is in fact reducing all the composite, commonly used, axioms to simple identicals or necessary truths. Ibid., p. 33.

[27] For more details, see ibid., p. 31. In NE I, iii, §6, Philalethes challenges the innateness of this principle (A VI, 6, p. 103). Locke holds that only God and substance can be regarded as innate. McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception & Thought*, pp. 94–5. Hacking has argued that Leibniz had a fairly modern conception of proof, unlike Descartes. Ian Hacking, "Leibniz and Descartes, Proof and Eternal Truths," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 59 (1975), pp. 176–78.

[28] On contingent truths, see *De libertate, contingentia et serie causarum, providentia*, A VI, 4, p. 1656. By moral certainty I mean conjectural knowledge (presumptions), which has to be replaced by true knowledge when it is available.

[29] On the different version of the principle of sufficient reason, see McRae, *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception & Thought*, pp. 103–10.

In what follows, I will limit myself to discussing moral reasoning and instinctive moral action which is also founded on the principle of sufficient reason. Contrasting these two ways to arrive at moral action has been rare in Leibniz-scholarship, and I attempt to show how acting by reasoning and acting by instinct are different from each other, although they can also complement each other.

2. Practical and Theoretical Instincts

In Early Modern Philosophy the concept of instinct was used in a general sense to describe natural behaviour typical of animals and men.[30] In a philosophical context, however, it was distinguished from common notions which are known by the natural light.[31] In the Leibnizian context an instinct is an innate natural drive which is founded on confused, insensible cognition.

Leibniz's main discussion on instincts is in NE I, ii which is suggestively titled as "That there are no 'innate practical principles.'" In the corresponding *Essay* I, iii Locke denies that practical principles are universal and therefore innate. He argues that moral principles require reasoning and exercise of the mind to discover the certainty of their truth, supported by the fact that many ignore them. Consequently, there are no moral principles that all men agree on.[32] However, Locke continues:

> Nature, I confess, has put into man a desire for happiness, and an aversion to misery: These indeed are innate practical principles, which (as practical principles ought) do continue constantly to operate and influence all our actions … These may be obsev'd in all persons and all ages, steady and universal; but these are inclinations of the appetite to the good, not impressions of the understanding.[33]

[30] Early Modern philosophers discussing instincts prior to Leibniz were Herbert of Cherbury and Blaise Pascal, who opposed instinct with reason. Charles Larmore, "Scepticism," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1177.
[31] *Blackwell Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 121. On the history of accounts of instincts, see Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. IV (Basel: Schwabe, 1976), pp. 407–17.
[32] *Essay*, pp. 65–6. On Locke's criticism of innate moral principles, see Catherine Wilson, "The Moral Epistemology of Locke's Essay," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke's* Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Lex Newman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 389–94.
[33] *Essay* I, iii, §3, p. 67.

The desire for happiness is for Locke a natural, common and constant desire which is not related to the understanding. Leibniz responds that this desire is not known fully by reason and it can be considered as an innate, indemonstrable principle:

> Although it is correct to say that morality has indemonstrable principles, of which one of the first and most practical is that we should pursue joy and avoid sorrow, it must be added that that is not a truth which is known solely from reason, since it is based on inner experience—on confused knowledge; for one only senses what joy and sorrow are.[34]

A little later he specifies: "It is not known by reason but by an instinct, so to speak. It is an innate principle, but it does not share in the natural light since it is not known in a luminous way."[35] This instinct of pursuing joy and avoiding sorrow is thus related to truths of fact and the principle of sufficient reason rather than to necessary truths. It can be understood as a moral maxim which we follow instinctively but which cannot be demonstrated. I will call it "moral instinct" from now on, as it inclines us to moral action.

Leibniz goes on to give examples of foreign customs to show that instincts are common to all men, mentioning the Orientals, the Greek and the Romans, the Bible, the Koran and American Indians.[36] However, it should be noted that the instincts only incline us to moral action without necessitating it.

> These instincts do not irresistibly impel us to act: our passions lead us to resist them, our prejudices obscure them, and contrary customs distort them. Usually, though, we accede to these instincts of conscience, and even follow them whenever strong feelings do not overcome them. The largest and soundest part of the human race bears witness to them.[37]

In addition to the fact that the moral instinct is founded on confused knowledge, it is essentially related to affections, which is often ignored in Leibniz-scholarship. The moral instinct, or natural feeling, as Leibniz also calls it, leads to pleasure and eventually to passions, as I will explain in the

[34] NE I, ii, §1, RB, p. 88.
[35] Ibid.
[36] A VI, 6, p. 93.
[37] NE I, ii, §9, RB, pp. 92–3.

next section. Despite its affective character, it is still related to innate truths, as Leibniz argues in NE I, ii, §9:

> That natural feeling is the perception of an innate truth, though very often a confused one as are the experiences of the outer senses. Thus *innate truths* can be distinguished from the *natural light* (which contains only what is distinctly knowable) as a genus should be distinguished from its species, since innate truths comprise instincts as well as the natural light.[38]

Therefore, for Leibniz, both the natural light and the instincts are ways to know innate truths. They represent alternative ways to arrive at a conclusion, or, in our case, moral act. A bit earlier he says that the natural impressions are fundamentally no more than aids to reason and indications of nature's plan.[39]

Leibniz discusses many other instincts in NE in addition to the moral instinct. The other practical ones are: a sense of justice, the knowledge that God exists, a natural inclination of men to avoid filth, and a sense of sociability. Like the moral instinct, they are based on affections and incline us to moral action.[40] For example, Leibniz appeals to a natural feeling when he explains how savages show a sense of justice, form societies and have a tradition that there is a God.[41]

Leibniz also mentions a theoretical instinct which has wholly different objects from the practical instincts. They are innate truths which are accepted straightaway without inquiry:

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[38] RB, p. 94.
[39] A VI, 6, p. 94.
[40] "Nature instils in man and even in most of the animals an affection and gentleness towards the members of their own species" (A VI, 6, p. 93). Poser helpfully discusses three different instincts: moral instinct, social instinct and love for man (*Menschenliebe*). Poser, *Leibniz' Philosophie. Über die Einheit von Metaphysik und Wissenschaft*, p. 233. It seems to me that the other practical instincts can be treated as a subclass of the moral instinct, but this merits some further study which is not possible here.
[41] A VI, 6, p. 93. There is old tradition, including Cicero and Calvin, among others, who hold that belief in the existence of God is instinctive in human beings. Herbert of Cherbury can be seen to belong to this tradition. He argued that the highest innate faculty of the mind is natural instinct which is able to grasp the truth intuitively (including God's existence) and has as its purpose self-preservation and desire for happiness. Hutton, *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 105–106. Herbert's instinct is clearly different from Leibniz's instincts: it is not affective by nature and it produces high-class knowledge. It is worth noting that Herbert's natural instinct received a lot of criticism which can be applied to Leibniz's instincts as well. Locke and Gassendi argued that if there is such a natural instinct, why are there so many different opinions? Descartes suspected that natural instinct can lead us to wrong goals due to our animal nature (which Leibniz himself acknowledges, as we will see). Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savanarola to Bayle.*, revised and expanded Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 133–35.

> Nor do instincts always pertain to practice: some of them contain theoretical truths—the in-built principles of the sciences and of reasoning are like that when we employ them through a natural instinct without knowing the reasons for them.[42]

The theoretical instinct seems to be an incomplete, but rational analysis. Probably this is what Leibniz has in mind when he says that the instincts can lead us to scientific conclusions.[43] Jorgensen seems to be right in saying that in the case of reasoning, the instinct is oriented towards the formation of an idea and in the case of moral precepts, it is an instinct towards moral action.[44]

However, some of the objects of the theoretical instinct concern ethical definitions, like disinterested love as finding pleasure of the good of the other,[45] justice as charity of the wise[46] and happiness as a lasting joy.[47] I think it can be claimed that on an instinctive level, these definitions are instructive maxims or sufficient reasons to act although we do not know them fully.[48] But they can be the objects of moral reasoning as well if we know them fully, understanding the meaning of the terms (justice, love, charity, etc.).[49] Leibniz illustrates the theoretical instinct in NE I, ii, §4:

> There are two ways of discovering innate truths within us: by illumination and by instinct. Those to which I have just referred are demonstrated through our ideas, and that is what the natural light is. But there are things which follow from the natural light, and these are principles in relation to instinct. This is how we are led to act humanely: by instinct because it pleases us, and by reason because it is right. Thus

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[42] NE I, ii, §3, RB, p. 90.
[43] A VI, 6, p. 89.
[44] Jorgensen, *Leibniz's Naturalized Philosophy of Mind*, p. 276.
[45] *Elements of Natural Law*, A VI, 1, p. 463.
[46] On natural law in NE, see Patrick Riley, "Leibniz on Natural Law in the *Nouveaux essais*," in *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. Marcelo Dascal, Dordrecht: Springer 2008, pp. 279–89.
[47] NE II, xxi, §42, A VI, 6, p. 194.
[48] It is unclear whether the theoretical instinct is connected to symbolic thinking, which Leibniz describes in *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas*: "I use the words, whose meaning appears obscurely and imperfectly to the mind, in place of the ideas which I have of them, because I remember that I know the meaning of the words but their interpretation is not necessary for the present judgment" (L, p. 292). This can be seen as instinctive reasoning which can be complemented by more rigorous one later on—in *Meditations* Leibniz argues that the opposite of symbolic or blind thought is intuitive thinking, when we can think simultaneously all the composite concepts that a complex concept includes (L, p. 292). On the other hand, Leibniz positions the blind thinking above clear and distinct knowledge in the cognitive hierarchy in the *Meditations*; and the knowledge the theoretical instinct produces is confused, so there seems to be no real connection between the two. However, in NE III, I, §2 he argues for the usefullness of blind thoughts in reasoning, because it would take too long always to replace terms by definitions (A VI, 6, p. 275). I will have to leave this issue unsolved for now and return to it in another paper.
[49] See A VI, 6, p. 91. Of further examples of moral definitions, see, among others, A VI, 4, p. 2798 and pp. 2806–12. In NE IV, ii, §9, Leibniz even says, "There are considerable examples of demonstrations outside of mathematics," and mentions jurisprudence as an example (RB, p. 370).

> there are in us instinctive truths which are innate principles that we sense and that we approve, even when we have no proof of them—though we get one when we explain the instinct in question. This is how we employ the laws of inference, being guided by a confused knowledge of them, as if by instinct, though the logicians demonstrate the reasons for them; as mathematicians explain what we do unthinkingly when we walk or jump.[50]

The extent to which Leibniz was prepared to argue for the universality of the instincts shows that he thought them important initiators of moral action. Because the object pleases us, we approve and follow it unless there are other, more powerful incentives. [51] Therefore, instincts guide us in our practical life, helping us to act when we cannot reason quickly enough, or when reaching a conclusion is difficult. For example, when we come across a dangerous animal, we act more quickly on instinct than on reason, and this can save our life, even if we misjudge the danger involved. But the practical instincts are not only helpful on this basic level—they lead us to higher cognitive affections which have a long-term effect on our practical rationality.

3. Moral Instinct and Affects as Sources of Moral Knowledge

One can consider the natural feeling of the moral instinct as a starting point of an affective process that can lead us to passions, which may or may not help us to act according to right reason and to reach the primary goal of moral action, happiness. It is clear that the moral instinct forms the basis of our moral motivation, for it leads us to the good while avoiding the evil.[52]

The good here consists of confused, but eventually notable pleasures. They are confused sensations which are, so to speak, aggregates of insensible, minute perceptions, which are either too "minute and too numerous, or else too unvarying, so that they are not sufficiently distinctive on their own."[53] They bring about a change in the form of minute leanings towards some pleasure or

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[50] RB, p. 91.
[51] Broad suggests that in instinctive action the striving is accompanied and directed by an unconscious belief that such-and-such future state would be good for the agent. Broad, *Leibniz*, p. 144. I think this is a mistaken view of Leibnizian moral instinct—it is not a belief, but an appetite for pleasure.
[52] Goodness is what contributes to pleasure or what contributes more to joy than sorrow or in relation to perceiving perfection. Gregory Brown, "Leibniz's Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*, ed. Nicholas Jolley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 412–13. Calabi argues that this picture is largely Aristotelian and related to books VII and X of *Nichomachean Ethics*. Clotilde Calabi, "Leibnizian Pleasures," *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 2 (1993), pp. 271–80.
[53] NE, Preface, RB, p. 53.

displeasure without our noticing it. When the change is noted, the instinct guides us to it. In this way the instinct can be seen as part of the appetite in the soul even though we become aware of the change only when the inclination gets weightier in cognitive terms.

NE II, xx, §6 includes Leibniz's most systematic, though not always very clear, discussion of the inclinations of the soul and especially the passions.[54] The starting point is Locke's concept of uneasiness, which is a violent affection felt upon the absence of anything which presently produces delight in us.[55] Leibniz prefers to use the term *inquiétude* or disquiet, which has a slightly different meaning. Whereas for Locke uneasiness represents a present, pressing conscious discomfort, for Leibniz it signifies an insensible inclination to suffering rather than the suffering itself. The disquiet consists of minute, confused perceptions which become notable only when they are amplified and directed to some object. Usually we are not affected by pleasure or pain per se, but only elements of them:

> Nature has given us the spurs of desire in the form of the rudiments or elements of suffering, semi-suffering one might say, or … of minute sufferings of which we cannot be aware. This lets us enjoy the benefit of discomfort without enduring its inconveniences.[56]

These semi-sufferings, which form the disquiet in the soul, are constituents of primary passions of joy and sorrow. The semi-pleasures or semi-sufferings are the beginnings of affective change of which we are not aware of at first.[57] We become aware of the change little by little and learn what is its cause, at which point we have a notable pleasure or pain. For example, we become aware of the disquiet of hunger eventually when it starts to grow in us.[58] This enables us to take precautions before the lack of food gets dangerous to our health.

When we are successful in resisting the semi-sufferings, such as sensual temptations like odours, we feel a notable pleasure and recognize its object:

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[54] Apart from this brief chapter, Leibniz never wrote a systematic treatise on passions. However, the early unfinished memoir *De Affectibus* (1679, A VI, 4, pp. 1410–41) anticipates NE in many ways, although Leibniz's conception of substance and appetite was very different at the time. In *De Affectibus* Leibniz defines an affect as an occupation or thought of the soul which arises out of its opinions of good and evil; its source is perceiving pleasure and pain (A VI, 4, p. 1412).
[55] Locke, *Essay*, p. 230.
[56] RB, p. 165.
[57] "Often it is an insensible perception which we can neither discern or single out, and which makes us lean one way rather than the other without being able to say why." NE, Preface, RB, p. 183.
[58] A VI, 6, p. 164.

> Our continual victory over these semi-sufferings—a victory we feel when we follow our desires and somehow satisfy this or that appetite or itch—provides us with many semi-pleasures; and the continuation and accumulation of these … eventually becomes a whole, genuine pleasure.[59]

Pleasure is an aggregate of the semi-pleasures that are "won" or converted from semi-sufferings. Leibniz argues that without the semi-suffering there would be no pleasure at all. They are obstacles, and by overcoming them we reach a state of ease.[60] At the same time, our cognition is temporarily heightened:

> This account of tiny aids, imperceptible little escapes and releases of thwarted endeavour, which finally generate notable pleasure, also provides a somewhat more distinct knowledge of our inevitably confused ideas of pleasure and pain; just as a sensation of warmth or of light results from many tiny motions …[61]

The notable pleasure is classified here as "somewhat more distinct" cognition because it is related to a recognizable object, whereas the semi-pleasures are only confused and minute perceptions. This level of cognition is clear, but confused, and it is founded on simple evidence of the senses, which does not contain marks that are needed to tell the sensation apart from others like it.[62] The source of notable pleasures or pains is often the body, as can be seen from the example of hunger. It seems to me that the moral instinct is especially related to this kind of cognition, as it presents us an object unlike the minute disquiet. Leibniz is not very clear in this matter, but as he thinks that the moral instinct inclines us to moral action, it seems reasonable to suppose that the action is related to some object.[63]

Passions proper are founded on this kind of notable pleasure or pain, but they are higher affections

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[59] RB, p. 165.
[60] A VI, 6, p. 165. Leibniz gives an example from Plato's *Phaedo*, where Socrates becomes aware little by little that his feet are itching. The semi-sufferings are fortified until he has to scratch his feet in order to overcome the pain that has become notable.
[61] RB, p. 165.
[62] *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas,* A VI, 4, p. 586.
[63] On the other hand, in NE I, ii, §9 he gives eating and walking as examples of instinctive action. A VI, 6, p. 92. It is also interesting to note that in NE III, xi, §8 Leibniz says, in connection to the significance of the term "instinct": "Although we do not understand the causes of these inclinations or endeavours as well as might be wished, still we have a notion of them which is sufficient for intelligible discourse about them." RB, p. 351.

in the cognitive hierarchy. Leibniz argues, for example, that love is "to be disposed to take pleasure in the perfection, well-being or happiness of the objects of one's love,"[64] joy is a state "in which pleasure predominates in us,"[65] and sorrow is a state of disquiet or notable displeasure.[66] The cognitive difference between notable pleasure or pain and passions is small. While both are confused inclinations, we can be aware of the objects of pleasure, but cannot know why they are pleasurable. With passions, the source of pleasure or pain is clearer. In NE II, xx, §6 Leibniz says that with disquiet we do not know what we lack, but with passions we at least know what we want, although they can also contribute to further disquiet.[67] Therefore passions include an additional cognitive component: they are judgements rather than sensations. Leibniz presents the hierarchy of the mind's affections in NE II, xxi, §42:

> The minute insensible perceptions of some perfection or imperfection … which are as it were components of pleasure and of pain, constitute inclinations and propensities but not outright passions. So there are insensible inclinations of which we are not aware. There are sensible ones: we are acquainted with their existence and their objects, but have no sense of how they are constituted; these are confused inclinations which we attribute to our bodies although there is always something corresponding to them in the mind. Finally there are distinct inclinations which reason gives us: we have a sense both of their strength and of their constitution. Pleasures of this kind, which occur in the knowledge and production of order and harmony, are the most valuable.[68]

In this continuous hierarchy the lowest level is disquiet, which we are not aware of. This may accumulate into notable pleasures or pains which the moral instinct inclines us to. When they are accumulated, they may develop into affectively powerful passions. Finally, we are always aware of the distinct inclinations or volitions given by reason and they give us the greatest pleasure.[69] While the moral instinct cannot lead us to distinct volitions, which are related to the understanding, it can

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[64] §5, RB, p. 163.
[65] §7, RB, p. 166.
[66] §8, A VI, 6, p. 167.
[67] A VI, 6, p. 166. On the nature of the passions, see Ebbersmeyer, "Leibniz on the Passions and the Dynamical Dimension of the Human Mind," pp. 150–56. Unlike in NE, in *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas* Leibniz discusses passions as clear and distinct ideas (he mentions hope and fear) (A VI, 4, p. 587), but it is likely that this is related to his view that the passions are common to many senses and are therefore concepts of the common sense.
[68] RB, pp. 194–95
[69] See NE II, xxi, §5, A VI, 6, p. 172.

guide us to passions of which some are intellectual, reflecting universal perfection. These passions, such as joy, hope and love, motivate us to contribute to the common good, which perfects us at the same time.[70] I will return to this theme in the final section of the paper.

4. Instinctive Inclinations, Will and Deliberation

In this section I will discuss both the will and the notable inclinations to which we are guided to by the moral instinct (I call them instinctive inclinations), as instances of the soul's appetite, and show how they are related to each other. Leibniz thought that the soul is an automaton, or a spiritual machine, where each state follows "automatically" from the preceding state by an internal, primitive active force.[71] In *New System of Nature* (1695) he argues that the scholastic substantial forms should be rehabilitated, but understood as consisting of this force.[72] The picture is largely Aristotelian, but Leibniz gives it a new twist by emphasizing that the source of the activity is in the substances themselves. Due to its infinite complexity, the soul is spontaneous or free to act according to the final causes of good and evil.[73] This spontaneity allows human beings to perfect themselves, although the spiritual machine is driven by its perceptions and inclinations or desires which arise from them.[74]

Leibniz describes the mind's dynamical striving in NE II, xxi. In §1 he argues that power in general can be described as the possibility of change, but says that it is not only a faculty, but also an endeavour which can be distinguished into entelechy and efforts. Entelechy is related to primitive active force, and efforts to derivative, passive forces. When entelechy (or a substantial form) is accompanied with perception, it is a soul.[75] The efforts are the momentary states

[70] Leibniz thought that promoting the common good is a reward in itself, as pleasure is given to the one who produces pleasure in others. In *Elements of Natural Law* (1671) he writes: "The sciences of the just [ethics] and the useful [politics], that is, of the public good and of their own private good, are mutually tied up in each other…no one can easily be happy in the midst of miserable people" (A VI, 1, p. 460; L, p. 132).
[71] I will use the terms "endeavor" and "force" interchangeably. Leibniz was aware of the use of the term "force" in Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and it is possible that he got it from there. However, Leibniz's use of it, starting from *New System*, is significantly different from Spinoza's, in that he emphasizes the spontaneity of the automaton, its relation to the pre-established harmony and the final causes of good and evil. Christopher Noble, "Self-Moving Machines and the Soul: Leibniz contra Spinoza on the Spiritual Automaton," *The Leibniz Review* 27 (2017), pp. 65–67, 77–78.
[72] GP IV, p. 479.
[73] On metaphysical goodness, see *Theodicy*, §209, GP VI, p. 242.
[74] *Theodicy*, §52; GP VI, p. 131.
[75] A VI, 6, pp. 169–170.

of the mind, such as disquiet, the notable pleasures and pains, and the passions. All of these are instances of the derivative forces which affect the entelechy at each moment.

The entelechy acts as a law-of-the-series of the substance, but also as a certain active appetite for something good, which relates it to the final causes and ultimately to happiness and perfection.[76] The most significant occurrence of this power in the mind is the will. It is a power to begin, continue or end an action and is always directed to what our thinking recognizes as good. Therefore, the will is related to moral reasoning, unlike the instincts, which are related to affects and confused knowledge of pleasure and pain.

The will should be distinguished from volitions, which are actual voluntary exercises of that power. Unlike the entelechy, they are efforts, momentary states of the will rather than the will itself. As efforts are derivative forces, the volitions can also be more or less passive, depending on how much they are affected by other, involuntary efforts. In NE, II, xxi, §5 volitions are defined as follows:

> I shall say that volition is the effort or endeavour (*conatus*) to move towards what one finds good and away from what one finds bad, the endeavour arising immediately out of one's awareness of those things.[77]

This sounds very much like the moral instinct; but volitions arise out of perceptions we are aware of and can reason about, whereas instincts are necessarily related to confused, insensible cognition. In general, the volitions lead to actions unless they are prevented.[78] Both volitions and instinctive inclinations are related to the good, but as the will is related to the (real) goods found by the reason, the instincts are related to the apparent goods or present pleasure, which may be deceptive as we have only confused knowledge of it.

To be clear, it seems that the will and the moral instinct are dynamic counterparts on the conscious and unconscious level in Leibniz's moral psychology. He prefers to call inclinations "appetitions" rather than "volitions", "for one describes as 'voluntary' only actions one can be aware of and can reflect upon when they arise from some consideration of good and bad; though

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[76] *Principles of Nature and Grace, based on Reason*, §3, GP VI, pp. 598–99.
[77] NE II, xxi, §5, RB, p. 172.
[78] A VI, 6, pp. 172–73. In NE II, xxi, §30 Leibniz argues that when a volition includes some imperfection or impotence, it is called "velleity." A VI, 6, 183, RB, 183. He explains this later on, saying that "desires and endeavours of which we are aware are often called 'volitions' too, though less complete ones, whether or not they prevail and take effect" (NE II, xxi, §39; RB, p. 192).

there are also appetitions of which one can be aware."[79]

Whereas volitions are founded on the present clear and distinct perceptions and exhausted when they lead to actions, involuntary thoughts or appetitions come to us both from the body, where outer objects affect our senses, and from our mind, as a result of often undetectable traces that are left behind by earlier perceptions which continue to operate and mingle with new ones.[80] Disquiet arises from sensible qualities, such as sounds and odours, which constantly affect our judgment due to their vividness, leading the mind away from clearly and distinctly perceived goods, which are the objects of the will.[81] The disquiet is also present in cognitively higher instinctive inclinations; as Leibniz says: "Disquiet occurs not merely in uncomfortable passions such as aversion, fear, anger, envy, shame, but also in their opposites, love, hope, calmness, generosity, and pride."[82] Note, however, that even though the passions may include some disquiet, they are typically the kind of appetitions of which one can be aware.

The human deliberation is a complicated dynamical process where volitions and instinctive inclinations are competing with each other. In addition, the confused elements in the process may distort or overcome the clearly and distinctly perceived ideas due to their vividness; and the following volition, which is formed mechanically, as it were, may lead us to do something else than what the reason recommends.[83] Another kind of case is a a compromise where the goods present in the deliberation are realized only partially Or there may result a kind of compromise of the goods involved in the deliberation and the real goods are realized only partially. In dynamical terms, we might say that the primitive active force in the mind or will is modified or limited by passive derivative forces or efforts.

Leibniz describes this conflict in NE II, xxi, §39, referring to the moral instinct as desire or fear, and to passions as impulses which consist of actual pleasure or suffering:

> Various perceptions and inclinations combine to produce a complete volition: it is the result of the conflict amongst them. There are some, imperceptible in themselves, which add up to a disquiet which impels us without our seeing why. There are some which join forces to carry us toward or away from some object, in which case there is desire or fear, also accompanied by a disquiet but not always one amounting to

[79] RB, p. 173.
[80] On memory traces, see Calabi, "Leibnizian Pleasures," p. 248.
[81] NE II, xxi, §12, A VI, 6, p. 177.
[82] NE II, xxi, §39, RB, p. 192.
[83] This leads often to acratic action, as Leibniz admits in NE I, ii, §11 and II, xxi, §35. On *akrasia* in Leibniz, see Jorati, *Leibniz on Causation and Agency*, pp. 162–74. On the vividness of confused knowledge, see also NE II, xxi, §35.

> pleasure or displeasure. Finally, there are some impulses which are accompanied by actual pleasure or suffering … The eventual result of all these impulses is the prevailing effort, which makes a full volition.[84]

It seems clear that while the will is the most powerful and perfect source of activity in the soul, the appetitions may also have degrees of activity, as some of them originate from the instincts and we can be aware of them. As they develop and gather more momentum, they rise in the cognitive hierarchy and may affect the deliberation in a significant way discussed above.[85] It is also important to notice that pleasure, the essential element in instinctive inclinations, is closely related to perfection:

> Although pleasure cannot be given a nominal definition, any more than light or heat can, it can like them be defined causally: I believe that fundamentally pleasure is a sense of perfection, and pain a sense of imperfection, each being notable enough for one to become aware of it.[86]

When we are receiving pleasure, the moral instinct motivates us to strive for the perfection represented by it. Eventually the instinct leads to intellectual passions, like love or joy.[87] As a cognitively higher affection, joy also includes the awareness of causes for joyfulness, and we can be said to have some kind of conception of metaphysical goodness or perfection, although it is related to natural feeling rather than reasoning. Joy increases our activity even more than mere sensing pleasure does, despite the fact that even in intellectual passions there is some disquiet always present, which can affect its power:

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[84] RB, p. 192. Another illuminating description can be found in "Observations on the Book Concerning 'The Origin of Evil,' Published Recently in London," an appendix to *Theodicy*, §14: "As for me, I do not require the will always to follow the judgement of the understanding, because I distinguish this judgement from the motives that spring from insensible perceptions and inclinations. But I hold that the will always follows the most advantageous representation, whether distinct or confused, of the good or the evil resulting from reasons, passions and inclinations, although it may also find motives for suspending its judgement. But it is always upon motives that it acts." G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Ferrer. La Salle, IL: Open Court 1985, p. 418. See also *Theodicy*, §51 for a similar expression of Leibniz's views.

[85] "These impulses are like so many little springs trying to unwind and so driving our machine along." RB, p. 166; NE II, xx, §10, A VI, 6, p. 167. See also Ebbersmeyer, "Leibniz on the Passions and the Dynamical Dimension of the Human Mind," pp. 151–52.

[86] NE II, xxi, §42, RB, p. 194. Calabi argues that Leibniz presented many different definitions of pleasure. I cannot go into details of these different definitions here. Calabi, "Leibnizian Pleasures," pp. 240–41, 243.

[87] A I, 4, p. 315, A VI, 4, p. 1993.

> If we take "action" to be an endeavour towards perfection, and "passion" to be the opposite, then genuine substances are active only when their perceptions … are becoming better developed and more distinct, just as they are passive only when their perceptions are becoming more confused. Consequently, in substances which are capable of pleasure and pain every action is a move towards pleasure, every passion a move towards pain.[88]

Although strength of will, or following the recommendations of the intellect, achieved by reasoning from the common notions, is the best way to moral progress, the moral instinct can promote our activity as well. The conflict between the entelechy and the efforts may lead us to wrong goals when the confused elements carry us towards the wrong direction, which results in imperfection and passivity. In a way, passivity and sorrow are essential parts of the human condition due to the unavoidable presence of minute perceptions in the mind, but one has to learn to moderate the appetitions and disquiet with strong will, which in turn requires a trained mind. This is a sort of rational self-manipulation where we eventually come to believe what we will to be true.[89]

Leibniz advises men to imitate God as well as they can in their actions, for the Creator represents a perfectly rational way of life.[90] Understanding God's creation requires reasoning, but simple maxims or good habits can also help us in acting wisely: "The dullest idiot can achieve it just as easily as can the cleverest and most educated person."[91] By this Leibniz seems to mean that everyone is able to resist the sensual temptations when one's will is strong enough. Therefore, each volition is important, as Leibniz emphasizes that through them we often indirectly prepare the way for other voluntary actions.[92] However, he might also have in mind the moral maxims of the theoretical instinct.

When we can diminish the role of the confused elements in deliberation, we are also more free to act. Truth can be found by reasoning with natural light while instinctive action is always more or less unfree, as it is founded on confused knowledge, where we cannot be quite sure of the nature of

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[88] NE II, xxi, §72, RB, p. 210.
[89] NE xxi, §18, RB, p. 180. Michael Losonsky, *Enlightenment and Action From Descartes to Kant. Passionate Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 158. On Leibniz's views on self-perfection, see Markku Roinila, "Deliberation and Self-Improvement in Leibniz," in Herbert Breger, Jürgen Herbst und Sven Erdner, ed., *Einheit in der Vielheit, VIII. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress*, Vorträge 2. Teil (G. W. Leibniz Geschellschaft: Hannover 2006), pp. 856–63.
[90] *Discourse on Metaphysics*, §9, A VI, 4, p. 1542. See also Brown, "Leibniz's Moral Philosophy," p. 423.
[91] RB, p. 207. An anonymous referee noted that it would be interesting to think about the relationship between the instincts and habits or prejudices. It certainly is, but as this leads us too far off from our topic, I will do this in another, planned paper. For now, I will only say that it seems to me that while the practical instincts are natural, this is not the case with the habits or prejudices, which are aquired.
[92] NE II, xxi, §35, A VI, 6, p. 187.

goods involved in our deliberations. However, we are not always very quick to identify the real goods and reach a conclusion. This is why instinctive action is important—we can strive for the good by instinct when we do not yet have the results of moral reasoning. Leibniz notes in NE I, ii, §9:

> Moral knowledge is innate in just the same way that arithmetic is, for it too depends upon demonstrations provided by the inner light. Since demonstrations do not spring into view straight away, it is no great wonder if men are not always aware straight away of everything they have within them, and are not very quick to read the characters of the natural law which, according to St Paul, God has engraved in their minds. However, since morality is more important than arithmetic, God has given to man instincts which lead, straight away and without reasoning, to part of what reason commands.[93]

Although instincts are more prone to errors of judgement concerning the good than the will (as they are founded on confused cognition), they can help the reasoning in other ways, in the sense that passions as efforts can effectively either affirm or limit the striving of the entelechy towards the good. For example, as pleasure is a sense of perfection, the passion of love can lead us to appreciate the universal perfection and its source, and motivate us to promote God's will and the common good. Therefore, the inclinations deriving from the moral instinct can incline us to goals we are at first not aware of, but which can become the objects of the will when we start to reflect our passions and our pleasures or pains. This, I think, is what Leibniz means when he says that the instincts sometimes anticipate reason.[94] He illustrates the difference between reasoning and instinctive action with a physical metaphor in NE II, xxi, §36:

> Appetitions are like a stone's endeavour to follow the shortest but not always the best route to the centre of the earth; it cannot foresee that it will collide with rocks on which it will shatter, whereas it would have got closer to its goal if it had had the wit and the means to swerve aside.[95]

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[93] RB, p. 92. Leibniz also argues in NE II, xx, §6 that due to the fact that most of our perceptions are insensible, "we could act more quickly by instinct, and not be troubled by excessively distinct sensations of hosts of objects." RB, p. 165. See also NE II, xxi, §13.
[94] See A VI, 6, p. 165.
[95] RB, p. 189.

5. Moral Reasoning and Instinctive Action as Alternative Ways to Happiness

Finally, I will discuss happiness as a case study. I will show how it can be reached by both moral reasoning, employing common notions like God, force and pleasure, and the principle of sufficient reason, as well as by the innate practical principle of moral instinct. I hope this illustrates the differences of sources of moral knowledge in Leibniz. Let us first take a look at the nature of Leibnizian happiness. It consists of lasting pleasure or joy, and it can be reached when we are systematically successful in resisting the confused inclinations and act according to the will—that is, according to practical reason. However, happiness is not a state but a process; it requires systematic efforts by the mind to fight over the semi-sufferings which bring about disquiet and displeasure. On the other hand, the disquiet is necessary for happiness, as it keeps us alert and ready for new challenges.[96] One might say that the moral instinct leads us to present joy, but reasoning and willing lead us to lasting joy or happiness, as Leibniz notes in NE II, xxi, §42.[97]

> Happiness is a lasting pleasure, which cannot occur without a continual progress to new pleasures. We might say, then, that happiness is a pathway through pleasures and that pleasure is only a single step … it is reason and will that lead us towards happiness, whereas sensibility and appetite lead us only towards pleasure.[98]

It seems then that happiness requires methodical reasoning and that sensibility and appetitions (that is to say: confused inclinations of the instincts) lead us only to present pleasure. However, in an earlier passage in the chapter which concerns the instinct he seems to leave space for instinctive striving for happiness:

> For happiness is nothing but lasting joy. However, what we incline to is not strictly speaking happiness, but rather joy, i.e. something in the present; it is reason which leads us to the future and to what lasts. Now, an inclination which is expressed by the understanding becomes a precept or practical truth; and if the inclination is innate then so also is the truth—there being nothing in the soul which is not expressed in the

[96] NE II, xxi, §36, A VI, 6, p. 189.
[97] See also Ripalda, "Instinkt und Vernunft bei G. W. Leibniz," p. 19.
[98] RB, p. 194.

> understanding, although *not always in distinct actual thinking*, as I have sufficiently shown.[99]

While Leibniz says here that reason shows us the way to what lasts, he also argues that the understanding expresses everything in the soul, even the inclinations which are not distinct and therefore not thought about. These inclinations can become practical truths, precepts for moral action. I think this passage reveals that Leibniz was prepared to allow instinctive means to reach happiness in addition to reasoning. He also gives an explicit reference to instinct that leads us to joy and happiness a bit later[100] and returns to the topic in NE II, xxi, §36, where he says that experience and reason teach us to govern and moderate the inclinations so that they can lead us to happiness.[101]

As I have suggested earlier, it seems to me that Leibniz thinks that the will and the instincts can complement each other, although both can in themselves suffice for the task.[102] We strive for lasting pleasure because we can conclude it would make us happy. This can happen, for instance, by doing good to one's fellow man and noticing that this brings us pleasure. This intense pleasure which Leibniz lists as one of the intellectual common notions is produced by disinterested love. It motivates us to do further good to other people which gives us further pleasure. Eventually we conclude that the source of pleasure is metaphysical goodness or perfection. This leads us to the volition of loving God and wisdom, in a systematic conscious promotion of the common good. The result is continuous, lasting pleasure or happiness.

> To find joy in the perfection of another—this is the essence of love. Thus the highest function of our mind is the knowledge or what is here the same thing, the love of the most perfect being, and it is from this that the maximum or the most enduring joy, that is, felicity, must arise.[104]

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[99] NE, I, ii, §3, RB, p. 90 (emphasis added).
[100] NE I, ii, §9, A VI, 6, p. 94.
[101] A VI, 6, p. 189. This suggest that the moderation of the will is preferable in order to secure happiness.
[102] De Gaudemar argues in a similar way: "We are always guided by reason, either without knowing it—reason acts like a natural method, that is to say, in the manner of an instinct—or methodically—when we intentionally use our rational resources. Judgements are rooted on feelings and emotions." Martine de Gaudemar, "Leibniz and Moral Rationality," in *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist?*, ed. Marcelo Dascal, Dordrecht: Springer, 2008, pp. 343–54, p. 346. My approach is also inspired by Lilli Alanen's observation: "Clear and distinct cognition of an object, its grade of perfection and its relationship to us, are followed by rational inclinations or rational appetites which Leibniz calls the will. Although these play an important role in deliberation, they cannot alone determine our actions unless supported by natural instincts and those natural tendencies which conform to reason ". See her "Emotions in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century", in Simo Knuuttila and Juha Sihvola (ed.), *Sourcebook for the History of the Philosophy of Mind. Philosophical Pcyhology from Plato to Kant*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2014, pp. 499-536, p. 528.
[104] L, p. 280.

Another route to happiness can be instinctive: the moral instinct guides us to pleasure and we are eventually led to the passion of joy, based on pleasure of the mind. We are motivated to increase and sustain our joy, as it is pleasurable. We find by experience that when joy is combined with benevolence, love and perfection (pleasure being a sense of perfection), we can find a standing source of the pleasure in loving God and our fellow human beings, as the other instincts are related to God and sociability. Sociability also inclines us to promote the common good, which is imitating God's actions. In NE I, ii, §2 Leibniz argues that instinct leads one human being to love another.[105] In this sense the intellectual passions are cognitive tools for moral progress.[106] The source of these passions is in pleasure, which the moral instinct inclines us to.[107]

Note, however, that this process is not necessarily affective and practical only. Perhaps some of the steps (realizing that God is the source of perfection, for instance) employ the theoretical instinct. In addition, instinctive moral action is more prone to errors of reasoning and it can also lead us to "wrong" pleasures, pleasures of the senses, which again can lead us to negative passions, displeasure and unhappiness. C. D. Broad puts it well: "Reason shows us the best road. Instinct and passion try to take short-cuts, and thus often lead us astray."[108]

Conclusion

The purpose of my paper has been to show that moral knowledge can have two different sources in Leibniz's practical philosophy, both founded on the principle of sufficient reason. One is moral reasoning, employing the common notions and the other instincts, based on confused cognition of pleasure and pain. While moral reasoning is related to the will or entelechy in the soul, the instincts are related to efforts of various kinds, including passions—which are founded on notable pleasure, but which can inform us of the world's basic structure, as pleasure is related to sense of perfection.

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[105] A VI, 6, p. 89.
[106] See GP VII, p. 89. In this Leibniz is close to Spinoza who thought that joy is a special affect, as it comes from the activity of thinking adequately or understanding, and therefore it increases our power (see his *Ethics*, Book three, Preface) and Gideon Segal, "Beyond Subjectivity: Spinoza's Cognitivism of the Emotions," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 8 (2010), pp. 1–19.
[107] Leibniz discussed innateness very little outside of NE, and it is no wonder that instincts are not mentioned in most of his other writings. There are some interesting exceptions, however. In GP IV, p. 576 he says that instinct is a durable passion and passion a sudden instinct. By this Leibniz probably means that the (moral) instinct is an innate principle which stays with us, leading to pleasure, and a passion is an instance of this constant inclination. Another mention can be found in comments to J. G. Wachter's juridical treatise from 1704, the year NE was finished. Probably for that reason his formulations on the instinct are very similar to those in NE. For details, see Poser, *Leibniz' Philosophie. Über die Einheit von Metaphysik und Wissenschaft*, pp. 233–34.
[108] Broad, *Leibniz*, p. 144.

Both reasoning and instincts can lead us to metaphysical goodness or perfection and happiness, although reasoning is a more reliable source of moral progress. They can also sometimes complement each other.

This double structure is typical of Leibniz's rationality. For example, there is the difference between demonstrated (or in principle demonstrable) necessary truths and the non-demonstrable truths of fact. These again are related to Leibniz's two great principles of contradiction and sufficient reason. Furthermore, the instincts in NE are divided into theoretical and practical: the former deals with theoretical subjects without demonstrations; and the practical instincts are related to affects rather than to propositions, and concern ethics and jurisprudence.

Leibniz's account of rationality in *New Essays* is very different from his usual style. There are new ideas as well, such as the theory of pleasure, which is founded on his doctrine of insensible, minute perceptions, discussed in detail for the first time in NE. Pleasure has a key role in Leibniz's theory of happiness, for it is defined as lasting pleasure; and it is also essentially related to the intellectual passions like joy, hope and love which help us in our moral progress.

Leibniz pays very little attention to instincts in his other works. When he does, the question is usually of the moral instinct of striving to pleasure and avoiding pain. Still, it should be interesting to find traces of the theoretical and other instincts in Leibniz's other texts, and I attempt to do this in future work. In addition, the relation between theoretical instinct and symbolic thought should be studied further. The difference between instincts and habits, the relationship between the moral instinct and other practical instincts, and the exact way in which the instincts lead us to the passions also call for further analysis.

The versatile account of innateness in book I of *New Essays* is of course related to Locke's attack against innate ideas and common notions in *Essay*, which forced Leibniz to think through many topics he had not previously written about (or since, for that matter). At the same time, the scope of innateness grows and grows until we find that everything in our minds is in a sense innate, even when it is related to confused knowledge. Leibniz also seems to be the first philosopher who relates instinct to innateness. Therefore, the narrow conception of Leibniz as an ultra-rationalist does not apply to NE. But since it is a commentary of Locke's views, one can of course argue that it does not represent Leibniz's true views very well. However, the fact that Leibniz does discuss minute perceptions and the importance of clear but confused perceptions in his earlier important article on knowledge, *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas* (1684) supports the interpretation that the views expressed in *New Essays* are not isolated. In addition, his early unfinished memoir on affects, *De Affectibus* (1679), anticipated the *New Essays* in many ways.

The context of *New Essays* also brings out the combination of Platonic and Aristotelian influences

in his views. Although Leibniz presents himself as a Platonist in the work and follows the theory of recollection in his views on common notions, his moral psychology is largely Aristotelian: the dynamical forces have a central role in his moral psychology, which makes it thoroughly teleological. However, neither account is orthodox. Leibniz demanded that the common notions should be demonstrated, which was against the general opinion of his time. Furthermore, his doctrine of substantial form is clearly different from traditional Aristotelianism, as it included the idea that every substance has a source of activity within itself.

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