

„Für unser Glück oder das Glück anderer“  
Vorträge des X. Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses  
Hannover, 18. – 23. Juli 2016

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## "La place d'autrui". Perspectivism and Justice in Leibniz

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### Introduction

Perspectivism is usually – and rightly – associated with Friedrich Nietzsche. As we read for instance in *On the Genealogy of Morality*,

"There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; the *more* affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'."<sup>1</sup>

According to some interpretations of Nietzsche, perspectivism is based on the idea that it is impossible to reach a universal truth, independent from the subjects, because there is no truth-in-itself to reach.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Nietzsche's perspectivism goes hand in hand with the denial of any metaphysical truth. However, a different approach to perspectivism can be found in other thinkers who directly or indirectly questioned Nietzsche's conception. One example is José Ortega y Gasset, who, in 1916, dedicated the introduction to his review "El Espectador" ("The Spectator") to the relationship between truth and perspectivism.<sup>3</sup> According to Ortega y Gasset, perspectivism is different from both skepticism and rationalism, which in his view are more similar than one might think. In fact, skepticism and rationalism would share the same premise: they actually consider the individual points of view *false*. For this reason and because one of its tenets is that only individual points of view exist, skepticism is obliged to reject the existence of the truth. On the other hand, rationalism believes that the truth is attainable, but expels the subject from the knowledge, which can thus be reached only through an extra-individual access. In regard to these theories, perspectivism agrees with skepticism that truth can be grasped only by the individual points of view, but shares with rationalism the

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Third Essay, § 12, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson, transl. by Carol Diethe, Cambridge 2006, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> But see on this Chiara Piazzesi: *Perspectivisme et éthique de la connaissance chez Nietzsche*, forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> See José Ortega y Gasset: "Verdad y Perspectiva", in: *El espectador*, Madrid 1998, pp. 45–55.

belief in the existence of the truth. Therefore according to perspectivism individual points of view are *true* and, moreover, are the only ways to the truth. But if the truth is attainable only through the individual points of view, it follows that in order to reach a more complete truth human beings necessarily have to cooperate. As a consequence, according to Ortega y Gasset, perspectivism is not only an epistemological theory, but also implies an ethical commitment: the obligation to work together, leaving aside every form particularism.<sup>4</sup>

Ortega y Gasset thought that one of the forerunners of his theoretical framework was Leibniz, whose *Monadology*, particularly article 57,<sup>5</sup> would perfectly describe perspectivism. In effect, Leibniz's life is characterized by the pleas to work together for the unity of knowledge. In this sense, nothing is more distant from Leibniz than Descartes' idea of a self-subsistent subject, working alone in his "stove-heated room (*poêle*)" and thinking that "the works of one man" are the most perfect, as we read in the second part of the *Discourse on the Method*.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, it is well known that Leibniz's monads "have no windows, through which anything could come in or go out",<sup>7</sup> and that each monad is radically different from the others and that "*must be different*".<sup>8</sup> But if so, how is it possible for different beings to find a way to understand each other in order to cooperate?

In the following pages I will try to give an answer to this question by analyzing Leibniz's notion of justice as "the charity of the wise". In the first part I will briefly recall the principal elements of this notion. In the second part I will show how it is actually possible according to Leibniz's main tenets to be just, i.e. to reach the place of others. In the conclusion I will suggest that, contrarily to Ortega y Gasset's opinion, Leibniz thinks that from an ethical point of view perspectivism must be overtaken.

<sup>4</sup> "como las riberas independientes se aúnan en la gruesa vena del río, componamos el torrente de lo real", Ortega y Gasset: "Verdad y Perspectiva", p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> "Et comme une même ville regardée de différents côtés paraît tout autre et est comme multipliée perspectivement, il arrive de même, que par la multitude infinie des substances simples, il y a comme autant de différent univers, qui ne sont pourtant que les perspectives d'un seul selon les différent points de vue de chaque Monade"; GP VI, 616.

<sup>6</sup> *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris 1964–1974, 11 vols., vol. VI, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Monadologie*, § 7; GP VI, 607; English translation in: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, transl. and ed. by Richard S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks, Oxford 1988, p. 268.

<sup>8</sup> "il faut que chaque monade soit différente de chaque autre", *Monadologie*, § 9, GP VI, 608 my emphasis; Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, p. 269.

### 1. Justice and Perspectivism

Leibniz's definition of justice is well known: justice is "the charity of the wise". As the scholars have pointed out, the first appearance of this definition is in a letter to Johann Friedrich in 1677.<sup>9</sup> However, in Leibniz's writings we can find the most occurrences of this term from the beginning of the 1690s, which however Leibniz stated in public only in 1693, in the preface to the *Codex Iuris Gentium*. The *Codex* was a collection of acts and treaties, occasioned by the battles of the Duke of Hannover for the Electorate – which was obtained by the House of Hannover in December 1692. The aim of the *Codex* was to clarify the grounds of the international law through the exposition of several documents concerning the European states from the end of the eleventh century until the seventeenth century. That because of Leibniz's essential thesis according to which phenomena express their metaphysical reasons. As we read in the second paragraph of the *Codex*, for instance,

"from what is obvious one divines what is hidden, and phenomena are observed in order to discover the reasons for that which appears."<sup>10</sup>

In this sense the history of the states, of their formation, of the conquering, more or less bloody, of new territories does not only reveal the signs of their actual future, but also suggests the main principles of the natural law on which the international law is, or better, *has to be* grounded. The gap between what the international law is and what it has to be depends also on the ignorance regarding what the principles of the right actually are. As Leibniz observed in the central paragraphs of the preface to the *Codex*,

"The doctrine of right (*juris*) [...] presents an immense field for human study. But the notions of right and of justice (*juris et justitiae*), even after having been treated by so many illustrious authors, have not been made sufficiently clear."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> More precisely, on the 9th May 1677. See A I, 2, 23. On Leibniz's definition of justice the literature is wide. See at least Gaston Grua: *La justice humaine selon Leibniz*, Paris 1956 and Patrick Riley: *Leibniz' universal jurisprudence: Justice as the charity of the wise*, Cambridge 1996.

<sup>10</sup> A IV, 5, 52; translation in: *The Political Writings of Leibniz* ed. by Patrick Riley, Cambridge 1972, p. 167.

<sup>11</sup> A IV, 5, 60; *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 170 (slightly modified).

According to Leibniz, right (*jus*) is "a kind of moral possibility (*potentia moralis*)"<sup>12</sup>, a definition that can be already found in the *Nova methodus discendae et docendaeque jurisprudentiae* (1667).<sup>13</sup> Since moral is "that which is equivalent to natural to a good man", therefore right is therefore the quality of all good actions, or, conversely, the frame in which the actions of good men take place. In other words, according to Leibniz the field of the right, the *jus naturalis*, corresponds to the field of morality, so that every possible good action from the *social* point of view is also a right action from the *moral* point of view. In this sense, Leibniz refuted Machiavelli's separation between the moral dimension and the political dimension of life, as well as the autonomy of the political sphere. As is well known, this separation concerns not only Machiavelli's thought but also Hobbes' and Pufendorf's, which are the target of several critics of Leibniz and particularly of Leibniz's widest writing on justice, the *Meditation on the Common Concept of Justice* (1702–1703).<sup>14</sup>

The first part of the *Meditation* precisely addresses the refusal of Hobbes's conception of justice as a consequence of the will of the sovereign:

"It is agreed – Leibniz wrote – that whatever God wills is good and just. But there remains the question whether it is good and just because God wills it or whether God wills it because it is good and just: in other words, whether justice and goodness are arbitrary or whether they belong to the necessary and eternal truths about the nature of things, as do numbers and proportions."<sup>15</sup>

Leibniz's answer stressed the danger in considering justice and goodness arbitrary, a danger that can be summarized in one word: tyranny. Leibniz's reasoning which we can also find in the *Observations on the Principles of Pufendorf*, written in the same period of the *Meditation on the Common Concept of Justice* (1706), was as follows: if we state that justice is arbitrary and, as a result, the foundation of laws is just the command of a superior as Pufendorf thinks, therefore

<sup>12</sup> A IV, 5, 61.

<sup>13</sup> A VI, 1, 301 (§ 14): "Moralitas autem, seu Justitia vel Injustitia actionis oritur ex qualitate personae agentis in ordine ad actionem, ex actionibus praecedentibus orta, quae dicitur: qualitas moralis. Ut autem Qualitas realis in ordine ad actionem duplex est: Potentia agendi, et necessitas agendi; ita potentia moralis dicitur Jus, necessitas moralis dicitur Obligatio."

<sup>14</sup> See on this Ian Hunter: *Rival Enlightenments. Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany*, Cambridge 2011.

<sup>15</sup> *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 45.

"there will be no duty when there is no superior to compel its observance; nor will there be any duties for those who do not have a superior. And since, according to the author [=Pufendorf], duty and acts prescribed by justice coincide [...] it follows that all law is prescribed by a superior. [...]. Now, then, will he who is invested with the supreme power do nothing against justice if he proceeds tyrannically against his subjects, torments them, and kills them under torture; who makes war without a cause?"<sup>16</sup>

If all obligations are derived only by a command, Leibniz continues, then international law, along with every pact and covenant, are impossible, because there is no common superior and therefore no common obligation. But if this is so, Pufendorf's argument proves too much

"namely that men cannot set up any superior for themselves by consent and agreement: which is contrary to what [even] Hobbes admit."<sup>17</sup>

As a consequence, according to Leibniz, Hobbes' and Pufendorf's conception of justice as arbitrary ends up denying the main tenets of Hobbes' and Pufendorf's political doctrine, i.e., contractualism, a clear sign of the inconsistency of such a view. On the contrary, both justice and goodness, far from being arbitrary, have the same ontological and epistemological status of mathematical truths:

"justice follows certain rules of equality and of proportion [which are] no less founded in the immutable nature of things, and in divine ideas, than are the principles of arithmetic and of geometry."<sup>18</sup>

As Leibniz clarifies in the *Meditation*, justice is absolute, i.e., independent from God's decrees, and is the same for God and men, although there is an obvious difference of degree between divine and human (just) actions.<sup>19</sup> Hence, those who think that justice is arbitrary, depending on the will of a superior, confound right and law and attribute to the first the feature of the second. In this sense, Leibniz observes,

<sup>16</sup> Dutens IV, 3, 279; *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Dutens IV, 3, 280; *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Cf., Ibid., p. 48.

"[r]ight cannot be unjust, it is a contradiction; but law can be. For it is power which gives and maintains law; and if this power lacks wisdom or good will, it can give and maintain quite evil laws."<sup>20</sup>

Far from being arbitrary, justice has an intelligible notion, a formal reason or a definition from which all its properties *in principle* can be derived. According to this definition, "Justice is nothing else than that which conforms to wisdom and goodness joined together."<sup>21</sup> Justice is then a virtue that joins both the intellectual and the practical side of the human beings: it joins the intellectual side because wisdom is a property of the understanding, but also the practical side because goodness pertains to the will. According to this view, justice is not only an intellectual concept, but a real way of being, or in Leibniz's words a *habitus*, "the habit of loving in accordance with wisdom."<sup>22</sup>

The thesis that justice is a *habitus*, which is present in Leibniz's writings since the *Elementa juris naturalis* (1670–1671),<sup>23</sup> is pivotal for understanding the difference between his definition of justice and the definitions given by the authors he refers to, namely Grotius, Hobbes and Pufendorf. As in the juridical tradition, for Leibniz justice concerns the relationships between the individuals, but not *externally*, as something that regulates the quarrels among people "giving to each his due". This function is, of course, also present in Leibniz but represents a lower degree of the right, i.e., the second degree of right.<sup>24</sup> The universal concept of justice, which coincides with Leibniz's third degree of right "piety" and with the third precept "honeste vivere", prescribes something more, i.e., to do something positive to the others. In this sense, as Leibniz explains, justice is nothing but the golden rule, "the rule of reason and of our Master", i.e. "*quod tibi non vis fieri, aut quod tibi vis fieri, neque aliis facito aut negate*."<sup>25</sup> From this definition, we understand that according to Leibniz the golden rule has to be read in a positive way, as a rule

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> "Happiness" (1694–1698?) in Grua, 581ff. and now also in A VI, 5, Internetausgabe, n. 1302, English translation in: *The Shorter Leibniz Texts. A collection of New Translations*, ed. by Lloyd Strickland, London 2006, p. 167.

<sup>23</sup> "Justitia est habitus (seu status confirmatus viri boni)"; A VI, 1, 480.

<sup>24</sup> See for instance *Nova methodus discendae docendae jurisprudentiae*; A VI, 1, 290 and ff. On the three degrees of right see Christopher Johns: *The Science of Right in Leibniz' Moral and Political Philosophy*, London/New York 2013, pp. 12 and ff.

<sup>25</sup> Georg Mollat: *Rechtsphilosophisches aus Leibnizens ungedruckten Schriften*, Leipzig 1885, pp. 41–70, here 58; *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 56. On Leibniz's golden rule see Mo-

that command us to do something and not only to abstain from doing something. In order to avoid injustice – for instance, because we do something that we think is good for the others despite the others' real desires – we have to put ourselves "in the place of another". Only in this way will we "have the true point for judging what is just or not."<sup>26</sup>

The aim of justice is then precisely to leave our point of view and take the perspective of others. But how is it possible to be just and therefore to de-place ourselves if, as we mentioned, we are monads, i.e., self-subsistent individuals with no windows? We will address this question in the next part.

## 2. Different Points of View

"[E]ach substance is like a separate world, independent of every other thing except God. So all our phenomena, that is to say everything which can ever happen to us, can only be consequences of our being."<sup>27</sup>

With these words in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* Leibniz summarized the definition of individual substance as something that has a complete notion in the mind of God. Since the substance is completely determined, everything that will happen to it is already inscribed in its notion, so that she who had a complete knowledge of this notion would know *a priori* if the individual described by the notion would do this or that (§ 8). However this independence does not imply the isolation of the substance in regard to the others. As Leibniz explained to Gabriel Wagner, a materialistic philosopher who corresponded with him for about four months between December 1697 and March 1698,<sup>28</sup> "Monads do not exist in isolation. They are monads, not nuns [*Sunt monadae, non monachae*]."<sup>29</sup> On the contrary: because substances constitute the world

gens Lærke: "The golden rule: Aspects of Leibniz's method for religious controversy", in: Marcelo Dascal (ed.): *The Practice of Reason. Leibniz and His Controversies*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2010, pp. 297–319.

<sup>26</sup> Mollat: *Rechtsphilosophisches aus Leibnizens ungedruckten Schriften*, p. 58; *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 56. On the "place of the other" see Naaman Zauderer: "The Place of the Other in Leibniz's Rationalism", in: *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist*, ed. by Marcelo Dascal, Dordrecht 2008, pp. 315–327.

<sup>27</sup> *Discours de Metaphysique*, § 14; A VI, 4, 1550; *Philosophical Texts*, p. 66.

<sup>28</sup> See Daniel Garber: "Monads on My Mind", in: Adrian Nita (ed.): *Leibniz's Metaphysics and Adoption of Substantial Forms: Between Continuity and Transformation*, Dordrecht 2015, pp. 161–176, in part. pp. 169–172.

<sup>29</sup> A II 3 704.

and in every possible world "all things are connected"<sup>30</sup>, in every substance there are the "traces of everything that happens in the universe."<sup>31</sup> This is precisely the ground of Leibniz's perspectivism. As we read in article 9 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*,

"each substance is like a whole world, and like a mirror of God, or indeed of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own fashion – rather as the same town is differently represented according to the different situations of the person who looks at it."<sup>32</sup>

The same argument is present in the *Monadology*, articles 56 and 57:

"§ 56 [...] this *interconnection* or this adapting of all created things to each one, and of each one to all the others, means that each simple substance has relationships which express all the others, and that it is therefore a perpetual living mirror of the universe.

§ 57. And just as the same town when seen from different sides will seem quite different, and is as it were multiplied perspectively, the same things happens here: because of the infinite multitude of simple substances it is as if there were as many different universes; but they are all perspectives on the same one, according to the different *point of view* of each monad."<sup>33</sup>

The independence and self-subsistence of every monad in regard to others goes hand in hand with the interconnection among all the monads in the universe, an interconnection that is the *pre-established harmony* founded in God's *ars combinatoria* described by Leibniz especially in the *Système nouveau* of 1695. Every monad is then at the same time autonomous and integrated in a system of relationships which it grasps only in part from its specific point of view. This "grasping" is nothing but perceiving, the main activity of each monad. As Leibniz explains in article 60 of the *Monadology*, "a monad is representative in its nature"<sup>34</sup>, and as a consequence it perceives the whole universe, albeit in a confused way. The difference among the monads lies precisely in the degree of distinction of their perceptions, so that we pass from

<sup>30</sup> *Essais de Théodicée*, I, § 9; GP VI, 107.

<sup>31</sup> *Discours de Métaphysique*, § 8; A VI 4, 1541; Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> A VI, 4, 1542; Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> GP VI, 616; Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, p. 275.

<sup>34</sup> *Monadologie*, § 60; GP VI, 617; Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, p. 276.

the "completely naked monad"<sup>35</sup> which lies in a condition of "permanent stupor"<sup>36</sup> to the monad that has only distinct thoughts, i.e., God.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, according to Leibniz the universe is a net of monads with varying degree of awareness of what they perceive, with each of them representing the same object but in different ways:

"They all [the monads] reach confusedly to infinity, to everything; but they are limited and differentiated by their level of distinct perception."<sup>38</sup>

This description, however, seems to portray a status of the universe that we can call its "starting point". In fact, since the monads are by nature active – they perceive and move endlessly from one perception to another – the degree of their perceptions, as well as their perceptions, changes through time.<sup>39</sup> This means that although the point of view from which the monad looks at itself and at the world around it remains the same, the content of the perceptions varies. The variation can depend on an external cause (for instance, the sound of a glass broken by my cat walking on the table which makes me aware of that part of my house and of my life) or on the monad itself (I wonder what my cat is doing and look at her until she breaks the glass) which according to Leibniz is free. As Leibniz stressed in the *Theodicy*, the freedom of the monad is grounded in its spontaneity, that is, in having the principle of its action in itself.

"§ 290 [...] spontaneity [...] belongs to us in so far as we have within us the source of our actions, as Aristotle rightly conceived [...]."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> § 24; GP VI, 611; Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, p. 271.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> See also *Principes de la nature et de la grâce*, § 13: "Chaque Ame connoit l'infini, connoit tout, mais confusement; comme en me promenant sur le rivage de la mer, et entendant le grand bruit qu'elle fait, j'entends les bruits particulier de chaque vague dont le bruit total est composé, mais sans les discerner; nos perceptions confuses sont le resultat des impressions que tout l'univers fait sur nous. Il en est de même de chaque Monade. Dieu seul a une connoissance distincte de tout, car il en est la source"; GP VI, 604.

<sup>38</sup> § 60; GP VI, 617; Leibniz: *Philosophical Texts*, p. 276.

<sup>39</sup> On this see for instance the short text *De mundi perfectione continuo augente* (1689–1690?); A VI, 4 B, 1642.

<sup>40</sup> *Essais de Théodicée*, III, § 290, 291; GP VI, 288, English translation in: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, ed. and with an introd. by Austin Farrer, transl. by E. M. Huggard, Charleston 2007, p. 307.

In the case of the monads of a "higher degree", i.e., the monads that are aware of themselves, the spontaneity allows them to dominate their own actions:

"§ 291 [...] true spontaneity is common to us and all simple substances, and that in the intelligent or free substance this becomes a mastery over its actions."<sup>41</sup>

For Leibniz, this mastery seems to correspond mainly to an increase in the monads' awareness, which gives rise to an extension of the knowledge of ourselves and of the world. In fact, the wider our knowledge, the more powerful we are:

"§ 289 Our knowledge is of two kinds, distinct or confused. Distinct knowledge, or *intelligence*, occurs in the actual use of reason; but the senses supply us with confused thoughts. And we may say that we are immune from bondage in so far as we act with a distinct knowledge, but we are the slaves of passion in so far as our perceptions are confused."<sup>42</sup>

Our freedom is thus strictly tied with the awareness of what we do, of our actions and as much as possible of the consequences of our actions.

Now, according to Leibniz all our actions are driven by what appears to be good to us:

"[...] I do not require the will always follow the judgement of the understanding, because I distinguish this judgement from the motives that spring from insensible perceptions and inclination. 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 [...]"<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, the extension of our distinct perceptions also implies an extension of the understanding of what real good is. As a consequence, the increase of our distinct perceptions also implies an increase of our capacity to act well. In this sense, as Leibniz wrote in the *Meditation on Justice*,

<sup>41</sup> *Essais de Théodicée*, III, § 290, 291; GP VI, 288; *Theodicy*, transl. by E.M. Huggard, p. 307.

<sup>42</sup> *Essais de Théodicée*, III, § 289; GP VI, 289; *Theodicy*, transl. by E. M. Huggard, p. 306.

<sup>43</sup> *Remarques sur le livre de l'origine du mal, publié depuis peu en Angleterre*, GP VI, 413; *Theodicy*, transl. by E. M. Huggard, p. 420.

"Wisdom, which is the knowledge of our own good, brings us to justice, that is to a reasonable advancement of the good of others."<sup>44</sup>

By improving our awareness and our knowledge of ourselves, of the world, and of those necessary truths whose knowledge distinguishes the reasonable souls from the bare monads,<sup>45</sup> we can thus reach that wisdom that turns on our practical dimension, leading us to justice. In fact, although Leibniz claimed that the act of will does not derive automatically from an intellectual judgement,<sup>46</sup> the expansion of the conscious knowledge increases our perfection and gives us a feeling of pleasure. As we read in a writing on happiness of the end of the 1690s,

"Happiness is a lasting state of joy [...]. Joy is the total pleasure which results from everything the soul feels at once [...]. Pleasure is the feeling of some perfection, and this perfection that causes pleasure can be found not only in us, but also elsewhere. For when we notice it, this very knowledge excites some perfection in us, because the representation of the perfection is also a perfection. This is why it is hood to familiarize oneself with objects that have many perfections. And we must avoid the hate and envy which prevent us from taking pleasure in these objects."<sup>47</sup>

This means, firstly, that knowledge produces in us some changes in both the intellectual and the affective sphere, and, secondly, that it connects us with the others in both spheres. In this sense, Leibniz defines wisdom as "the science of happiness", i.e., the knowledge of what is needed to reach that lasting state

<sup>44</sup> See *Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice*, Mollat, p. 59; *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> See *Monadologie*: "§ 29 [...] la connoissance des verités nécessaires et éternelles est ce qui nous distingue des simples animaux et nous fait avoir la *Raison* et les sciences, en nous élevant à la connoissance de nous mêmes et de Dieu. Et c'est ce qu'on appelle en nous *Ame raisonnable*, ou *Esprit*. § 30 C'est aussi par la connoissance des verités nécessaires et par leur abstractions, que nous sommes élevés aux *Actes reflexifs*, qui nous font penser à ce qui s'appelle *Moy*, et à considerer que cecy ou cela est en Nous: et c'est ainsi, qu'en pensant à nous, nous pensons à l'Etre, à la substance, au simple et au composé, à l'immateriel et à Dieu même, en concevant que ce qui est borné en nous, est en luy sans bornes. Et ces Actes Reflexifs fournissent les objetct principaux de nos raisonnemens"; GP VI, 612.

<sup>46</sup> See the passage from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Remarques sur le livre de l'origine du mal*, 1710 quoted *supra* in the main text.

<sup>47</sup> See for instance the writing on *Happiness* quoted above, *The Shorter Leibniz Texts*, p. 169. On happiness see Donald Rutheford: *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 46 and ff.

of joy that corresponds to happiness.<sup>48</sup> However, as Leibniz stated in the *Elementa juris naturalis*, "No one can easily be happy in the midst of miserable people."<sup>49</sup> As a consequence, to be just – that is, to do to the others what we would like others to do to us – is not only desirable from the point of view of goodness, but also from an egoistic point of view. The bridge that can join the natural egoism with the (less natural) altruism is the central element of justice, a particular condition of the soul: love.

As we read for instance in the *Elementa verae pietatis* (1677–1678?),

"Love is to be delighted by the happiness of someone, or to experience pleasure from the happiness of another. I define this as true love."<sup>50</sup>

This definition of love will remain until the last writings, in which Leibniz uses it also to argue against quietism, one of the most important philosophical controversies of the time.<sup>51</sup> Since, as we mentioned, happiness arises from the sentiment of perfection, the one who loves finds pleasure in the perfections of the beloved. Therefore, love connects the lover and the beloved, whose well-being produces egoistic pleasure in the lover.

From this description it looks like the feeling of pleasure for the perfections of others follows as a consequence of love: that is, love is the condition for feeling delighted by the beloved. In this sense, it is because Mary loves Anna that Mary feels pleasure for the perfections of Anna. In another context, however, Leibniz states something different. As he writes precisely in the *Meditation on the Common Concept of justice*,

"One cannot know God as one ought without loving him above all things, and one cannot love him without willing what he wills. His perfections are infinite and cannot end, and this is why the pleasure which consists in the feeling of his perfections is the greatest and most durable which can exist. That is, the greatest happiness, which causes one to love him, causes one to be happy and virtuous at the same time."<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> A VI 1, 460. English translation in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Philosophical Papers and Letters. A Selection*, ed. by Leroy Loemker, Dordrecht 1989, p. 132.

<sup>50</sup> A VI, 4 B, 1357; *The Shorter Leibniz Texts*, p. 189.

<sup>51</sup> See on this the letter to Nicaise, 19th August 1697; A II, 3, N. 140 (Online Edition 8129): "l'amour est cet acte ou estat actif de l'ame qui nous fait trouver nostre plaisir dans la felicité ou satisfaction d'autrui. Cette definition, comme j'ay marqué dès lors, est capable de resoudre l'enigme de l'amour desinteressé, et le distingue des liaisons d'interest ou de débauche."

<sup>52</sup> *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 59.

In the case of God, therefore, the knowledge of his perfections causes that specific act of the soul which is love for god, and in addition produces in us the virtue of loving others as God loves them. In other words, by knowing God, the infinite being, we love him and become able to love others.<sup>53</sup> But how can we know God and make God known to other people? Certainly not through books on religion or by means of preachers, which "far from removing doubts, rise them",<sup>54</sup> Leibniz wrote in a letter to Thomas Burnett. On the contrary,

"I would like that in order to make known the wisdom of God one tries with physics and mathematics, through revealing always more the marvels of nature."<sup>55</sup>

In this sense, Leibniz observes in the *Meditation on Justice*, the progress of the knowledge of truth would also influence the public good

"which is strongly interested in the augmentation of the treasure of human knowledge."<sup>56</sup>

But in order to do that we must not only cooperate but above of all set aside that spirit of sectarianism that prevents us from seeing the truth in different

<sup>53</sup> See also Letter on Christian Thomasius to the abbot of Boccum: "Je ne suis pas dans son sentiment lorsqu'il fait l'amour antérieur à la lumière. [Je crois que nous avons de la lumière et de l'intelligence en tant que nous sommes passif et recevons en nous l'action de Dieu, mais nous sommes agissans en tant que nous agissons envers les autres creatures, car nous ne scaurions agir sur Dieu, ainsi nostre union avec Dieu ne peut estre que passive de nostre côté]. Nous ne pouvons estre unis avec Dieu que passivement à son egard car nous ne scaurions agir sur luy, et nous devons recevoir son action en nous [mais cette lumière faisant naître en nous un effort pour agir sur nous et sur les autres choses conformément à cette lumière, cet effort d'un esprit éclairé qui va à exprimer le bien est l'amour], pour agir par apres conformément à son esprit, tant sur nous que sur les autres choses. Ainsi la lumière est notre passion, l'amour est le plaisir qui en resulte, et qui consiste dans une action sur nous mêmes, dont provient un effort d'agir encor sur les autres pour contribuer au bien en tant qu'il depend de nous", Grua 87. On the love of God as "the fountain of true justice", see Stuart Brown: "Leibniz's Moral Philosophy", in: Nicholas Jolley: *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 423 and ff.

<sup>54</sup> Leibniz to Thomas Burnett s.d. s.l.; GP III, 279.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 53.

opinions.<sup>57</sup> This (bad) attitude depends, again, mostly on our unconscious beliefs, on our personal history, and on our particular point of view on the universe. As a consequence, in order to attain that knowledge of God that teaches us to leave our particular point of view and reach "the place of others", we first have to become aware of the limits of our being a particular point of view on the universe. In other words, to open our minds and take the point of view of others, we must first acknowledge that we are just a point of view on the universe. The new point of view that we adopt will thus be that "appropriate place [...] to make us to discover thoughts, which would otherwise not occur."<sup>58</sup>

### Conclusions

"We are not [...] born for ourselves, but for the good of society, as are parts for the whole."<sup>59</sup>

Written around 1686, the same year as the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, these words express Leibniz' thought regarding the main reason that explains the moral and the political obligation we have with respect to other people. "We are not born for ourselves", and therefore we cannot close ourselves in our egoism; instead we must move toward the others. However, it is also true that despite our being "parts" we are nonetheless "wholes", every monad being "a separate world."<sup>60</sup> For this reason a form of perspectivism, not to say *egocentrism*, is unavoidable, because each of us experiences, and cannot help but

<sup>57</sup> See for instance Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Eclaircissement des difficultés que Monsieur Bayle a trouvées dans le système nouveau de l'union de l'ame et du corps*: "lorsqu'on entre dans le fonds des choses, on remarque plus de la raison qu'on ne croyoit dans la plupart des sectes des philosophes. Le peu de réalité substantielle des choses sensibles des Sceptiques; la réduction de tout aux harmonies ou nombres, idées et perceptions des Pythagoristes et Platoniciens; l'un et même un tout de Parménide et de Plotin, sans aucun Spinozisme; la connexion Stoïcienne, compatible avec la spontanéité des autres; la philosophie vitale des Cabalistes et Hermetiques, qui mettent du sentiment par tout, les formes et les entelechies d'Aristote et des Scholastiques; et cependant l'explication mécanique de tous les phénomènes particuliers selon Démocrite et les modernes, etc. se retrouvent réunies comme dans un centre de perspective, d'où l'objet (embrouillé en regardant de tout autre endroit) fait voir sa régularité et la convenance de ses parties: on a manqué le plus par un esprit de Secte, en se bornant par la rejection des autres"; GP III, 523f.

<sup>58</sup> *La place d'autrui*, 1679?; Grua, 701; A IV, 3 N. 137. English translation in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *The Art of Controversies*, transl. and ed., with an introductory essay and notes by Marcelo Dascal, with Quintín Racionero and Adelino Cardoso, Dordrecht 2006, p. 165.

<sup>59</sup> *Sur la générosité* (1686–1687?); A VI, 4 C, 2722; *The Shorter Leibniz Texts*, p. 159.

<sup>60</sup> *Discours de Métaphysique*, § 14.

experience, the world from a specific perspective. This is the consequence of Leibniz's basic perspectivism, a perspectivism that we can call *metaphysical perspectivism*, and which Leibniz described in the article 57 of the *Monadology* mentioned above. According to this, as we have seen, each individual is a certain view of God on the world and contributes to constituting reality. Additionally, we can also identify two other kinds of perspectivism. The first is *perceptual perspectivism*, which follows directly from the metaphysical perspectivism, i.e., the idea according to which every individual perceives the world from her point of view, and since these perceptions are mostly confused or unconscious, she has a very limited understanding of what happens. The second form of perspectivism can be defined as *ethical perspectivism*. This perspectivism is the one prescribed by the notion of justice and invites us to change our perspective, to decenter ourselves and reach the place of others. However, it is important to note that by reaching this place we are not only obtaining a new perspective or a new point of view. As Leibniz explains in the *Meditation on Justice*, while commenting on the objection one can make against the golden rule, i.e., "that a criminal can claim, by virtue of this maxim, a pardon from the sovereign judge, because the judge would wish the same thing if he were in a similar position"<sup>61</sup>:

"The reply is easy: the judge must put himself not only in the place of the criminal, but also in that of others, who are interested that the crime be punished. And the balance of good (in which the lesser evil is included) must determine it [the case]."<sup>62</sup>

Hence, to reach the place of others does not mean to reach another specific point of view, but on the contrary *to leave* any specific point of view. In this sense the only point of view that seems really desirable is the point of view of God, that is, a global view of the world that would reveal all its perfection and harmony:

"[...] those who examine the interior of things – Leibniz writes to Sophie Charlotte – find everything so well ordered there that they would not be able to doubt that the universe is governed by a sovereign intelligence, in an order so perfect, that, if one understood it in detail, one would not only believe but would even see that nothing better could be wished for. [...] and just as what we see now is only a very small portion of the infinite universe, and as our present life is only

<sup>61</sup> *The Political Writings of Leibniz*, p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

a small fragment of what must happen to us, we should not be surprised if the full beauty of things is not initially discovered there; but we will enter into it more and more, and it is for precisely this reason that it is necessary that we change our situation.”<sup>63</sup>

This implies that, contrary to what Ortega y Gasset thought, Leibniz cannot be seen as a forerunner of perspectivism, at least in Ortega y Gasset's meaning of perspectivism, because in his philosophy, and even more in his ethics, the aim of ethical perspectivism is to make the metaphysical and perceptual perspectivism *disappear*. For this reason, it seems that Leibniz can be hardly separated from rationalism, that is, from the thesis that the truth exists as independent of the subjects and therefore must be grasped as much as possible independently from the singular points of view. However, Leibniz's rationalism, far from being a rejection of the truth of the different perspectives on the world as Ortega y Gasset stated, invites us to give to all these perspectives a real value.

<sup>63</sup> Leibniz to Sophie Charlotte, 9/19 May 1697; A I, 14, 196, English translation in: *Leibniz and the Two Sophies: the Philosophical Correspondence*, ed. and transl. by Lloyd Strickland, Toronto 2011, p. 160.

## Leibniz' Akademiepläne als europäisches Projekt

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Es sind zwei große Projekte, die der junge Leibniz im Dienst des Mainzer Kurfürsten Erzbischofs und Reichserzkanzlers Johann Philipp von Schönborn entwirft und die beide einen Großteil seines Wirkens bis in seine letzten Lebensstage hinein ausfüllen werden, zum einen die Einigung der gespaltenen Christenheit und zum anderen die Gründung gelehrter Gesellschaften oder wie sie später genannt werden, Akademien der Wissenschaften. Beide Projekte werden in ihrer Bedeutung nicht erfasst, wenn man sie losgelöst betrachtet von der Metaphysik, der Wissenschaftslehre, der Rechtsphilosophie und der politischen Philosophie und Ethik; und sie werden der Leibniz'schen Intention nach nicht begriffen, wenn man sie lediglich zu Pflichtarbeiten eines höfischen Bediensteten oder zu Unternehmungen, fixen Ideen eines – dazu nicht sonderlich erfolgreichen – barocken Projektgemachers degradiert.

In der hier gebotenen Kürze sei stattdessen thesen- und stichwortartig auf gewisse Elemente hingewiesen, in denen jene Zusammenhänge sichtbar werden, an denen aber vor allem geprüft werden soll, inwiefern das Leibniz'sche Akademienprogramm ein europäisches Projekt genannt werden kann. Doch seien zuvor in sieben Punkten einige gemeinsame Kennzeichen der Leibniz'schen Projekte angeführt.

1. Schon in den Entwürfen der Mainzer Zeit (1668–1672) fordert Leibniz, dass die Wissenschaften und somit auch die gelehrten Gesellschaften nicht bloß der Befriedigung der *curiositas* dienen dürfen, sondern sich durch *utilitas*, durch den Nutzen für die gesamte Menschheit (nicht nur für Europa also) auszeichnen.
2. Worin die Nützlichkeit, die *utilitas*, besteht, definiert Leibniz schon in einer seiner ersten Entwürfe 1669, *Societas philadelphica*, mit folgendem Dreischritt:

„Das für jeden Nützlichste ist dasjenige, was Gott am angenehmsten ist“, so dann „Gott ist aber dasjenige am angenehmsten, was die Perfection des Universums herbeiführt“ und schließlich „Zur perfection des Universums führt alles das, was der Perfection der Menschheit dient. Denn in der sensiblen Welt gibt es nichts Vollkommeneres als den Menschen.“<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A IV, 1, 552f. (Übers. H. R.).