

Leibniz's Philosophical Dream of Rational and Intuitive Enlightenment

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Leibniz's Philosophical Dream [*Songe Philosophique de Leibniz*] is a short essay by Leibniz. It was given the title soon after Leibniz's death by Johann Daniel Gruber, who was librarian at the Royal Library in Hanover where his *Nachlass* were kept. The piece has not yet appeared in the Akademie edition of Leibniz's writings, although has been assigned a date of 1693 by the editors and should appear the fifth, and next, volume of Series VI. Nonetheless, it has been widely available since its transcription by E. Bodemann.¹ This paper begins with a new translation of *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* followed by more difficult task of interpretation.

The essay was first translated into English by Mary Morris for the 1934 Everyman Library edition of *Leibniz: Philosophical Writings*, which was a commonly used text for many years in the English-speaking world.² However, G.H.R. Parkinson removed the piece, when he edited the *Everyman* edition for re-issue in 1973.³ Given the fact that it appears in no other printed English-language edition of Leibniz's writings, it remains a little-known piece in the English-speaking world. However, it was given something of a second lease of life when Donald Rutherford published a translation on his webpage in 2014.⁴

It is safe to say that *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* is an essay which would defy the expectations of most people already acquainted with Leibniz's work or with the conception of Leibniz as one of the three canonical "rationalist" philosophers – the other two being Descartes and Spinoza. As I have suggested elsewhere, the nature and scope of Leibniz's philosophy is surprisingly misunderstood even by those who self-identify as historians of philosophy.⁵ In particular, many people seem to be unaware of the extent to which ethical issues are at the heart of Leibniz's thought. But even among Leibniz scholars, my experience is that the nature of *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* generally comes as a surprise once they become aware of its existence. Partly, this is a formal issue. Leibniz used many different literary styles throughout his career, but *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* is unique – as far as I am aware – insofar as it combines autobiography with a dreamscape.⁶ But the content is also surprising.

The essay is very difficult to interpret and the analysis I shall provide will be quite speculative at points. However, I am confident that any attempt to make sense of what

¹ See LH VIII, 10.

² PW1, 253-57.

³ See PW2.

⁴ <http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/rutherford/Leibniz/translations/Dream.pdf>

⁵ See Lodge 2020, 261-62.

⁶ The *Theodicy* ends with a fictitious dialogue, sometimes known as the "petite fable" in which one of the main characters, Theodorus, gains access to an important truth, namely that this is the best of all possible worlds, as a result of revelation in a dream (see GP VI, 362-65/H 369-73). There is a case to be made for taking *Theodorus* to be a fictitious character who represents Leibniz, given that Theodorus of Cyrene was a geometer most famous for his work on irrational numbers and the way in which Leibniz conceives of the nature of contingent truths and their cognition. However, if *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* is taken at face value it is a straightforward depiction of Leibniz's life up to and including the occurrence of an actual dream. For further discussion of the petite fable see Keum 2020; for more on Theodorus see Davis 2001; and for the relevant aspects of Leibniz's account of contingency see Adams 1994, 25-30.

Leibniz says would require answers to questions that we are rarely required to ask when confronting his other writings; and I am also confident that it would be hard to provide an interpretation that did not push against cherished conceptions of Leibniz's understanding of the nature and role of rational enquiry. Indeed, I cannot help but wonder how Leibniz scholarship might have differed had this piece remained in the second edition of *Leibniz: Philosophical Writings*, and stood as one of Leibniz's canonical writings for Anglophone students and scholars.

1. The Text of *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream*

I was content with what I was among men, but I was not content with human nature. I often considered with sorrow the evils to which we are subjected: the short duration of our life; the vanity of glory; the disadvantages that arise from sensual pleasure; the sicknesses that overwhelm even our spirit; finally, the annihilation of all our importance and all our perfections in the moment of death, which appears to reduce the fruits of our labours to nothing. These meditations left me melancholic. I naturally loved to do good and to know the truth. However, it appeared that I gave myself unnecessary pain, that a successful crime is better than an oppressed virtue, and that happy madness is preferable to despondent reason. But I resisted these objections and better part of my mind prevailed through consideration of the Divinity, who must have given good order to everything and who kept my hopes up with the expectation of a future capable of redressing everything.

This battle was renewed in me at the sight of any great disorder, either among men, when I saw injustice triumphant and innocence afflicted, or in nature, when hurricanes or earthquakes destroyed cities and provinces and caused the deaths of thousands without distinction between the good and the wicked, as if nature cared no more about us than we bother ourselves about ants or worms that we come across on our path. I was deeply touched by these sights and I could not stop myself pitying the condition of mortals.

One day, tired from these thoughts, I fell asleep and found myself in a dark place which resembled an underground cave [*antre*]⁷, very large and very deep, and swarming with men who were hurrying strangely in the darkness to chase after moving flames, which they called "honours", or after little glow worms under the name of "riches". There were many who looked at the ground in order to search for bright pieces of rotten wood which they called "sensual pleasures". These nasty lights each had their followers; there were some who had changed sides and others who had abandoned the pursuit altogether through weariness or despair. Many of those who ran blindly and who often believed they had attained their goal fell over precipices, from where only moans were heard. Some were stung by scorpions and other venomous creatures, which made them wretched and often furious. However, neither these examples nor the arguments of some wiser people stopped the others from running the same risks and even fighting in order to forestall others or prevent themselves from being forestalled.

There were little holes and almost imperceptible cracks in the vault of this great cave [*antre*], where some trace of the light of day entered. But it was so weak that it required great attention to notice it. One often heard voices which said, "Stop you mortals, or run, miserable

⁷ Leibniz uses of two words, "antre" and "grotte", which I translate as "cave". I have included the French each time to mark these differences. "Antre" also has the connotations "lair/den" and "home"; and "grotte" has "cavern" or "grotto".

beings that you are.” Others said, “Lift up your eyes to the sky.” But no one stopped and no one lifted up their eyes except to chase after these dangerous trifles. I was one of those who was extraordinarily struck by these voices. I began to look up often, and I finally noticed this small light, which required so much attention. It seemed to me that it grew larger as I stared at it. My eyes were imbued with its rays, and when I used them, immediately afterwards to see where I was and where I was going, I was able to discern what was around me which was enough to protect me from the dangers. A venerable old man, who had wandered for a long time in the cave [*grotte*] and who had thoughts very much like mine, told me that this light was what is called “common sense [*le bon sens*]” and “reason” in us. I often changed position in order to consider the different holes in the vault that supplied this small light, and when I was positioned in a place where several lights could be seen at the same time from their true point of view, I found a collection of rays which greatly enlightened me. This occupation was a great benefit to me and made me more capable of acting in this darkness. Finally, after having tried out various viewpoints, I was led by my lucky star to a location that was unique and the most advantageous in the cave [*grotte*], intended for those whom the divinity wished to remove completely from this darkness.

I had barely begun to look up when I was surrounded by a great light gathered from all sides. All of the cave [*grotte*] and its miseries were fully disclosed to my eyes. But a moment afterwards a dazzling brightness surprised me. It soon grew and I saw before me the appearance of a young man whose beauty enchanted my senses. There seemed to be a majesty about him, which produced veneration mixed with fear. But the sweetness of his looks reassured me. I began, however, to feel myself weakening, and I was about to faint, when I felt myself touched by a bough imbued with a marvellous liquor. I could compare it to nothing I had ever felt before and it gave me the strength which was necessary to withstand the presence of this celestial messenger. He called me by my name and said to me in a charming tone: “Give thanks to the divine goodness which removes you from this crowd.” At the same time, he touched me a second time, and at that moment I felt myself lifted up. I was no longer in the cave [*antre*]. I no longer saw a vault above me, and I found myself on a high mountain, which revealed the face of the earth to me. I saw at a distance what I only wanted to look at in general, but when I considered a particular place fixedly, it grew bigger at once and I needed no telescope other than my attention to see it up close. This gave me a wonderful pleasure and emboldened me to say to my guide: “Mighty spirit — for I cannot doubt that you are of the number of those heavenly angels who hold court with the sovereign of the universe — since you have kindly enlightened my eyes, do as much for my mind.” It seemed to me that he smiled at these words and took pleasure in hearing my wish.

“Your wishes are granted,” he said to me, “since you desire wisdom more than the pleasure of the vain spectacles that the world presents to your eyes. But you will lose nothing that is solid in those same spectacles. You will see them with very different eyes. Your understanding being fortified from on high, will discover everywhere the brilliant light of the divine author of things. You will notice only wisdom and happiness, wherever men are accustomed to find only vanity and bitterness. You will be content with your creator; you will be delighted to see his works. Your admiration will not be the effect of ignorance as it is with ordinary people. It will be the fruit of knowledge of the greatness and the wonders of God. Instead of despising with men the unravelled secrets, which they previously regarded with astonishment, you will find that when you are admitted into the interior of nature your raptures will grow as you advance. For you will be only at the beginning of a chain of beauties and delights that grows to infinity. The pleasures that enchant your senses and that fabled Circe who changes men into beasts will have no hold on you, if you attach yourself to

the beauties of souls, which never perish and never displease. You will be of our company and will go with us from world to world, from discovery to discovery, from perfection to perfection. You will pay court with us to the supreme substance, who is beyond all worlds and who fills them without dividing itself. You will be at the same time before his throne and among those who are distant from it. For God will establish his seat in your soul and heaven follows him everywhere. Go then and lift up your mind above everything that is mortal and perishable, and hold fast only to the eternal truths of the light of God. You will not always live here below, this mortal life, which is close to that of beasts. There will come a time when you will be released completely from the chains of this body. Therefore, use well the time that providence gives you here, and know that your future perfections will be proportionate to the care you take here to achieve them.”

2. Interpretation

As one reads *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* one of its most obvious features is that it is divided into two parts: a shorter first part in which Leibniz describes a number of features of his life up until the point at which he had his dream; and a longer second part in which he describes the content of the dream itself. For the purposes of this essay, I am going to treat the whole text as if it is genuinely autobiographical. Clearly, there is scope for further analysis, which addresses the rhetorical significance of Leibniz's adoption of this style of writing, and whether there are reasons to question whether it is best treated as genuine autobiography. However, I do not intend to undertake that here.

With this hermeneutic decision in place, at least one difficulty is laid to rest; for we can treat the first of the two parts of the outline above as descriptions of phases that Leibniz himself went through before he had the dream. Unfortunately, however, this does not help us a great deal with the second part. For the text breaks off without any account of how the contents of the dream relate to the autobiography. Leibniz neither interprets the dream from within the autobiographical narrative, nor tells us anything about the ramifications it had for his post-dream life.

2.1. The Autobiographical Sketch

The autobiographical sketch consists of two phases. I shall refer to them to them as Leibniz's “naturalistic phase” and “theistic phase” respectively. Whilst there is no explicit suggestion that Leibniz is an atheist in his naturalistic phase, his religiosity is not presented as playing a significant role.⁸ He tells us that he was “content with what he was among men” and someone who “naturally loved to do good and know the truth”. But he also seems to hold that these attributes are not natural in the sense that they are essential features of human nature. Indeed, a key component of this first phase is the fact that, whilst content with his own standing in the human world, reflecting on human nature leads him to be “melancholic”, or as we might say today, “depressed”.

The problem that he perceives here is that humans are subjected to evils, of which he explicitly singles out five:

“[1] the short duration of our life;

⁸ However, it should be noted that, whilst Leibniz does characterize himself as an atheist, he does appear to reject the existence of post mortem existence.

- [2] the vanity of glory;
- [3] the disadvantages that arise from sensual pleasure;
- [4] the sicknesses that overwhelm even our spirit;
- [5] the annihilation of all our importance and all our perfections in the moment of death which appears to reduce the fruits of our labours to nothing.”

However, the thing that Leibniz seems most dejected about is something that stems from the fifth evil, the suggestion that humans are mortal beings whose existence has significance only whilst they are alive. For it is this that leads him to wonder whether what had made him content with himself was really worth all the effort. And here he appears to suggest that love of doing good and knowledge are not things that bear desirable fruits, observing that “a successful crime is better than an oppressed virtue, and that happy madness is preferable to despondent reason.”

Despite these challenges, Leibniz tells us that he did not abandon his commitment to doing good and knowing the truth. This leads him into the second, theistic, phase, which is presented as bringing initial relief to the melancholy. Fortunately for Leibniz his mood does not completely overwhelm him, and he is able to turn his attention to thinking about God, who is taken to be a being who “must have given good order to everything” and “who kept [Leibniz’s] hopes up with the expectation of a future capable of redressing everything.” In other words, he came to expect an afterlife in which there is just reward and punishment. But this respite is not long lasting. Leibniz does not describe himself as becoming melancholic again. But he is, nonetheless, brought into some kind of turmoil when considering the place of evil in the lives of mortals insofar, such as the suffering that is indiscriminately inflicted on people by natural disasters and the way in which the guilty and innocent fail to receive their just deserts. And he is left “tired by these thoughts” to the point that he falls asleep.

A number of features of the autobiography are striking. On the one hand, 1693 is the beginning of a period of three years of so in which Leibniz fell into some kind of mid-life crisis;⁹ on the other, the date of 1693 coincides with a massive earthquake in Sicily - the largest recorded in Italian history - which is thought to have killed around 60,000 people. Thus, we have an historical example of the kind of event that is represented as reintroducing psychological difficulties during the theistic phase. That said, if the piece is autobiographical, it seems unlikely that it is reporting a dream that occurred at this time, given that the commitment to some of the things Leibniz learns in the dream are found in his writings prior to this period. However, we might speculate that in 1693 Leibniz was reminded starkly of problems that had plagued his former self.

Turning to the content of the sketch, it is notable that Leibniz’s portrayal of himself is at odds with the common characterization of him as someone who is insensitive to the reality of evil, allowing it to be brushed aside by appeal to the thesis that this is the best of all possible worlds. Whilst this may be true of the fictional character with whom Leibniz is often identified, namely Dr Pangloss from Voltaire’s *Candide*, in these passages, Leibniz presents himself as someone who is made melancholic by the world as he finds it, and whose apparent commitment to a theistic outlook is at best a source of temporary respite. Another notable feature is that, even when Leibniz does attend to God, this is said to bring nothing more than the “expectation” of an afterlife in which injustices will be redressed. This is in striking

⁹ See Antognazza 2009, 322; Görlich 1987, ch. 8.

contrast with other writings in which he suggests that we can know these things¹⁰ However, it is important to remember that all of this occurs before Leibniz falls asleep and begins to dream.

2.2 *The Dream*

As we enter the dreamscape, Leibniz again presents the situation of most people in very negative terms. In the “dark place which resembled an underground cave, very large and very deep” in which he finds himself, they are occupied by the pursuit of “honours”, “riches”, or “sensual pleasures” or have stopped being so as a result of “weariness or despair”. Furthermore, they are blind both to the more wretched fates of others who take themselves to have succeeded in the same pursuits, or who have been driven mad as a result, and do not heed that those whom he refers to as “wiser people”. As in the autobiographical phase, Leibniz represents himself as standing apart from the crowd. However, it is not for the same reasons. He says nothing about the way in which his own moral or epistemic status, or his religious beliefs differentiate him. Furthermore, unlike the differences in the autobiography, the ones he mentions at this point lead to an escape from the exhaustion and despair that befall the others in the cave and befall his waking self. Indeed, they ultimately lead to a complex journey to a kind of enlightenment beyond the cave.

The differences in question are not ones that Leibniz presents as unique to himself. They pertain to the way in which those in the cave respond to two other features. First, there are “little holes and almost imperceptible cracks” through which daylight enters the cave; second, there are frequent voices which either seem to condemn the mortals to their miserable fates or implore them to look up. Most people ignore the voices and look up only to the extent required for them to continue their miserable pursuits. But Leibniz is one of those who hears the imploring voices and looks up frequently. After doing so many times he finally sees the daylight, which grows stronger and transforms his sight in such way that he can see what is in his immediate vicinity and what is required not to fall foul of the dangers around him.

The next part of the dream is one in which Leibniz moves around and becomes aware of the light as it emerges from various different holes, and then finds places where he can gain access to the way that the light comes through more than one hole at the same time. Furthermore, where the latter occurs he is more able to act to avoid danger, presumably because he is aware of more of what is in the cave. Another thing that we learn at this point is absolutely crucial. When Leibniz gains initial access to the light which helps him see what is around him and makes it easier for him to act, he is told by a figure, whom it is hard not to identify with Plato given that the episode occurs in a cave, that the light is to be equated with “common sense and reason in us”.¹¹ As is clear from the description, it is not that Leibniz could not see in the ordinary sense of the word before. Indeed, all the people in the cave were capable of seeing and acting on the basis of that. What is new is some kind of additional cognitive access.

With this initial transformation in place, Leibniz moves around. Initially, this gives him access to different holes, but then he finds places where several can be seen together.

¹⁰ For example, see NE 96

¹¹ Whilst Plato is a natural candidate, it is worth noting, as we shall see below that the expression “common sense” is more readily associated with Aristotle.

This is said to have “greatly enlightened” him and to have been very useful insofar as it enabled him to act more readily. But this is only the beginning of Leibniz’s enlightenment. He tries out “various viewpoints” and then by following his “lucky star” he ends up in a place that he describes as “unique and the most advantageous in the cave, intended for those whom the divinity wished to remove completely from this darkness.” And he reports that as he began to look upward from this vantage point he “was surrounded by a great light gathered from all sides” and with things lit up in this way “All of the cave and its miseries were fully disclosed to [his] eyes.”

Up to this point, the epistemic transformation and its practical benefits are said to have arisen from Leibniz’s coming to the use of common sense and reason. Leibniz does not say any more about how we are to understand either of these expressions. However, we can piece together the basic idea here from other texts that are central to Leibniz’s oeuvre. In a letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia from 1702, Leibniz presents an account of sensory perception which appeals to a notion of common sense which is essentially the one we find in Book III, ch 1 of Aristotle’s *De Anima*. On this account common sense is a power of the soul common to humans and other animals which enables the perception of what are sometimes referred to as the “common sensibles”, namely the qualities that are accessible through all sense modalities, such as shape, size and motion (see GP VI, 500/AG 187). In the *New Essays*, Leibniz provides an explicit account of the term “reason” in contrast to the one Locke had offered in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Here we learn that “A reason is a known truth whose connection with some less well-known truth leads us to give our assent to the latter”, and that the word is also used to refer to “the faculty which is aware of this connection amongst truths, i.e. the faculty for reasoning” (NE 475).¹² Furthermore, in Sections 31 and 32 of the *Monadology*, Leibniz observes that “Our reasonings are based on two great principles, that of contradiction [. . .] and that of sufficient reason” (GP VI, 612/AG 217).

Thus, we can see that Leibniz’s reliance on guidance by the light is a metaphor for his coming to grasp truths about the cave - indeed he is depicted as ultimately all there is to know - by employing the ability to perceive the common sensibles and a faculty which links truths about them together and whose operation accords with principles that are taken to be emblematic of his identity as a “rationalist”. In other words, it allows him to achieve what I shall call “rational enlightenment”.

Rational enlightenment is contrasted here with the situation in which most people find themselves. But it also appears to be distinct from the kind of situation in which Leibniz found himself before going to sleep. And, whilst, Leibniz is not explicit about this, it seems to be the case that the transition suffices for a life that involves the ability to cope in ways that were not available before. At first pass, this seems like an odd claim. After all, the waking Leibniz was said to be a lover of truth and represented himself as thinking in a way that was more sophisticated than most people. However, Leibniz provides us with a way of understanding this insofar as he distinguishes between rational thought and the thought of “empirics” (NE 50) whose thought is governed by “the shadow of reasoning” (NE 51).

What Leibniz has in mind when he speaks of this other way of thinking is a capacity that involves drawing conclusions based on “expectation of a similar issue in a case where it

¹² Also see section 1 of ‘Preliminary Dissertation on the Conformity of Faith with Reason’ in the *Theodicy* (GP VI, 49/H 73).

appears to resemble the past, with no knowledge of whether the same reason obtains” (NE 475). Furthermore, he distinguishes between “simple empirics who maintain that what has happened once will happen again in a case which is similar in the respects that they are impressed by” (NE 50) and those “made cunning by age and experience” (ibid.). The simple empirics are portrayed as little different to animals and as easily making mistakes due to their inability to track the nature of the reality that underwrites their beliefs and behavior. But even the more sophisticated empirics are vulnerable “when they trust too much to their past experience ... not taking sufficiently to heart that the world changes and that men become cleverer and find hundreds of new tricks” (ibid).¹³

With this distinction in mind, I want to suggest that we regard the waking Leibniz as representing a sophisticated empiric for whom even those beliefs that he embraces in his theistic phase are not grounded in an understanding of the reasons for things. Leibniz suggests that this kind of epistemic position is one that leaves him vulnerable to melancholy in the face of experiences of the negative aspects of the created world. And, whilst we are not told why, this is presumably because the countervailing considerations are based on accepting the authority of the testimony of others rather than a rational theology.

The fact that Leibniz embraces the possibility of a transition from sophisticated empiric to one who is rationally enlightened will perhaps not come as much of a surprise. Nor I expect will it be surprising to discover that rational enlightenment is something that Leibniz suggests God has granted to those he “wished to remove completely from ... darkness”. However, this transition occurs when we are only about one third of the way through the dreamscape and at a point there are more transitions to come. Thus, although one might be tempted to take “removal from darkness” to refer to the state of rational enlightenment, it could also refer to something else for which rational enlightenment is merely a necessary condition. And whether it does or not, *Leibniz’s Philosophical Dream* certainly describes a scenario in which we are told that there is something more to be had.

The next stage of the dream involves the cave coming to be filled with yet more light. However, the light in question is “dazzling” and accompanied by the arrival of a being whom Leibniz identifies as one of the angels who make up God’s court. The encounter leaves Leibniz weak and in need of a different kind of assistance, namely the provision of some kind of “marvellous liquor” that revives him.¹⁴ With the drink administered, Leibniz is told to thank God for his selection and then removed from the darkness of the cave in a literal sense. Like the protagonist in the Plato’s allegory of the cave, he finds himself outside.¹⁵ But far more detail is given at this point and features are introduced that go well beyond what is found in the discussion in Plato’s *Republic*.

Leibniz has been taken to the top of a mountain where he sees the surface of the earth and, most importantly, he now has additional powers. With a kind of telescopic vision, he is able to bring any part of the earth to which he attends into view as if it were close by. This is described as pleasurable, but accorded no greater significance. Whilst hard to interpret, it could be that Leibniz is alluding here to an expansion of the range of sensory experiences

¹³ Also see NE 475-76.

¹⁴ Leibniz is also given a liquor to revive him at a crucial point in the petit fable, namely when he is given access to an experience which outstrips normal human epistemic capacities and confirms the thesis that the actual worlds is the best of all possible worlds (see GP VI, 364/H 372).

¹⁵ See *Republic* 516a.

which are available for rational scrutiny. There is cognitive advancement, but nothing that involves the exercise of different capacities than those utilised before. However, Leibniz goes on to ask whether he may be granted an analogous enhancement for his “mind”. We are told that the angel considers this to be an expression of the fact that Leibniz “desire[s] wisdom” and that because of this it is granted. But there is no requirement that he forego his new sensory enhancement. And it gives rise to a capacity that allows Leibniz to “see ... with very different eyes.”

What Leibniz depicts next is a new kind of enlightenment, which I shall refer to as “intuitive enlightenment”. This seems no longer to involve the consideration of truths and their connection via the faculty of reason. It is a kind of non-inferential thinking that allows one to bring things into view in such a way that the mind is able to grasp what is there directly. Whilst it might not be readily associated with Leibniz, it seems to be his version of a conception of a kind cognition has a long history. In various places, Aristotle talks of *noûs* or *noêsis* as a kind of non-inferential thinking which is explicitly discussed in connection with the activity of the intellect;¹⁶ and it is also central to writings of Plotinus.¹⁷ Of particular relevance in the present context is the way it is presented as “intuitive cognition” in the writings of Duns Scotus, one of the most influential and widely-read among medieval philosophers. For Scotus intuitive cognition is contrasted with “abstractive cognition”. Abstractive cognition employs generic concepts and enables us to grasp universal, repeatable, features of reality. And, whilst establishing the claim would require a good deal of discussion, I would suggest that it is abstractive cognition that is employed in the kind of thinking that Leibniz attributes to the faculty of reason. By contrast intuitive cognition is the capacity to think about existing particulars, both the things which exist outside the mind of the cognizer and the acts of the cognizer’s mind.¹⁸

Intuitive cognition may not be readily associated with Leibniz. However, it is a central component in his epistemology. For as well as having a faculty of reason, all humans have a faculty of perception. The relevant sense of perception here is a technical one that is peculiar to Leibniz. It is “the expression of many things in one, *or in simple substance*” (A VI i, 272/L 91), where Leibniz holds that “One thing expresses another ... when there is a constant and regulated relation between what can be said of the one and of the other” (G II, 112/LA 144). Simple substances here include beings such as ourselves, whose perception is sometimes sensory. But perception is an essential feature which is present in us even during stupors or dreamless sleep. Furthermore, there are substances whose phenomenal lives are constantly of this kind.¹⁹

Whilst there is much more to be said about this notion, we can see that it is a kind of non-inferential cognition. More important for present purposes is the fact that Leibniz is committed to two other theses: First, Leibniz holds that all simple substances perceive the entire universe, past present and future, from their own perspective, the so-called “universal expression thesis”;²⁰ second, he holds that for human beings and other rational beings (which would include the angelic messenger) at least some of the content of perception is available in awareness, via the capacity for “apperception” which is “*consciousness*, or the reflective knowledge of this internal state” (GP VI, 600/AG 208). But

¹⁶ See *De anima* III, 4–6

¹⁷ See *Enneads* V.8.6, 1–15.

¹⁸ For more on Scotus’ views see Pasnau 2002.

¹⁹ For example, see *Monadology* Sections 19–21 GP VI, 610/AG 215–16.

²⁰ For example, see DM Section 8; DM Section 13; NE 228.

it should also be noted that there are limits to our apperception; Leibniz adds that this is “something not given ... at all times to a given soul” (ibid.).

What the new transition seems to involve is the onset of a highly developed and heightened capacity to apperceive, both in terms of the details of creation and its extent. This cognition of reality is not one that is mediated by reason or by generic concepts. It involves a cognitive acquaintance with the individual things that make up created reality. In Scotus’ case this includes the universals as they are found in existing things. But for Leibniz there are no universals; all that exists is an infinite plurality of monads, which are immaterial, unextended soul-like entities. Any appearance of there being generic aspects of reality that are multiply instantiated is just that. Thus, the transition to intuitive enlightenment (which, it should be emphasized does not require the forgoing of rational enlightenment), seems to involve the ability to intellectually apprehend individual monads as distinct existing things.

As with the transition to rational enlightenment, the benefits conferred by intuitive enlightenment are presented as more than epistemic. However, it is notable that these are benefits that Leibniz is told will arise by the angel rather than benefits that he in fact experiences. They stem from the fact that he will “discover everywhere the brilliant light of the divine author of things”. He is told that when he looks upon the world that ordinarily seems to others to contain “vanity and bitterness” he will “notice only wisdom and happiness” and that this will lead to an entirely different mode of being in the world. Leibniz will both be “content with [his] creator” and “delighted to see his works”, something which will arise from his “knowledge of the greatness and wonders of God.” Furthermore, this delight is not something that will remain at a constant level. As Leibniz is “admitted into the interior of nature” he will find that his “raptures will grow”. For he will be “only be at the beginning of a chain of beauties and delights that grow to infinity.”

Indeed, Leibniz is told that if he can “attach [him]self to the beauties of souls, which never perish and never displease” once he has entered this mode of being, then the “pleasures that enchant [his] senses will have no hold on [him]” and there will be no danger of turning from man into beast as in the fable of Circe from Homer’s *Odyssey*. For at this point he will belong to the company of the angels and “go with [them] from world to world, from discovery to discovery, from perfection to perfection” whilst “pay[ing] court to the supreme substance, who is beyond all worlds and who fills them without dividing itself.” However, the messenger also points out that this whilst paying court, Leibniz “will be at the same time before [God’s] throne and among those who are distant from it,” since “God will establish his seat in [Leibniz’s] soul and heaven follows him everywhere.”²¹

The dream and *Leibniz’s Philosophical Dream* ends with an exhortation from the angel. Leibniz is first told “Go then, and lift up your mind above everything that is mortal and perishable, and hold fast only to the eternal truths of the light of God”, which is presumably an injunction to use his newly acquired abilities and attach himself to the mode of life that it will engender. But Leibniz is also told that he will eventually “be released completely from the chains of this body” and that he should use his time well before then since his “future perfections will be proportionate to the care [he] take[s] to achieve them.” The promise here

²¹ Leibniz’s reference to the throne of God is one that warrants further exploration. It could be read as no more than an expression of the way in which Leibniz’s relationship to God will have changed. However, the image of the throne has a long history, beginning with the vision of Ezekial (*Ezekial* 1: 4-28) and is a central component of Merkavah mysticism (see Arbel 2003)

seems to be of an even more developed version of the intuitive enlightenment that was granted during the liquor induced journey.

Another central aspect of Leibniz's philosophy must be born in mind at this point, namely his conception of post-mortem existence. When the angel tells Leibniz that he will be freed from "this body", we should not assume that he is to expect an entirely disembodied future. Rather, Leibniz is committed to the view that all creatures, angels included, are embodied throughout their existence, which is something that goes on forever.²² So, the suggestion here seems to be that Leibniz will be preparing himself for the kind of existence that his visiting angel enjoys. Indeed, it is notable that when the angel arrives initially, Leibniz is said to see "the appearance of a young man", which at least suggests that the angel is not present in its actual form.

The benefits that Leibniz is promised initially are ones that we find him describing in other places in his writings.²³ But they are presented as available to anyone who is able to love God above all things with no suggestion that this could not occur during a human lifetime. However, nowhere else that I am aware of does Leibniz speculate about the possibility of joining another group of more enlightened beings – presumably with bodies that give them greater access to apperception of the content of their intuitive cognition of reality and of its relation to God as well as attendant practical advantages. But perhaps this is where dream and reality come together. For when Leibniz awoke he would have found himself in a position where he was aware of possibilities for enlightenment that he presents as available in everyday life, albeit restricted by human embodiment. But he would also be aware of the content of the promise that there is more to come after he dies and that once attained, the benefits of intuitive enlightenment will be reaped forever in community with similar, but even more enlightened, beings.

I have suggested that the dream presents a journey that is available to Leibniz and others which leads to a celebratory mode of being and activity. But it is also important to attend to the way in which this enlightenment comes to pass. Leibniz only begins to make the journey after falling asleep. But perhaps more significantly, within the dream, it is only as a result of attending to others who are already further along the path that Leibniz makes progress. It is true that the move to rational enlightenment is in part a result of his own tendency to look up and pay attention to the voices of others. But when it comes to the transition to intuitive enlightenment, matters are completely out of Leibniz's control; indeed, the revelation is only possible because he has been given some kind of drug. It is also important to notice that, although the advances that Leibniz makes and those he is promised for the future involve coming to see how things are with greater accuracy, this is not presented as intrinsically valuable. Their real importance seems to lie in the fact that they give rise to a joyous mode of existence where there is a constant awareness of one's relation to God and creation, initially on earth, but ultimately in the company of others who are free to visit other parts of the universe.

Before closing, two additional remarks seem worth making. I have noted that *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* is, as far as I am aware, unparalleled in the writings of Leibniz. However, I also mentioned one other place in which a dreamscape is invoked, namely the "petite fable" at the end of the *Theodicy*. As we have seen, in this dialogue, the

²² See GP VI, 619/AG 222.

²³ For example, see the preface to the *Theodicy* (GP VI, 27–8/H 51–52).

main character – who is plausibly identified with Leibniz – is also granted access to knowledge of something that is beyond his normal capacities while under the influence of a drug. In this case it is the infinite complex evidence for the fact that the created world is the best of all possible worlds. Just what the significance of these motifs should be taken to be is something that will need to await further investigation. But in both cases, it is only through a form of personal revelation that he gains access, and in both cases, it is necessary that he receive some kind of artificial stimulant in order to have a mind that is ready to receive them.

Finally, it should be noted that whilst the journey to enlightenment involves the intensification and securing of a theistically infused mode of being infused, there is no role given to the figure of Jesus. Leibniz is visited by an angel and granted heightened powers. His advancement is not mediated by an encounter with a being whose behaviour and injunctions parallel those found attributed to Jesus in the gospels; and there is no reference to scripture at all in the piece. Again, this echoes a theme that can be found in the *Theodicy*. In the preface to that work, Leibniz offers a genealogy of the religious outlook that he is defending which comprises nothing more than monotheism that he suggests emerged explicitly within Judaism and a belief in the immortality of the person, something he suggests was also esoterically present among the Jewish people. Jesus has a role, but it is as a divinely inspired populariser of old dogmas; and there is no explicit suggestion that he should be identified with the second person of the Trinity.²⁴ Whatever the precise relationship between *Leibniz's Philosophical Dream* and his own religious views, it is consonant with a spirituality which is other than that which his being identified as Christian apologist might suggest to many readers.^{25 26}

A = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Darmstadt and Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1923–). Cited by series, volume, and page.

AG = *Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, ed. and trans. R. Ariew and D. Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989).

DM = *Leibniz Discourse on Metaphysics*, trans. G. Rodriguez-Pereyra (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Cited by section number.

GP = *Die Philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, 7 vols., ed. C. I. Gerhardt (Berlin: Weidmann, 1875–90; reprint ed. Hildesheim: Olms, 1960). Cited by volume and page.

²⁴ See GP VI, 26-27/H 50-51.

²⁵ It is undeniable that many of Leibniz's writings provide accounts of how best to understand Christian doctrine (for example, see LGR 42-46; 70-78; 93-94; 199-202; 244-52), and there is no reason to resist Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra's suggestion that the "overarching aim" the *Discourse on Metaphysics* is "to provide a metaphysics for Christianity" (DM, 2). However, the issue of whether Leibniz himself adopted the views that he articulates in this work is open to dispute. This issue is also related to the question of whether it is appropriate to characterize Leibniz as a Christian (see Antognazza 2007; and Lodge 2020, 263-64 for differing views). This turns in part, of course, on what it is for anyone to be appropriately characterized as a Christian. And here it is worth noting Robert Adams report (in conversation) that at the founding of the Society for Christian Philosophers it was observed that 'being a follower of Jesus' sufficed.

²⁶ Many thanks to Maria Rosa Antognazza and Henry Straughan for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

H = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, ed. A. Farrar, trans. E. M. Huggard (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1985).

L = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed., ed. and trans. L. Loemker (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969).

LGR = *Leibniz on God and Religion: A Reader*, ed. and trans. L. Strickland (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)

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NE = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. and trans. P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Pagination is identical with the French version in A VI, 6.

PW1 = *The Philosophical Writings of Leibniz*, ed. and trans. M. Morris with an introduction by C. R. Morris (London: Dent, 1934)

PW2 = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Philosophical Writings*, ed. G.H.R. Parkinson, trans. M. Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Dent, 1973)

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