PERFECTION AND FREE WILL IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WORLD OF LEIBNIZ

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ABSTRACT

In this study I aim to examine the attributes 'best' and 'most perfect' that Leibniz frequently makes use of concerning the question of free will. The question of free will constitutes a crucial theme throughout Leibniz's philosophy and particularly in regard to his concern with morality. In accordance with the essential constituents of his philosophy such as the best possible world and the necessity-contingency dichotomy, I aim at debating the legitimacy of Leibniz's use of these attributes with respect to divine and human acts as free acts—the divine in a supreme manner and the human in degrees. In order to do that, I firstly examine Leibniz's tendency to tie these attributes to one another without offering an account of what these attributes really comprise. Secondly, I demonstrate how a hierarchy is introduced with the attribute of the best into Leibniz highly formal system – a hierarchy which seriously endangers Leibniz well-known thesis of the best possible world. In this context, Leibniz's writings that cover the question of free will and two of his renowned texts, *Monadology* and *Discourse on Metaphysics* will be consulted.

Keywords: Leibniz, Free Will, God, Necessity, Contingency.

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INTRODUCTION

The attributions of the interrelated, if not identical, concepts of best and most perfect entail two major concerns, both of which inform the whole Leibniz's philosophy to a considerable extent: omnipotence of God as the most perfect being and moral conduct in the world of human beings. It is appropriate to take God's omnipotence as the first concern since it comes across as the most prominent postulation within Leibniz's philosophy to which all other absolute and hypothetical aspect of the metaphysical and moral realms are ultimately connected. In *Monadology*, Leibniz asserts that God is the necessary substance and the ultimate reason for all the "intricate detail"s that pertain to contingencies or, in other terms, existentials (Leibniz 2014: 38-39).[1] He further describes God as a "unique and universal" being that is totally independent of other existent beings and that knows no limit, concluding that God is

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[1] I have modelled the reference to two main texts of Leibniz, namely *Monadology* and *Discourse on Metaphysics* on paragraph, rather than page numbers.

"absolutely perfect" (Leibniz 2014: 40-41).[2] Leibniz's postulation of God as the most perfect being has a strong moral character that goes in tandem with the indispensability of his existence in metaphysical terms. God's omnipotence and omniscience as the manifestation of his ontological perfectness is immanently linked to a perfectness of a moral kind. Leibniz makes this link clear when he states in his *Discourse on Metaphysics* that "power and knowledge are perfections, and in so far as they belong to God, they have no boundaries. Whence it follows that God, possessing supreme and infinite wisdom, act in the most perfect manner, not only metaphysical sense, but morally speaking as well" (Leibniz 2020: 1).

God's perfection as regards the moral realm constitutes a major point in Leibniz's philosophy as this trait is what renders omnipotence to God in turn. Leibniz proceeds to prove God's omnipotence by formulating a dichotomy between the 'necessary' and the 'contingent'. Firstly, the necessary is that whose opposite implies a contradiction whereas the contingent is that whose opposite do not imply a contradiction. Secondly, while a necessary truth is that which cannot "not-exist," the non-existence of a contingent truth does not pose a contradiction (Strickland 2006: 95-96). Thirdly, in the case of necessary truths, the subject is contained in the predicate and the analysis of such a truth into its primitive components is finite. In that of contingent truths, though the subject is contained in the predicate, there is no such finite analysis but one that converges on a finite analysis (Russell 1997: 16-25).[3] In the light of these fundamental definitions of the two concepts, Leibniz argues that the existence of God is absolutely necessary, yet his conduct as regards the universe is hypothetically necessary, i.e., contingent. He strongly denies that God acts in a necessary fashion, as this poses a threat to his omnipotence and reduces his conduct to a mere mechanical one that complies necessarily with the preservation and perpetuation of the best.[4] If so, his will and eventually his power, becomes an irrelevant issue. Leibniz's distinction thus serves to efface the idea that God is necessarily inclined to act in a certain way and to wipe out the threat against his omnipotence. God's perfection in both metaphysical and moral domain brings us to Leibniz's second concern, namely, the one with moral conduct of humans. Leibniz constitutes the debate of God's moral perfection in the first article of *Discourse on Metaphysics* with the following words: "the more

[2] In the detailed chapter on contingency in *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, Robert Adams points at what could be termed as one of the blind spots of Leibniz's formulations regarding his denial of the world's being necessarily actualized. Leibniz equates 'existential' with 'contingent' and simultaneously believes that God exists, i.e., that there is at least one necessarily existential truth (Adams 1994: 9).

[3] For the distinction between analytic and synthetic proposition, likewise between necessity and contingency in Leibniz's system I also consult to Bertnard Russell's excellent commentary work on Leibniz's philosophy.

[4] Massimo Mugnai rightly formulates God's power of production of the best possible world out of the infinitely many possible worlds by bringing his ideas in his mind together only "on the basis of the laws of logic" (Mugnai 2018: 41).

enlightened and informed one becomes about the works of God, the more disposed one will be to find them excellent, and entirely satisfying in relation to everything that one could even have desired" (Leibniz 2020:1).

In other words, knowledge and power are two capacities that grant human a share of God's perfection in a relation of direct proportionality. The more powerful and knowledgeable a person is, the freer she is. Much as God's unbounded freedom in his conduct goes hand in hand with his total control over the universe, the bounded, yet nevertheless existing, freedom renders moral agency to humans, making them responsible for their conduct in the world.[5] Like those of God, humans' actions are contingent; humans are not 'necessitated' but 'inclined' to do what seems to be the best to them (Strickland 2006: 92-94).

In conjunction with the necessity-contingency dichotomy, Leibniz's positing inclination as opposed to necessity aims at managing the workings of another dichotomy: indifference and determinacy. Accordingly, actions of both humans and God are determined, not arbitrary, in that, they always have reason. As Leibniz states in one of his texts on freedom and spontaneity, "[t]he more substances are determined by themselves, and removed from indifference, the more perfect they are"—determined either by an internal or external force (Strickland 2006: 94). The more this force has to do with reason instead of passion, the more perfect the substance is. God is the most perfect, as he is the "most determined by himself to do the most perfect" (Strickland 2006: 95). The fact that God grants us all his perfections does not posit a contradiction; it is why we are free because God grants us a degree of his perfection and his freedom, which "makes us most inclined to choose good and do good" (Strickland 2006: 95).

The two concerns explicated above are immanently linked to the doctrine of the best possible world, which pertains to the idea that God has provided us with the best world among alternatives, and with our actions we contribute to the making of this best possible world. Leibniz's appeal to the attribute 'possible', then, primarily concerns the elimination of necessity and emphasizes freedom both on a godly basis as well as earthly one. Since only one of these worlds can exist, God is inclined to choose the one that is the most perfect, which constitutes the sufficient reason for the existence of this particular world we are living in, and which again serves as a proof of God's good will and power (Leibniz 2014: 53-55). Again, the

[5] Leibniz's theory of agency reveals itself within divine causality, that is, concurrentism as distinct from occasionalism. For a very detailed examination Leibniz's concurrentism see (Bayam 2021: 661-69)

doctrine of the best possible world not only addresses a metaphysical concern, but a moral one as well, and human rationality plays a key role within this framework. Being the best possible world in moral terms, this world comprises what Leibniz calls the "City of God," i.e., a world in which thanks to the existence of rational souls, God's greatness and goodness are known and glorified (Leibniz 2014: 86). Leibniz articulates the concept of the city of God while at the same time highlighting most of the major components of his major philosophy with the following words:

> "God, who always aims at the greatest perfection in general, will care the most for minds, and will give them, not only in general but also to each one in particular, the maximum of perfection that the universal harmony can allow.
>
> It can even be said that God, in so far as he is a mind, is the origin of existences; otherwise, if he lacked the will to choose the best, there would be no reason for a possible thing to exist in preference to others. Thus the quality God has of being himself a mind takes precedence over all the other considerations he may have with regard to creatures" (Leibniz 2020: 36).

Once more weaving God's free determinacy against indifference into his philosophy in line with the principle of sufficient reason, Leibniz glorifies human rationality. Furthermore, he adds that God has therefore set the happiness of humans which are like subjects to a prince that is God himself, as the highest of his laws (Leibniz 2020: 36).

What Constitutes the Best - Problem of Content

In brief account on Leibniz's two interrelated concerns, the best and the most perfect appear as attributes. Although these attributes seem to have been used interchangeably for the most part, the former mainly refers to the world as a contingent existential and the latter to God as the necessary existential. Leibniz offers us a well-founded system, albeit a highly formal one by correlating the major doctrines of his philosophy to one another mainly via the use of direct proportionality between the positive component of one dichotomy and the positive component of another (e.g. the more reasonable the freer), and likewise between negative component of one dichotomy and the negative component of another (e.g. the less knowledgeable, the less powerful or the more ignorant the weaker). The formal aspect of his philosophy will be examined in this chapter by delving into possible drawbacks of Leibniz's tendency to tie attributes and concepts to one another without offering an account of what these attributes and concepts really comprise.

In his essay titled "Leibniz's Two Realms", Jonathan Bennett raises similar concern. Primarily focusing on Leibniz's offerings of teleological accounts in relation with matters of

physics, Bennett criticizes Leibniz for not adequately explicating the reason for animal behaviour. Accordingly, Leibniz does give a conative account rather than a mere cognitive one when he claims that "Volition is the effort or endeavour (*conatus*) to move towards what one finds good and away from what one finds bad" (Leibniz qtd. in Bennet 2005: 144). Bennett is not satisfied with this account by stating that such a teleological account that hinges on the idea that one is inclined to do what one finds good is "vacuous": "[this view] needs to be replaced, for each individual and monad, by something that says *what* the animal 'finds good'" (Bennett 2005: 144-145). He acknowledges Leibniz's concern with harmonizing the material and teleological realms. This way, says Bennett, does not merely consult an efficient cause when explaining behaviour. It seems to him, however, that Leibniz's legitimation of the involvement of a teleological account for animal behaviour is not satisfactory. "It is a prima facia reasonable thing to do; but we should bear in mind that while it aims to supply teleology with its felt, experienced, inward aspect, it contributes nothing to its *workings*" (Bennett 2005: 146).

Two problematics are at stake as regards Bennett's criticism quoted above. The first problematic could be formulated in the following way: if one is inclined to do what one finds good, then what constitutes the criteria of goodness for Leibniz? Being directly related to the first problematic, the second one pertains to the requirement of a final cause when explaining behaviour: if, for Leibniz, acts in the extensional realm embody a teleology, then he should provide us with an account of the workings of this teleology, rather than a mere connection between the extensional and the teleological. Leibniz does not provide us with the workings of any teleology because he fails to engage in what Bennett terms as "long distance teleology," which requires "rules, criteria, principles, general theory" so as to describe the teleological patterns in the behaviour in a precise manner (Bennett 2005: 144).[6]

Although Bennett rightfully warns against giving an explanatory account of teleological concepts "in a spirit of mere description", his criticism deserves a careful consideration, for it poses a substantial threat to Leibniz's philosophy which entails an intricate web of logical connections among formal concepts (Bennett, 2005, 146). Regarding the focus of this article, namely, the attributes of the best and the most perfect, the lack of criteria set for these attributes leads a number of important questions. Perhaps the most basic of these is the question concerning the performance that how one is supposed to act good if the criterion for acting good is uncertain. When the doctrine of the best possible world is taken into account, the

[6] David Blumenfeld argues that indeed Leibniz offers a criterion for God's perfection, namely "variety/simplicity" though for Blumenfeld, "how it is to be interpreted" remains problematic just like as for Bennett (Blumenfeld 2006: 383).

question could evolve into the following formulation: how is one to know which is the best way to act?

It is known, and in many of his writings strongly hinted at, that Leibniz has an affinity towards Christianity. If Leibniz's suggestion is to read the Bible to learn what is good and what is bad, it would not only be an illegitimate move on his part, but also be injustice to his philosophy itself. Leibniz would answer to such a question by stating that humans are free in their conduct. He asserts that God "gave us our reason to examine good and evil, and to choose between them" upon which we use our power to act "according to what we have judged the best" (Strickland 2006: 92, 93). What is more, it is in "our nature to will what we believe to be the best"; claiming merely to "will to will" something would mean to ally ourselves with our prejudices rather than our nature (Strickland 2006: 93). Equated with our nature, our reason is defined as a guide to distinguish good from evil and to tend towards the best. Like in the case of introducing a final cause to behaviour which Bennett criticizes, however, the corelation between reason and judging the best does not involve anything regarding the workings of judging the best. Even worse, such a formulation reifies reason as a mere means to one end, namely, finding the best so that one can act accordingly. Like the question of what the best entails, what reason entails does not exceed a mere correlation of direct proportionality in which the more reasonable one is, the more one is inclined to choose the best.

Most importantly, such a propositional account of the reason as a formal function that leads to the best, done in the manner of positing the former as an antecedent and the latter as a consequent, hampers the claim of a moral realm that two major concerns sketched above ultimately address. Bennett recites a similar formulation with Leibniz in which he equates speaking against reason with speaking against the truth since reason is "a chain of truths" (Bennett 2005: 153). Leibniz further adds that "the principle use of reason consists in knowing the good" and that justice is "nothing other than goodness in conformity with reason" (Leibniz qtd. in Bennet 2005: 153). Bennett argues against Leibniz by claiming the following passage:

> "I do not quarrel with the thesis that any moral proposition incorporates an imperative, so that accepting it involves adopting a conative attitude [instead of a mere cognitive one] … But most of those who adopted a position of this kind have associates it with a certain subjectivism about the nature of morality, which has led them to find its human roots in felling rather than in reason. They have indeed been pushed that way by their inability to devise a *credible epistemology for morality* if it is taken to be objective and factual. Someone who holds as Leibniz does that reason can discover objective moral truths, and who also holds (as I am conjecturing that Leibniz also does) that accepting

> such a truth involves a conative element, has a lot of explaining to do. I have not found that Leibniz does any of it" (Bennett 2005: 154. Emphasis added.).

While Bennett's focus is on the credibility of an account of morality in light of the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity, his criticism primarily points at the need of further explanation of Leibniz's system, the lack of which jeopardizes his concern with morality. It could be added to Bennett's claim that Leibniz's account seems to make correlations between concepts on a formal basis, yet do not seem to delve into content, i.e., what constitutes the best and the most perfect. While the argument evolving around the actualization of the best possible world is supported through a convoluted set of logical connections involving other doctrines such as the city of God with an emphasis on morality as well as the mechanics of corporeal bodies led by laws of nature, there is no account of what the best and the most perfect comprise apart from its direct relation with reason.

Leibniz's doctrine of the best possible world as the model of perfection becomes even more dubious in the face of arguments evolving around the bad things that take place in this world. One of these arguments pertains to whether God could be said to be perfect in the face of actualization of evil: if God is omnipotent which could possibly mean that he can actualize what he wills, then does he will evil as well as good? If he does, how come he is perfect? Leibniz's chief stance concerning this objection is that God does not will but permit evil, which ultimately serves to the best world possible (Strickland 2006: 102). The only imperfect beings stimulate evil. Leibniz's stance, in fact, differentiates the known from the unknown will of God. The known will of God refers to his wills on law, and the unknown will of God refers to facts. These two wills do not contradict one another, yet we can only abide by the known will of God, which is general and concerns all the rules that he has set. we "ourselves contribute to making a success of his unknown will concerning facts, which is particular" by conforming or not conforming to these rules, and facts cannot be figured out in advance (Strickland 2006: 100-101). As regards to God's distribution of his grace to individuals, in line with the claim of the 'unknown will,' Leibniz states that "there are certain great reasons of wisdom or congruity which God has observed, which are unknown to mortals and are grounded in the general order, whose aim is the greatest perfection of the universe" (Leibniz 2020: 31).

Several things are at stake in this chain of formulations mentioned above. Much as what constitutes the "greatest perfection" remains vague, what the known will of God comprises is no less an enigma than his unknown will. What is worse, Leibniz seems to surrender to a grave contradiction when he claims that we have the knowledge of what God has set to be the general

laws on the one hand, and that God's unknown will and/or reasons concerning fact are derived from these general laws on the other. This contradictory stance paves the way to a dead end: we shall act according to the laws so as to contribute to the facts, the sum of which is to constitute the best possible world and, at the same time, bow to God's choice that complies with these same laws that lead to the actualization of the best possible world. Free act becomes identical to submission to a predestined course of events.

The paradoxical situation at hand is addressed and explicated as a reply to Descartes who maintains the idea that things are not good with respect to an objective set of standards but because God has chosen them. Leibniz strongly opposes Descartes's stance by appealing to the concept of determination: if God is indifferently choosing one thing to take place and the others not to, then why praise him for doing one thing and not for doing the others? (Leibniz 2020: 2). Accordingly, we praise him because he chooses what is good, and through our reason we can see why things are good (Leibniz 2020:2). This account falls terribly short of constituting a sound counter-argument, for it equates the objective set of standards with what God chooses, which is unquestionably good; or else it fosters the idea that we are never to know these standards anyway, since we can know neither the will nor reason for God to let a thing actualize itself. Leibniz conflates the universal laws that we (are supposed to) know and the existential phenomena whose workings we cannot know, both of which appear as expressions of the best possible world. The best world as the universal becomes identical to the best possible world as an existential, which seriously damages the legitimacy of a moral command directed to human to act good.

What Does *Not* Constitute the Best – Problem of Hierarchy

The claim that the universal and the existential merge, if substantiated more firmly, poses a serious problem to Leibniz's philosophy on a broad scale. Before the assertation of this bold claim, it seems to be more appropriate to delve into the relevant arguments of his in order to do justice to Leibniz's philosophy.

Speaking in terms of denotation, the adjective "best," being superlative form of good, is attributed to an entity chosen amongst at least three entities of the same kind. This, in turn presupposes a scale stretching from the least best/the worst to the best. In other words, with the adjectival attribute "best," a hierarchy is introduced. As I have argued before, the question of how, or according to what criteria, to account for the bestness of this word remains largely vague. If 'what takes place' predicates on the "best possible world" at hand, which is equated

with the best world as the manifestation of God's perfection, then how can one speak of degrees of goodness, i.e., a hierarchy whose termini are the best and the worst?

At this point, it might be fruitful to further examine Leibniz's replies to questions involving the actualization of evil. As well as those who claim that God arbitrarily chooses the best, instead of an objective set of standards, Leibniz equally dislikes those who claim that God's creation is not the most perfect and could indeed be better:

> "…it seems to me that the consequences of this opinion are completely contrary to the glory of God. *Uti minus malum habet rationem boni, ita minus bonum habet rationem mali*. (Just as a lesser evil contains an element of good, so the lesser good contains an element of evil) …our having too little knowledge of the general harmony of the universe and of the hidden reasons for the conduct of God, which makes us judge rashly that many things could have been done better.
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> They also believe that in that way they provide for the freedom of God, as if the highest freedom were not to act perfectly, according to sovereign reason" (Leibniz 2020: 3).

Leibniz further asserts that evil does not originate from God but from the "lacks and limits of created things", including humankind whose "soul been possessed by original sin ever since he lost his innocence" (Leibniz 2020: 30). Their imperfection is intrinsic, which makes them liable to commit sins and make mistakes. Human's capability of sin and mistake implies two modes of "sophism" or "*lazy reason*" (Strickland 2006: 98). The first is an appeal to predestination which inevitably leads to indifference on the part of humans: if God is omniscient, meaning that he sees the future, then why not do what one wants to do, since what will happen must happen and therefore will happen? The second sophism draws a correlation between the actualization of evil and God's will: if God is omnipotent, does not the fact that he does not banish evil from the world mean that he wants them to stay in the world?

Against these two modes of sophism, Leibniz argues that whether one is to be predestined to be a sinner depends on one's will, and if one does not sin, the one is not predestined to be a sinner. One should accuse neither predestination nor God, but one's will. If it is predestined that a person will be ruined, it is to take place, not in spite of what he does but because what he does, meaning that he paves the way to his own ruination (Strickland 2006: 98). Moreover, God lets sin in the world for the best: one can commit a crime, the capability being provided by God, and one wants to commit a crime, the will being provided by the circumstances, which God administers with the whole chain of causes that reaches back to the beginning of the world.

Leibniz's replies to arguments about the actualization of evil once more embody his concerns regarding God's omnipotence and morality of humans. God is the most sovereign being that exercises his supreme freedom to 'act perfectly', unlike humans as finite and imperfect beings whose knowledge of God's motives is limited, yet who freely exercise their will, that is, independently of a divine intervention. The outcome of the exercise, though never perfect and evil at times, eventually contributes to the best.

Three possible objections could be derived from Leibniz's articulation here. The first has to do with the operation of the contingent truths. In another text on freedom, Leibniz asserts that God himself does not see the end of the resolution of such truths whose analysis stretches up to infinity, for there is no such end, yet sees the connection between the termini (i.e., subject predicate) or the way in which the predicate is included in the subject (Strickland 2006: 111). Such truths, according to Leibniz, stem partly from God's understanding and partly from his will (Leibniz 2020: 13). When the necessary truths' being based solely on God's understanding is considered, the concept of infinite analysis, which constitutes the core of contingent truths vis-à-vis the necessary ones, seems to be the venue in which God's will comes on the scene. Are we then to conclude that God's will is somehow alien to his knowledge as well as ours, the affirmation of which would contradict with his omniscience and consequently with his perfection in the metaphysical sense, since knowledge, freedom, and perfection are directly oriented? Is some aspect of 'unknown will of God' concerning facts somehow unknown to him, too?

The second objection is related to Leibniz's alleged justification of ruination in relation to predestination, which serves as a far from satisfying approach to such a common event as the death of an infant in the most down-to-earth sense.[7] Almost as if replying to such an objection Leibniz elsewhere asserts that all the resentment springing from injustice is set in a far more perfect harmony through fitting punishments and rewards: "it is almost remains true that the hope of reward contributes to making one do good, and the fear of punishments makes one refrain from doing evil" (Strickland 2006: 100). His apparent appeal to divine justice that will retain its course in an after-world incites a strange consequence regarding the doctrine of the best possible world: does it entail heaven and hell as well? If it does, is it made up of a less just and a less perfect part –world– and a more just, and therefore a more perfect part –after-

[7] Paul Rateau takes evil as challenging to God's justice in two senses: law and perfection. "The apparent disorder of things" for Rateau, that is, "the prosperity of some evil men and the misfortune of numerous good people" obviously calls divine justice into question as well as God's justice as perfection (Rateau 2018: 101).

world? How would the existence of an after-world account for God's choosing this world among alternatives in the first place? In other words, how is it that this world, whose existence could be said to owe its existence to the original sin, be best possible world? The aim of this article is not to eliminate God's freedom in choosing the best among alternatives, but the concept of the after-world itself could possibly posit a more perfect 'alternative' world at hand (unlike other possible contingents whose knowledge is totally restricted to God). Such an approach would counter the idea that this world is the best possible world, ranking lower than the after-world. This would then lead to an undesirable hierarchy among worlds, which could counter the bestness of this world, since this world would then be a 'second best'.

Lastly, Leibniz's defense of God's choosing the "highest freedom to act perfectly" points at an interesting debate: freedom to act perfectly simultaneously embodies the freedom to act imperfectly, otherwise it becomes a necessity rather than an inclination. At this point, Leibniz seems to be compelled to take sanctuary in the idea that there is no absolute perfectness, which would render necessary the acts of God in a Spinozistic sense that Leibniz dislikes. With this motive he introduces another superlative "highest", namely, another hierarchy containing two termini. This "highest" might have to do with God's omnipotence. Evidently, humans are not capable of acting perfectly like God is. Nevertheless, as agents contributing to the maintenance of the best possible world, they are supposed to be capable of acting as perfectly as possible, which would then imply that they are free to act less perfectly in a similar vein.

Leibniz asserts that "we choose what we will; but we will what we find good, which depends on our taste and the objects, and not on our choice" (Strickland 2006: 99). Leibniz does contend, however, that sometimes we happen to act less perfectly, and in these situations, we might possibly be trying to demonstrate freedom. Although we are always inclined "towards the direction where the immediate greater good is apparent", since we are inclined freely and act spontaneously, we can choose "another path" (Strickland 2006: 110). We obviously perform such acts according to our taste of taking pleasure in doing what seem lesser good. Would this then not mean to choose not to abide by the highest freedom to act as perfectly as possible within the scope of human capability? Even when 'taste', whatever it consists of, seems to be on a par with evil, for it prevents us from acting less perfectly, is it not a means for us to perform the freedom of standing against the highest possible freedom, which glorifies the scope of human freedom even further? Likewise, in a converse manner, does the introduction of another hierarchy regarding God's freedom not constitute a check on his freedom and, consequently, on his omnipotence (which would then become an oxymoron, since he would no longer be

omni-potent), for he bows to this highest freedom rather than performing the freedom of not bowing to it? Within this formulation, the freedom to reject the freedom to act perfectly appears as a no less sign of omnipotence, although it involves the risk of infinite regress.

Obviously, Leibniz's stress on God's freedom to act perfectly has strong moral implications. The argument of taste versus choice when preferring the less perfect appears as a somewhat eccentric text within the Leibniz canon. In regard to Caesar's crossing the Rubicon and winning the battle of Pharsalus, Leibniz lays out a more familiar argument which counters the former: "although God certainly always chooses the best, this does not prevent what is less perfect from being and remaining possible in itself, *even though it will not happen*, since it is not its impossibility, but its imperfection, which makes God reject it. Now, nothing is necessary of which the opposite is possible" (Leibniz 2020:13. Emphasis added). In other words, the truth of this event that depends on Caesar's decision is contingent one. Leibniz immediately warns against lazy reason that would set aside the contemplation of "criteria for providing humanity, if not merely ourselves, with the best conditions for living", which would render pointless the human striving to progress (Leibniz 2020: 13).

If something less perfect "will not happen", then by what right does Leibniz ask us to contemplate such criteria? Even when the coming into being of the best possible world, which makes it highly problematic to speak of a hierarchy of values, ultimately embodies a moral concern, by what right does Leibniz claim this world to be a contingent truth in the metaphysical sense? In his detailed analysis of Leibniz's theory of contingency, Adam arrives at a number of interesting hypotheses, one of which is of particular interest to this question. It involves Leibniz persistent assertion that the internal possibility of existential depend on God's omnipotence in the metaphysical sense and not on his justice. From here, Adams argues, one is tempted to infer that "an alternative that is possible *in itself*", namely, an internally possible world, renders Leibniz's system as necessitarian as that of Spinoza (Adams 1994: 20).[8] At this point, he reminds the reader that Leibniz's main interest is the free will of God and humans. Adams further points at the role that the comparative value of different worlds plays as regards the final cause by arguing that "even if God's choice of this world is necessary, other worlds

[8] "Internal" here refers to the distinction between absolute and hypothetical in logic: "In Leibniz's conception of hypothetical necessity, the absolute necessity or contingency of the antecedent is no more important than the externality of the antecedent to the consequent. What follows necessarily from what is necessary through itself is certainly necessary by necessity of the consequent, in the traditional sense. It is not necessary through itself, however, but only hypothetically necessary, and contingent, in Leibniz's sense, if the antecedent from which it follows is external to it, and not contained in its own nature" (Adams 1994: 17-18). As regards to necessitarianism and the problematic identification of contingency with hypothetically necessity, Jeffrey K. McDonough'a article is clarifying (McDonough 2018: 90-93).

are possible in their own nature and are not excluded without God's choice but only through (the necessity of) God's choosing this one" (Adams 1994: 21). Choosing this world as the best one among alternatives in turn constitutes a moral necessity, not a metaphysical one (Adams 1994: 22).

As an objection to the inference of the world's being necessary actualized in his system, Leibniz sets a distinction between necessity's application to the copula and to what is contained in the copula: "It is true that this proposition: God wills the work that is most worthy of him, is necessary. But it is not true that he will it necessarily" (Leibniz qtd. in Adams 1994: 24). This stance, however, leads to an uncertainty in the face of his frequent stress on the impossibility of God's failure to choose the best, which Adams estimates, refers to a moral necessity (Adams 1994: 36). Adams then draws attention to the question of the demonstrability of the best possible world and claims that for Leibniz it is not demonstrable that God as the perfectly good being would choose this particular world, for it is not demonstrable that this particular world is the best (Adams 1994: 39). Since justice and goodness constitute essential attributes of God, however, Leibniz "seems to be unable to escape the conclusion that it is demonstrable, and hence logically necessary, that God, as an absolute perfect being, does what is best", namely, God's choosing the best is metaphysically necessary (Adams 1994: 39-40).

Adams's profound analysis has a number of grave consequences for the hierarchicality of the 'best' and the 'most perfect'. This world's being metaphysically the best one, regardless of temporality, absolutizes its bestness to the extent of annihilating the hierarchical overtones that the superlative 'best' implies. Any value that can be attributed to an existential on a scale of goodness, albeit not preventing us from judging and evaluating it with respect to our moral norms, is transformed into a member of what constitutes the best. The proposition 'God chooses the best possible world" turns into, or is equated to, the proposition 'the best possible world is'. The former, as Leibniz would content, is a matter of 'copula versus content of the copula' as regards the necessity-contingency dichotomy, along with that of whether the analysis of the subject in regard to the predicate is finite or infinite. The latter on the other hand lacks predicate altogether, effacing the infinite analysis conception of contingency and denoting an absolute. Within such a semantics, the command of moral and metaphysical maxims concerning the best and the most perfect that would go beyond worldly, mundane, pragmatic evolutions of acts and things become idle.

CONCLUSION

This article mainly draws attention to the possible blind spots that Leibniz's system involves by targeting the attributes "best" and most "perfect" particularly in regard to the doctrine of the best possible world. The first part deals with the problem of content with a spesific focus on the attributes of the best and the most perfect. The lack of criteria set for these attributes leads an important question concerning the performance that how one is supposed to act good if the criterion for acting good is uncertain. Leibniz's doctrine of the best possible world does not provide us with an answer to the question that how one is to know which is the best way to act. That is to say, what substantially constitutes the best is absent in Leibniz's philosophy. The second part is about the problem of hierarchy, which, as distinct from that of content, hampers to constitute the best. God's freedom in choosing the best among alternatives is hampered by the very concept of the after-world itself as it could possibly posit a more perfect 'alternative' world at hand. Such an approach would counter the idea that this world is the best possible world, ranking lower than the after-world. This would then lead to an undesirable hierarchy among worlds, which could counter the bestness of this world, since this world would then be a 'second best'.

Nevertheless, even when very likely posing further blind spots to his system, when he ironically urges us to look at the whole law before making judgement, Leibniz's "law of enjoyment" appears as one of the marginal articulations throughout his writings, which I would like to quote in length:

> "Indeed, distinguished masters of composition often mix dissonances with consonances so that a listener may be aroused and pricked, as it were, and as if anxious about the outcome, be so much more joyful when all is then restored to order. It is much like taking delight in small dangers, or in experience of misfortunates, our delight coming from the very sense of our own power or happiness or the act of showing off. Or is it like when we delight in the spectacle of tightrope-walking or sword-dancing because of the very fears that they inspire, and we laughingly half-let go of children as if we were going to throw them away; it was for this reason that the ape carried off Christian, King of Denmark, when he was still an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, to the edge of the roof, and then, when everyone was anxious, the ape, as if laughing – put him back into his cradle unharmed. On the same principle it is insipid to always eat sweet things; sharp, sour, and even bitter things should be mixed in to excite the taste. He who has not tasted the bitter does not deserve the sweet, not will he appreciate it in fact. This is the very law of enjoyment, that pleasure does not come from a uniform course, for this produces disgust and makes us dull, not joyful" (Strickland 2006: 36-37).

This piece of writing sounds a rather Dionysian tone with its allusion to the most worldly, carnal drives in the face of most of Leibniz's writings that contrastingly follow a strictly formal, rational course in an Apollonian mode, to speak Nietzschean terms. Does the picture above fit the best possible world that we contribute to once we tear the placenta apart? If so, how? Then, it means that the "law of enjoyment" is to be a grey zone within Leibniz's system in which malice and joy, sweet and bitter, good, and evil are immanently linked.

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