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1714-2014
LIRE AUJOURD'HUI LES *PRINCIPES DE LA NATURE ET DE LA GRÂCE* DE G. W. LEIBNIZ

édité par

PAUL RATEAU

ILIESI
CNR

2019

Istituto per il Lessico Intellettuale Europeo e Storia delle Idee

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ISSN
2464-8698
ISBN
978-88-97828-13-6

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1. Introduction

The heading of Leibniz's *Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason* (from now on: PNG) presents a conceptual dichotomy – that of "nature" and "grace" – lying at the very heart of the religious and intellectual struggles of the seventeenth century. At the turn of the new century, however, when the PNG are written (1714), the big theological controversies begin to fade away in the European culture, while many theological concepts take the way of secularization. Romano Guardini indicated as a peculiar trait of the modern age the transvaluation of what was originally Christian – i.e., the gift, both supernatural and historical, of a certain religious experience – into a structural feature of the universal human nature, something able to be detected, in principle, by the pure light of natural reason.[1] From this point of view, the development of the meaning of "grace" in Leibniz's late writings could well assume a paradigmatic value.

Speaking about the "principles" of nature and grace, however, as if they were two complemetary "systems", is not a Leibnizian invention, but reminds us of a close antecedent: Malebranche's *Treatise on Nature and Grace*. Hence, it is worth taking our first step from this work of thirty years before.

[1] Guardini 1950.

1. The Malebranchian Model

1.1. General Laws: A Common Pattern for both Nature and Grace

Malebranche's *Traité de la nature et de la grâce*[2] presents a rationalistically-minded theodicy, majestic as much as disconcerting, which provoked Antoine Arnauld's harsh reaction, thus triggering an epoch-making controversy between the two post-Cartesian thinkers.

What is most peculiar of Malebranche is his parallel treatment of "nature" and "grace" as two lawlike systems. God – the only true causal agent in both fields – acts in them according to different sets of laws. Though being different, however, these rules present a fundamental homogeneity in their formal structure:

> Since it is the same God who is the author of the order of grace and of that of nature, it is necessary that these two orders be in agreement with respect to everything that they contain, which marks the wisdom and the power of their author. Thus, since God is a general cause whose wisdom has no limits, it is necessary for the reasons which I stated before, that in the order of grace as well as in that of nature, he acts as a general cause; and that having as his end his glory in the construction of his Church, he establish *the simplest and the most general laws*, which have by their effect the greatest amount of wisdom and fruitfulness.[3]

The fundamental character of *generality* belonging to the laws – a property that can be further specified in terms of universality, constancy, simplicity – is for Malebranche a capital mark of value and the key of his solution of the theodicean problems: God does never act on the ground of any particular wills, because His wisdom obliges Him to conform to general rules. But then, all particular unwelcomed effects should be seen as the unavoidable by-products of the unfolding of the causal chains according to those general laws.

Now, this type of explanation/justification is applied by Malebranche not only to the evils caused by the course of nature (monsters, accidents, natural disasters), but is also extended to the arduous and intensively disputed questions raised by the distribution of divine graces.

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[2] First published in 1680, the work took its final form with the 1684 (fourth) edition, now in OM, vol. V. Quotations are drawn from the English translation in R. For a classic commentary to these aspcts of Malebranche's thought, see Gueroult 1959.

[3] R 126; *Traité*, *Discourse* I, Part II, § XXXVII. Italics in this and the other quotations is mine.

1.2. The Domains of Grace

But what are exactly, for Malebranche, the domains of "nature" and "grace" respectively? "Nature" is far from being identified solely with the physical world. The laws of nature, indeed, should be further specified in three sets of rules, governing, respectively, (a) the (mechanical) interactions among bodies; (b) the series of thoughts and feelings in our souls; (c) the reciprocal (indirect) determination between events belonging to (a) and (b).

The world of "Grace", instead, is – according to the traditional theological sense – the field of God's super-natural actions which are the proper source of human salvation; more precisely, graces in the proper and strict sense are "graces of feeling", that is to say divine modifications of our feelings (*sentiments*). Traditionally, this was the field of God's totally free, particular acts of will, over and above any "law" by which God Himself could have somehow vinculated His power and will accordig to the ordinary course of nature. Malebranche's audacious idea was instead, as I anticipated, to apply the same causal-nomological model even to the distribution of graces.

In the natural world, as is well known, the movements of bodies and the modifications and volitions of minds play the role of occasional causes for the exercise of (divine) real casuality according to its general laws. In the distribution of graces, no such natural event can play this role. The source of the particular specifications in the distribution of the divine grace – hence, what plays here the role of occasional cause – should be looked for, instead, in the particular acts of will of Christ. These acts, in their turn, are bound to the conditions and constraints of his human nature. Thus, the limits of Christ as a human being and their interplay with the variety of circumstances, together with God's maintenance of the general rule governing the distribution of His grace, explain the particularization of the effects of the general rule and the only apparent randomness or injustice in the distribution of graces themselves.

The fields of "nature" and "grace", however, cannot be sharply separated for Malebranche. There are other graces, indeed, that have as their outcome the enlightement of our understanding; now, these "graces of light" (to be distnguished from those of "feeling", the

properly super-natural ones) are included within the order of nature: they are also dispensed by God (remember that for Malebranche every effect, natural as it may be, is brought about directly by God), but by God as our creator, not as our Redeemer:

All these kinds of grace – if one wants to leave them that name – being the graces of the Creator, the general laws of these graces are the general laws of nature. For one must take note that sin has not destroyed nature, although it has corrupted it. The general laws of the communication of motion are always the same; and those of the union of the soul and the body are not changed…[4]

Accordingly, our mental movements of attention will be the relevant – and natural – occasional causes which determine the enlightement of our mind.

More generally, many other natural causes (e.g. also physical ones, such as physical accidents or fortuitous personal encounters) can determine our attitude towards God and salvation. Thus, we can adopt an even wider sense of grace, considering "grace" every event which – while always obeying the general rules of nature at the different levels of creation – does have some relevant positive impact on our salvation and eternal destiny.[5]

Observe that in the Malebranchian framework the laws connect also events situated at different levels of being (e.g. physical and mental events) so that the different (quasi-) casual chains ruled by their respective different laws cross each other and interfere in many complex ways. Malebranche is prepared to accept, and even to emphasize, this concurrence of a multiplicity of (quasi-) causal factors which, taken together, determine the patterns of grace.[6] This is his

[4] R 158; *Traité*, *Discourse* II, P. II, § XLIV. Actually Malebranche goes further with an important precision: "except in this alone, that what was only a union with respect to our mind, has been changed into dependence [after the original sin] … For we are now dependent on the body to which we were only united" (ibidem).

[5] "… since external graces which do not act immediately in the mind, none the less enter into the order of the predestination of the saints, I regard them still as true graces. *In a word I believe that one can give the name of grace to all natural effects, when they have a relation to salvation… If, however, one does not consent to this, I have no wish to dispute over words*." (R 157; *Traité*, *Discours* II, P. I, § XLIII,).

[6] "*Since grace is conjoined with nature*, all the movements of our soul and of our body have some relation to salvation… We know not at all what is advantageous to us. But we know well that there is nothing so indifferent in itself, that it has not some relation to our salvation, *because of the mixture and combination of effects which depend on the general laws of nature, with those which depend on the general laws of grace*." (R 157; *Traité, Discours* II, P. I, § XLII;); "*It is certain that natural effects combine and mix in an infinity of ways with the effects of grace, and that the order of*

peculiar way to interpret the union of nature and grace – a traditional tenet of Catholic doctrine, in contrast with the sharp opposition of the two principles in the theology of the Reformation.

1.3. The Supreme Order and the Nature/ Grace Relationship

The complexity of interrelations among different lawlike patterns raises the question about the resulting global plan of the world. Does God simply ratify the outcome of this immensely complex intercrossing of different sets of general laws, on one hand, and particular circumstances on the other? Are generality and simplicity the only supreme rules He wants to follow? Or do other criteria intervene, to better harmonize the composition of the different lawlike chains?

Malebranche introduces the notion of "Order" to indicate the supreme rule governing divine wisdom and action.[7] This "Order" reflects a hierarchical scale of values, which should guide the attitude of a rational agent with respect to all possible choices and all different beings. According to this objective hierarchy, for instance, the life and happiness of a human being should be taken as more valuable than those of a non-rational animal. As a consequence, this type of criterion seems to determine a moral obligation to put the perfection and happiness of human beings above every other value – hence to subordinate all other laws to the salvific order of grace, though maintaining also, as far as possible, the formal constraints of

nature augments or diminishes the efficacy or the effects of the order of grace - according to the different ways in which these two orders mix with each other. Death, which *according to the general laws of nature* comes at a certain time to a good or to a bad prince, to a good or to a bad bishop, causes a great deal of good or evil in the Church: because similar accidents *bring about a very great variety in the sequence of effects which depend upon the order of grace*. Now God wills to save all men by the simplest means. Thus one can and even must say, in general, that he has chosen the time, the place, the ways which, in the fullness of time, and according to the general laws of nature and of grace, must (all things be equal) cause to enter into the Church a greater number of predestined persons. God does everything for his glory. Thus *of all possible combinations of nature and grace, he has chosen, through the infinite extent of his knowledge, that which should form the most perfect Church, the most worthy of his greatness and his wisdom*." (R 160; *Traité, Discours II*, P. I, § XLVIII,)

[7] R 119 (*Traité, Discours* I, § 20). The notion will gain more and more importance in Malebranche's later metaphysical works.

simplicity/generality. The way of balancing these different criteria and requirements, and their possible mutual tension, have been the object of intensive discussion in Malebranche's scholarship.

In any event, we are faced with an implicit shift in the way of conceiving the order governing divine action, and more specifically grace itself. The idea of one general, or global, will of God is maintained. But now its content no longer appears as a purely formal rule, but rather as a specific system of ends, according to which all actions and rules are evaluated.

From this perspective, a hierarchical, finalistic relationship between the different "kingdoms" can be envisaged: Malebranche, in fact, goes as far as to suggest that the divine decision to create bodies – and with them the whole order of physical nature – is finalized to the ends of the order of grace understood in this axiological way: in Malebranche's words, to the building of the "eternal Church" in all its variety.

To justify the persisting disharmonies between this notion of order as (moral) perfection and the order of nature, Malebranche can appeal to the theological doctrine of original sin, by which nature has been somehow corrupted, whereas the originary plan of creation envisaged a systematic subordination of the order of nature to that of grace:

> Here one must take note that the essential rule of the will of God is order; and that if man (for example) *had not sinned … then, order not permitting that he be punished, the natural laws of the communication of motion would never been able to make him unhappy*: for, *the law of order which wills that the just person suffer nothing despite himself being essential to God, the arbitrary law of the communication of motion must necessarily be subjected to it.* [8]

After man's sin, this perfect subordination of the working of the general laws to the supreme law of (moral) order has been lost. Malebranche, however, considers also the possibility that, even in the present state of our world, God alters in a miracuolus way the actual order of nature, in order to better harmonize it with the superior ends dictated by the supreme order:

> There are, still, some rare occasions on which these general laws of motion ought to cease to produce their effect. But it is not the case that God changes his laws, or

[8] Riley 119 (*Traité, Discourse* I, P. I, § 20).

corrects himself; it is because of *the order of grace, which that of nature must serve*, that miracles happen in certain circumstances.[9]

Admittedly, these occasions are "rare". It is interesting to see how Malebranche, even in later works, tends to provide some explanation of many miracles (e. g. of several miracles of the Old Testament) in terms of general laws, if not properly in a naturalistic way. What is especially relevant for us here, is the fact that in putting forward this type of explanation he gives an illustration of the way in which nature, while not changing any of its laws, can serve the higher ends of God according to the highest order (and even to the distribution of His grace in the strict sense).

2. The Leibnizian Model

2.1. From the Treatise to the Discourse: the Redeemer and the King

Leibniz's systematic usage of the nature/grace pair is clearly inspired by the Malebranchian model. Not accidentally it appears in the *Discourse of metaphysics*, a text whose themes are clearly presented and organized with an eye to the most recent developments of Cartesian philosophy, in particular to Malebranche's ideas and his discussion with Antoine Anauld (the latter being, after all, the designed addressee of the draft of the *Discourse* itself). Now, the *Treatise on nature and grace* was then one of the last important texts published by Malebranche; moreover, the philosophical-theological views expressed there were the deepest and truest motivations of Arnauld's polemical attack launched against Malebranche. For his own part, Leibniz was very sensitive to the Malebranchian approach to the theodicean issues, its leading ideas – such as the criteria of generality, or the working out of a notion of order – and the problems they raised.[10]

[9] Ibidem (*Traité, Discourse* I, P. I, § 21).
[10] For a (positive) reference to Malebranche *Treatise* in the *Theodicy*, see *Essais de Théodicée*, § 204 (GP VI, 238). For a general overview on Leibniz's relationship with Malebranche, see the classic Robinet 1955. See also Riley's *Introduction* to the *Treatise* in R.

When passing from Malebranche's *Treatise* to Leibniz's writings, however, we are faced with some shift in the usage of the term "grace" and the definition of the related domain. To be sure, Leibniz also is intensively concerned, in the *Discourse* as in many other writings, with the specific problem of the divine supernatural aids provided on behalf of human salvation, and of the logic of their distribution – that is to say, the proper field of "grace" in strictly theological (even in Malebranchian) sense, which was then at the centre of the hottest debates between Catholics and Protestants, or between Jesuites and Jansenists – but when he speaks about the "kingdom of grace", in contrast to the "kingdom of nature", usually he is not referring exclusively (or even primarily) to this topic.

True enough, in a text edited by Couturat we find a definition that, at first sight, seems to overlap Malebranche's "wider" definition of grace, taken as all which contributes to human salvation:

> When the Grace is contrasted to the Nature, this means *to contrast the actions done by God as a King to the actions done as the mere author of things*. More especially, however, his actions are meant, which are relevant for human salvation.[11]

What is most important, Leibniz identifies the scope of "grace", in general, as a special field of God's action, distinct from His general action as creator. This distinction might be applied also to the case of Malebranche's "proper" sense of "grace", but it is important to observe that this is taken by Leibniz in a quite different way. It is God's role as a "King", indeed, which is connected by hiim to "grace", and the king/grace pair is contrasted to the creator/nature one. Now, telling about God as a "king" amounts to focusing on His role as the ruler of rational creatures.

As a matter of fact, it is no longer God's role as the Redeemer, which qualifies the field of grace: every reference to a specific work of redemption, and to Christ – absolutely central in Malebranche's *Treatise* – tends here to fade away; not in the sense of being abolished, but of being no longer the central topic, being rather absorbed within the general consideration of God's gobal handling as a moral ruler of the world.

[11] COUT 508.

Moreover, God's action as a "king" is not presented as the implementation of a specific lawlike pattern in the distribution of His graces (as is was the case in Malebranche's *Treatise*), but as a different finalistic order which governs a specific sector of creation and, through this, is superimposed to the subordinated order of "nature". In this sense the Leibnizian rule of "grace" might be rather identified with the Malebranchian notion of a global *moral* "order".

2.2. The Domain of Grace, or the City of God

The idea of the "Kingdom of grace", as opposed to that of "nature", becomes a peculiar Leibnizian tool at least from the *Discourse* on.[12] We find it in the *New System*[13] of ten years later, and finally in the famous couple of texts of Leibniz's last years, the PNG and the *Monadology*.[14] The strucural characters and the usage of this conceptual tool remain basically constant during this period (that is to

[12] "… we must consider God, not only as the principle and cause of all substances and all beings, but also as *the head of all persons or intelligent substances and as the absolute monarch of the most perfect city or state*, such as the universe composed of all spirits together, God himself being the most perfect of all spirits…" (*Discours de métaphsique* § 35, A VI.4, 1584-85; L 326). See aso Leibniz's letter to Arnauld, October 1687,: "As for spirits, that is substances which think and are capable of knowing God and discovering eternal truths, I hold that God governs them according to laws which differ from those by which he governs the other substances… God governs the substances of beasts according to *the material laws of force or of the transmission of motion*. But *he governs spirits according to the spiritual laws of justice, of which the others are incapable.* It is for this reason that the substances of beasts can be called material, because the economy which God follows with respect to them is that of a worker or a mechanic; but with respect to spirits God fulfils the function of *a prince or a legislator*, which is infinitely higher. With regard to material substances God is only what he is in relation to everything - the universal Author of beings. He assumes another role with regard to spirits, in which we are led to conceive him as endowed with will and moral qualities… It can truly be said that the whole universe was not made except to contribute to the ornament and happiness of this City of God. *This is why everything is arranged in such a way that the laws of force or purely material laws work together everywhere to carry out the laws of justice or of love*, so that nothing can harm the souls which are in the hand of God, and everything must work for the greatest good of those who love him.", A II.2, 257 (GP II 125, L 347).

[13] "… God governs minds as a prince governs his subjects or as a father cares for his children, while he deals with other substances, instead, as an engineer handles his machines. Minds thus have *special laws which place them beyond the revolutions of matter*, and one can say that *all the rest is made only for them*, *these revolutions themselves being adapted to the happiness of the good and the punishment of the evil*." *Système Nouveau* (GP IV 479-480, L 454-455)

[14] PNG, § 15 (GP VI, 605); *Monadology*, §§ 84-90 (GP VI, 621-23).

say, in Leibniz's mature and late thought); I try now to explore a bit closer these characters and this usage.

To this aim, it is worth focusing on another notion to which the "Kingdom of grace" is usually associated by Leibniz: I mean, the concept (maybe better, the image) of the "city of God". To be true, another possible (perhaps more imemdiate) association is with the notion, central in the New Testament, of "God's Kingdom": this is the way taken by Leibniz in the last paragraphs of the *Discourse*.[15] Also in this text, however, the image of "city" or "republic" neatly prevails; and in the other texts centered on the nature/grace dichotomy, the world of "grace" is constantly accompanied by a constellation of kindred political images. Thus, in paragraph 15 of the PNG, one can read:

> For this reason all spirits, whether of men or higher beings, enter *by virtue of reason and the eternal truths* into a kind of society with God and are members of the City of God, that is to say, *the most perfect state, formed and governed by the greatest and best of monarchs*. Here there is no crime without punishment, no good action without a proportionate reward, and finally, as much virtue and happiness as is possible.[16]

Needless to say, the natural link between the biblical theme of the "Kingdom of God" and this political imaginery was provided by the great tradition of Augustine's "city of God". The powerful Augustinian notion, however, is transfigured in Leibniz's rationalistically-minded reading,[17] where it becomes the label for the ideal society which embraces God and all rational beings, on the basis of a commonly shared "natural right" taken in a strongly univocist way – this "natural right" being nothing but the object of his celebrated "universal jurisprudence".[18] In this context, God as the true monarch – though being qualified in *Discourse* § 35 as "absolute" – still is quite different from a dispotic ruler, insofar as He is vinculated by the natural law.

To sum up, the Leibnizian notion of "Kingdom of grace", turns out to be constantly focussing on: a) God's *moral* attributes, such as

[15] In parallel with the usage of this biblical image, the qualification of "father" is contrasted with that of "architect", to express the same dichotomy as king (of the spiritual world) and creator (of the material world). See also the passage from the *New System*, cited note 12 above.
[16] PNG, GP VI 605, L 640.
[17] For some remarks on this reworking, see the chapter devoted to Leibniz in Gilson 1952.
[18] The classic study on Leibniz's philosophy considered from this viewpoint, accompanied by an impressive collection of texts, is Grua, 1953.

justice and goodness; b) the emergence of beings capable of moral responsibility.

Leibniz, indeed, usually invokes that notion while introducing the ontological distinction he is eager to draw between the generality of simple substances or souls on one hand, endowed with (different grades of) perception, and the subset of rational beings on the other, capable of self-knowledge and of grasping necessary truths. These characters make of them moral subjects, deserving reward or punishment.

According to the general law of His "kingdom", or "city", on one hand, God is bound to procure the happiness of these higher creatures:

> So dear is this consideration to him that the happy and flourishing state of his empire, which consists in the greatest possible felicity of its inhabitants, becomes his highest law. For happiness is to persons what perfection is to beings. And if the highest principle rulig the existence of the physical world is the decree which gives it the greatest perfection possible, the highest purpose in the moral world, or the city of God which is the noblest part of the universe, should be to spread in it the greatest possible happiness.[19]

And then the further precision comes: this happiness should be proportional to the virtue of rational creaures.[20] In Leibniz's view, the "kingdom of grace" obeys the rule of charity, or universal benevolence; but it is the "charity of wise", a synonim for justice – charity being for Leibniz the highest level of justice itself. The "Kingdom of grace", indeed, viewed under the juridical-political equivalences evoked by Leibniz, is, indeed, a system of justice, framed around man's and God's moral obligations.

In this sense, this system of grace turns out to be rather far from – if not even opposite to – the originary theological notion of grace, taken as an essentially gratuitous gift: what is not surprising, given the "univocist" approach of universal jurisprudence, i. e. the subordination of God and man to a common rule.

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[19] *Discours de métaphysique* § 36, (GP IV 462, L 327).

[20] "As a result they will always know what they are, otherwise they would be incapable of *reward and punishment, both of which are essential in a republic and especially in the most perfect one where nothing can be overlooked*." (Ibidem). Leibniz is speaking here about the necessary maintenance of self-knowledge; on this more later. For an insightful discussion of the relationship between justice and happiness of rational beings in the Leibnizian world, see Adams 2014.

But this issue invites us to consider more closely the Leibnizian opposition of "grace" to "nature" and their mutual relationship.

The Nature/Grace Distinction: "Supernatural" as "Moral"

What about the complementary definition of the scope of "nature" in the Leibnizian nature/grace pair? Leibniz usually speaks, as if the relevant term to be harmonized with grace were physical nature as such. "Physical", however, does not simply coincide with "mechanical", in the sense of ruled by efficient causes:

> As we have established above a perfect harmony between two natural kingdoms, that of efficient and that of final causes, we must also point out here *another harmony* between the *physical* kingdom of nature and the *moral* kingdom of grace, that is to say, between God considered as architect of the machine of the universe and God considered as monarch of the divine city of spirits.[21]

Leibniz here is accurate in distinguishing the field of "grace" from other finalistic aspects of the world: the "realm of grace", in fact, is far from being simply coextensive with the domain of teleology, or of final causes. As is well known, according to Leibniz teleological considerations play a role even at the level of the world of bodies, where they represent a complementary explanation of physical events, together with efficient (mechanical) causality. When speaking about "grace", therefore, a further and different finalism is considered, insofar as the whole of natural processess, already guided by finalism (functionally, epistemologically, or even esthetically shaped), is now related to a further, specifically moral end.

No to count that the scope of "natural" should likely be extended to embrace some psychical processes, they also ruled by lawlike patterns: what is already implicit in the fact that the distinction line is drawn (differently from what done by the Cartesian Malebranche) between not-rational souls and intelligent minds.

Accordingly, all this reflects into the new characterization of the "Kingdom of grace", that is to say of the sense and scope of "supernatural", taken as the sphere of "moral" laws (versus "physical"

[21] *Monadologie*, § 87 (GP VI, 622, L 1060). The distinction among these different "realms" is neatly illustrated in Phemister 2003, one of the very few studies epressly devoted to an analysis of the concept of "kingdom of grace" and its relationship with nature.

ones, be they even teleological, or psychological). Thus, the preceding paragraph of the *Monadology* tells us that:

> This city of God, this truly universal monarchy, *is a moral world within the natural world*.[22]

Moroever: analogous to the way in which in the PNG Leibniz at a point invokes the need of passing from "physical" consideration to "metaphysical" ones, already in the *Discourse* he had introduced the topic of the "realm of God" by the need to join "moral" to metaphysics:

> But in order to support by natural reasons the view that God will preserve for all time not merely our substance but our person, that is to say, the memory and knowledge of what we are … *we must add morals to metaphysics*….[23]

Only that type of consideration, indeed, could establish true immortality, by working as a sort of "moral postulate" (to use a bit anachronistically Kant's later jargon) which establishes the immortality (in the proper sense) of rational souls by distinguishing it from the unperishability common to all substances in general. I shall consider this closer below.[24]

3. Leibniz's Harmony of Nature and Grace, or the Moral Nature of Nature

3.1. Moral and Natural Order: Distinction and Preminence

In Leibniz's framework, as we have seen, the elements of Malebranche's system of nature and grace are profoundly reshaped. While in Malebranche the specific laws of grace were structurally homogeneous to those of nature, in Leibniz the contrast of God as an "architect" and God as a "monarch" tends to reveal and emphasize a

[22] *Monadologie* § 86 (GP VI, 621-22; L 1059).
[23] *Discours de métaphysique* § 35 (A VI.4, 1584; L 502).
[24] By the way, the new polarity of "physical" and "moral" could be an echo (at least from the terminological point of view, but also from the conceptual one, though reworked, as usual) of Malebranche's analogous polarity, by which the latter distinguished the causal (more exactly, quasi-causal) aspects of human action (the "physical" ones) from its moral aspects, the latter being deprived of any causal efficacy, but giving to action its moral character through the relationship with the exercise of human freedom.

fundamental dis-homegeneity beween the two types of laws. The Leibnizian order of "grace" is less reducible to a system of (we could say, quasi-Hempelian) causal laws, than the occasionalist schema of "general laws"; the rules of "grace" have an essentially normative character – although in the case of divine action what ought to be the case invariably *is* the case. From this point of view, there is rather some continuity with the other great Malebranchian theme of (moral) "Order", at least in its general sense of a set of axiological principles.

A precision is required here: one should distinguish this objective recovery of the Malebranchian "order" from the other Leibnizian notion (it also a reworking of a Melbranchian theme) of a supreme all-encompassing order, actually realized in the best of possibile worlds. Admittedly, this also is ultimately determined by axiological considerations of perfection, but it already includes their total specification and their balancing with all toher parameters. Within this notion, the conceptual tensions which emerged In Malebranche's view turn out to be somehow nuanced and attenuated, insofar as this all-encompassing notion of "order" already integrates ethical values and epistemological ones (like the simplicity/fecundity balance); besides this, Leibniz's enlarged concept of law tends to relativize the contrast between general and particular wills.

When Leibniz, however, takes the moral order as synonimous of the order of grace, and contrasts it to the order of nature, he is considering more analytically the single factors of that all-comprehensive universal order: in particular, he is considering the "moral order" in a strict sense, as being distinct from other parameters of the divine evaluation, and in need to be (problematically) co-ordinated with them. In this sense, we find again Malebanche's problem of the adaptation of the causal-nomological patterns of nature to the moral ends.

Although the moral order properly concerns only a subset of the created world, however, and represents only a part of the criteria which guided its creation, still it maintains a priority, so that the other "sub-orders" or sets of rules have to be somehow subordinated and finalized to this higher system of ends.

More concretely, this means that the destiny of rational beings – hence, their happiness – is the absolutely privileged end of the cosmic order. Leibniz also sketches in his writings some arguments

to the effect of showing the necessary connection between the basic general criterion of metaphysical perfection and the specific moral criterion of the happiness of spirits.[25]

Admittedly, in certain contexts Leibniz warns us that that preminence is not as absolute, so that the moral ends of the order of grace (in other terms, God's ends as the king of spirits) can be, at least to a certain extent, sacrified to other ends, concerning the whole of the cosmic system and the interest of other (non-rational) creatures. This point of view is especially developed in some sections of the *Theodicy*, where part of Leibniz's strategy is to criticize Bayle's objections as too anthropocentric. Accordingly, Leibniz is ready to emphasize that the adjustement of "nature" and "grace" is a reciprocal one; moreover, he goes on occasionally to admit that moral justice and the happiness of rational creatures – or at least of mankind – is not always the preminent, let alone the unique goal guiding the divine choice:

> …I grant that the happiness of intelligent creatures is the principal part of God's design, for they are most like him; but nevertheless I do not see how one can prove that to be his sole aim. It is true that the realm of nature must serve the realm of grace: but, since all is connected in God's great design, we must believe that *the realm of grace is also in some way adapted to that of nature*, so that nature preserves the utmost order and beauty, to render the combination of the two the most perfect that can be. And *there is no reason to suppose that God, for the sake of some lessening of moral evil, would reverse the whole order of nature. Each perfection or imperfection in the creature has its value, but there is none that has an infinite value.* Thus the moral or physical good and evil of rational creatures does not infinitely exceed the good and evil which is simply metaphysical, namely that which lies in the perfection of the other creatures…

Nevertheless, in the texts which typically develop and illustrate the nature/grace polarity, the emphasis is always on the preminence of the city of God, and of the related moral ends, within the wider context of our world. Moreover, in these contexts the happiness due to the spirits is expressly measured according to moral criteria: happiness should be distributed according to virtue, and the content of the nature/grace harmony ultimately amounts to this. Thus Leibniz, in the selfsame *Theodicy*, criticizes Bayle for the opposite ground as before:

[25] For a discussion of this relationship and its tensions, see Rutherford 1995, Chapter 3: *Happiness and Virtue in the Best of All Possible Worlds*, pp. 46-67; Adams 2014.

One might thence conclude, according to him (posthumous Reply to M. Jacquelot, p. 183), "that God created the world only to display his infinite skill in architecture and mechanics, whilst his property of goodness and love of virtue took no part in the construction of this great work. This God would pride himself only on skill; he would prefer to let the whole human kind perish rather than suffer some atoms to go faster or more slowly than general laws require". M. Bayle would not have made this antithesis if he had been informed on the system of general harmony which I assume, which states that the realm of efficient causes and that of final causes are parallel to each other; that *God has no less the quality of the best monarch than that of the greatest architect*; that *matter is so disposed that the laws of motion serve as the best guidance for spirits*; and that consequently it will prove that he has attained the utmost good possible, provided one reckon the metaphysical, physical and moral goods together…[27]

3.2. The Finalization of Nature: Justice through Nature

It remains to be seen, how this harmony is conceived by Leibniz. Here one can see how Leibniz – while seemingly abandoning Malebrache's audacious exportation of the nomological model of natural science into theology, and striving at estabilishing by contrast a neat division of fields – by this same move comes to formulate in a crystal clear way the same problem already confronted by the Oratorian, namely the problem posed to theological and moral thought by the new scientific view of the world.

His very general requirement is that the system of nature, unfolding according to its own rules, at the same time does satisfy the moral requirements. The task is especially arduous, notice, insofar as for Leibniz, more than for Malebranche (who admits, though in his peculiarly indirect and mediated form, an interaction bettween the mental and the physical), the system of natural laws is a perfectly self-closed one.

Thus, Leibniz is eager to emphasize, that no interference is admitted in the sphere of the laws of nature:

[27] *Essais de théodicée*, § 247 (GP VI 264).

And this takes place, *not by a dislocation of nature, as if what God has planned for souls could disturb the laws of bodies, but by the very order of natural things itself, by virtue of the harmony pre-established from all time between the realms of nature and of grace*, between God as architect and God as monarch, in such a way that nature leads to grace, and grace perfects nature by using it.[28]

Consider also that the same beings do belong to both realms, insofar as, e.g., human beings are subjected both to the natural laws, as embodied souls, and to the jurisdiction of the moral law, as citizens of the "city of God". As Leibniz puts it, the realm of grace is a "moral world *within* the natural world".

Moreover, something more than a mere coordination – as in the case of the classic explanation of the body/soul relationship given by pre-established harmony – seems to be required, because the outcomes of one set of laws must be subordinated to the other one.[29]

But how can this preminence of moral finalism, and the corresponding harmony, be figured out in a plausible way?

A first and straightforward way is to claim that, contrary to the appearances, the working of nature – the "blind" mechanism of the laws of physical motion, or the psychological dynamism of appetites often directed towards only seeming goods – ultimately ends up promoting the moral ends ro be pursued, in particular the correct retribution of human actions.

This might seem, of course, a completely gratuitous assumption. Sometimes Leibniz seems to have in mind the idea that moral handling coincides with the correct working of human nature, so that virtue is (as Spinoza would say) the reward for itself, while vice takes with itself its punishment:

It can … be said that God as architect satisfies God as lawgiver in everything and that sins must therefore carry their punishment with them by the order of nature, and even by virtue of the mechanical structure of things; and that noble actions, similarly, attain their rewards through ways that are mechanical in relation to bodies, although this cannot and should not always happen at once.[30]

[28] PNG, GP VI 605, L 640.
[29] In a sense, of course, the case is the same: in the nature/grace harmony there is no more than a coordination; conversely, also in the "physical" (i.e., non moral) harmony of soul and body one can tell of a (relative) subordination, insofar as the reason for a certain modification can be found in one of the terms better than in the other. But the issue is exactly that with the moral harmony Leibniz seems to be committed to a general one-sided distribution of reasons on behalf of the "moral" rule.
[30] *Monadologie* §89, L 652.

This moral outcome of natural processes, however, is not so evident in a lot of cases. Hence the final clause, which projects the "harmony" into a more or less remote future – be it the time of an entire human life, or a properly eschatological one.

Remember how Malebranche invoked the fact of the original sin, in order to explain the disconcerting disharmony between the working out of nature and its alleged moral ends. Leibniz does not focus his attention on this explanation: in this case also, his view of the "kingdom of grace", differently from that of the French theologian, is not essentially connected (while leaving a possible room for it) to what is specific to the story of Christian redemption.

The disharmony of the two kingdoms does not only concern the conflict of tendencies within rational agents, but also the topic of natural disasters – another one attentively considered in Malebranche's theodicy. Also these phenomena, according to Leibniz, should be assumed to have a "moral" justification, though difficult to see from our very limited perspective.

To this kind of consideration seem to point also some rather cryptic allusions concerning the alleged harmony between the story of our planet and the moral story of its inhabitants. These allusions can be interpreted in general along a strictly orthodox idea – to be found also in Malebranche – according to which the original sin corrupted also nature, and conversely, according to St. Paul's *dictum* ("the whole creation groans with us and shares our birth pangs"), redemption will involve nature itself.

More interestingly, we are faced with the attempt at suggesting a "moral" account of the most recent discoveries and discussions concerning the story of earth; discoveries that could easily appear at odds with the biblical teaching. Leibniz, in fact, is suggesting that the big natural changes in the earth's general conditions harmonize with the moral requirements of God's global plan:

> The result of this harmony is that *things lead to grace by means of the very ways of nature* and that *this globe*, for example, *must be destroyed and repaired by natural ways at those times which the government of spirits demands for the punishment of some and the rewards of others.* [31]

[31] *Monadologie* § 88, L 652.

Compare this with a passage in Thomas Burnet's *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, (1681), whose author – after giving a "physical" explanation of the universal deluge – warns that this does not compromise the biblical interpretation of the deluge as a divine punishment:

> It is no detraction from divine providence, that the course of nature is exact and regular, and that *even in its greatest Changes and Revolutions it should still conspire and be prepared to answer the Ends and Purposes of the divine Will in reference to the moral world.* This seems to me to be the great Art of Divine Providence, *so to adjust the two Worlds, human and natural, material and intellectual,* as seeing through the Possibilities and Futuritions of each, according to the first States and Circumstances he puts them under, they should all along correspond and fit one another, and especially in their great Crises and Periods.[32]

Elsewhere Leibniz goes on to illustrate the same idea with some audacious speculations put forward by contemporary Origenists: this is the case with the "astronomical theology" referred to in the *Theodicy*: "Simultaneously (by virtue of the *harmonic parallelism* of the Realms of Nature and of Grace) this long and great conflagration will have purged the earth's globe of its stains."[33]

This grand view of the changes of our world, however, leaves the possibility of realizing justice still unclear, if the persistence of the same moral subject is not granted. I am speaking, notice, of "moral subject", because the simple persistence (or unperishability) is already metaphysically assured for all simple substances. But the order of the "city of God", with the related retributive justice, requires something more, that is to say that the same self-conscious being persists, endowed with the memory of her/his past actions. Accordingly, several passages in the texts on the nature/grace harmony insist on the preservation of the same person, despite the continuous and radical transformations to which the physical world is subjected ("beyond the revolutions of matter").[34]

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[32] Burnet 1689 (transl. by J. Addison, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, Hooke, London, 1719, I, 146).

[33] *Essais de Théodicée* § 18 (transl. Huggard). These speculations are connected to Leibniz's interest for the topic of Apokathastasis and his relationship with the heterodox and millenarian theologian Petersen. See on this Fichant, *Introduction*, and Costa 2014.

[34] For the idea of being subtracted to the "revolutions of matter", see the *Nouveau Systeme* (note 13 above) and Mendelson 1995. For the immortality of minds as a key element in the "kingdom of grace", see already *Discours* § 36 (note 12 above) and the letter to Wagner of June 1710: "… as soon as [human souls], however, are made rational, and capable, together of being self-conscious, of partnership with God, I am persuaded that from then on they never lose their personal quality of citiziens of

As a matter of fact, what Leibniz wants to get from his harmony is nothing but that final conciliation of subjective consciousness and divine justice whose need was emphasized also by John Locke, and which should have been assured by the doctrine of the Last Judgment, together with a final eschatological reconciliation of soul and body, of virtue and happiness.

It is worth noting, however, that this eschatological outcome seems to be thought of by Leibniz – though in a largely ambiguous and nuanced way – in a more intra-mundane way. That is to say, the reconciliation of nature with the moral ends of the "kingdom of grace", both on the global and individual plan, is projected into the future; but this seems to be a future still belonging to the (admittedly, dramatic) development of our (and God"s) unique world.[35]

Conclusions: Kant on the Realms of Nature and Grace

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Doctrine of Method*, Kant at a point relies explicitly on Leibniz's legacy, by taking again his idea of the realms of nature and grace:

> Leibniz termed the world, when viewed in relation to the rational beings which it contains, and the moral relations in which they stand to each other, under the government of the Supreme Good, the kingdom of Grace, and distinguished it from the kingdom of Nature, in which these rational beings live, under moral laws, indeed, but expect no other consequences from their actions than such as follow according to the course of nature in the world of sense. To view ourselves, therefore, as in the kingdom of grace, in which all happiness awaits us, except in so far as we ourselves limit our participation in it by actions which render us unworthy of happiness, is a practically necessary idea of reason.[36]

We are not faced, indeed, with a merely terminological recovery: Kant's idea seems to be objectively in staightforward continuity with Leibniz's approach, and the conceptual framework expressed by the idea of the Leibnizian "Kingdom of grace" is largely taken again by

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God's republic; and becuase this republic is ruled in the rightest and most beautiful way, it follows that these souls, through the selfsame laws of nature, *because of parallelism between grace and nature,* are made by their actions apt to receive reward or punishment" (GP VII 531).

[35] This intra-mundane character of future harmony is emphasized in Phemister 2003.

[36] CPR, Ch. II, Sect. 2, A 812, B 840: *Transcendental Doctrine of Method*, transl. Meiklejohn 539.

him from a transcendental point of view. We have on one hand the natural world (embracing both the physical one and that of empirical psychology), ruled by causal laws; on the other, the laws of morality, or of practical reason (binding all rational beings, God included, like for Malebranche and Leibniz). The realm of grace is, properly, the idea of the union of the two, or of their reconciliation: what Kant technically labels by his notion of "supreme good". Although the way of conceiving the relation of happiness with moral intention is, of course, different from Leibniz's, still the fundamental idea (or problem) formulated by Leibniz is there: I mean, the requirement of a reconciliation of the scientific and the moral view of world – which will be a major theme in the whole classic German philosophy. Not only our immortality, but God's eixistence itself are now definitely taken as postulates derived from the assumption of the moral law. Interestingly enough, in Kant's view, this requirement concerning the "moral nature of nature" is ideally conjoined with another element we have found in Malebranche – while being in Leibniz, though not absent, more balanced by other considerations – namely, the emphasis on the universal character of rules and the extension of this formal character to both realms of nature and moral.

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