

Theodicy and Reason

Logic, Metaphysics, and Theology in Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée* (1710)

edited by Matteo Favaretti Camposampiero, Mattia Geretto, and Luigi Perissinotto

The Sanctity of Reason and Complementarity of Revelation in the *Essais de Théodicée*

Mattia Geretto

(Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Abstract Aim of this article is to determine to what extent philosophy and 'revealed message' can be viewed separately in Leibniz's *Theodicy*, in order to demonstrate that Leibniz's texts seem to try to reconcile 'reason' and 'revelation', a complementarity justified by what can be called the 'sanctity' of reason. Leibniz's reference to the 'image of Divinity' reveals that he refers to both 'reason' and 'intelligence', thus confirming his position in a well-rooted exegetical tradition that goes directly to the Late Classical concept of *synderesis* (συντήρησις). Although Leibniz does not explicitly use the term *synderesis*, he still refers to 'pure reason', a reason instilled in man by God and free of corruption. The conclusion in the last section examines some interesting passages in the *Theodicy*, § 91 and § 397, in which Leibniz deals with reason and original sin, and seems to hold that reason has somehow eluded the corrupting nature of original sin.

Summary 1 The Nexus Between Philosophy and Theology in the *Theodicy*. – 2 On the Correct Way, According to Leibniz, to Interpret Controversial Passages in the Scriptures and Mysteries. – 3 The Sanctity of Reason and *Synderesis*. – 4 Sections 91 and 397 in the *Theodicy*.

Keywords Reason. Untainted Reason. *Synderesis*.

1 The Nexus Between Philosophy and Theology in the *Theodicy*

Reason and revelation in Leibniz's *Theodicy* are so inextricably woven together that attempting to define the terms separately is a complex task. We should first seek to determine the extent to which the *Theodicy* may be considered a purely philosophical work, or whether it concerns more dogmatic theology or biblical exegesis. Indeed, it is no coincidence that following the work's publication, in a letter to Des Billettes, Leibniz jokingly refers to himself as a 'public preacher'.¹ Moreover, at certain points in the text one feels that Leibniz holds forth from the pulpit, just as in other parts

1 See Leibniz's letter to Des Billettes dated 28 June, 1713. In the letter Leibniz half-jokingly imagines he is Des Billettes' confessor («Si j'étois votre Confesseur...») and it is difficult to ascertain to what extent he is being serious, although there is no reason to doubt his good faith: «A quoy servira donc la pieté et la bonne morale, si elle ne porte à la charité? Vous

his theory of monads seems to hold sway. It is precisely this combination of the two apparently different approaches that may cause bewilderment.

One point to bear in mind, nevertheless, is that when Leibniz undertakes a philosophical analysis of issues concerning faith or dogma, he does so because he firmly believes that the philosophical aspect is congruent with revelation, as well as the fact that philosophy can defend faith, while safeguarding reason. Hence, I shall start by providing some examples of his approach, beginning with the aspect of the 'complementarity' of the Scriptures.

Let us first examine the biblical doctrine of creation, which is central to Leibniz's philosophy. In the *Theodicy*, this doctrine is never challenged. On the contrary, it is present right from the beginning of his *Preface* when he uses the term 'creature', expressed in terms of the *continuing creation of creatures* (Cf. *Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 37). Leibniz must surely have been aware of the implications arising from the use of this term, namely the acknowledgement of a revealed truth. I agree with Cook's affirmation (in turn based on Loemker)² in a recent article that «Leibniz did believe that creation is an act of divine revelation» (Cook 2009, p. 456); and also with his further assertion that it is a revelation «open at least in part to all rational beings and not an esoteric mystery open only to the converted» (Cook 2009, p. 456).

However, when considering divine revelation we are faced with something 'more' that reason alone can only suppose or conjecture, but cannot demonstrate. Cook's assertion that «Leibniz did believe that creation is an act of divine revelation» is borne out by the fact that on this point Leibniz shares the same view as Aquinas, who – according to Leibniz 'together with other great scholars' – had established that the doctrine of creation could not be proved through reason alone. At this point I would like to mention Leibniz's famous letter/treatise to De Remond on Chinese philosophy, better known as *Discours sur la Theologie naturelle des Chinois*. Leibniz at a certain point considers the question of the relation between 'Li', the First Principle, and 'Ki', a kind of universal primitive matter, and from these he goes on to demonstrate the compatibility between Chinese philosophy and Christian theology:

Il est vrai qu'il semble que les Chinois ont cru, que le Li a d'abord et [a] toujours produit son Ki, et qu'ainsi l'un est aussi éternel que l'autre. Mais il ne faut point s'en étonner, puis qu'apparemment ils ont ignoré cette Revelation, laquelle seule nous peut apprendre le commencement

me voyes en train de precher et apres avoir publié mes Essais de Theodicée, il me semble que je suis predicateur public» (GP VII, p. 458).

2 See Loemker 1972, p. 88.

de l'univers. *S. Thomas et d'autres grands docteurs ayant jugé, que ce dogme ne peut point être démontré par la seule Raison.* Cependant quoy que les anciens Chinois disent formellement que le Ki ne perit jamais, ils ne disent point assés expressement qu'il n'a jamais commencé. Et il y a des gens qui croient que le commencement de leur Empire tombant dans le temps de Patriarques, ils pourroient avoir appris d'eux la Creation du monde. (Leibniz 2002, Section II, § 24, p. 51-53, italics mine; cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 46, a. 2)

However, acknowledging creation as an act of divine revelation does not mean that Leibniz considers revelation as the *conditio sine qua non* in order to achieve an understanding of God. To illustrate this point Leibniz tackles the interpretations of a Jesuit priest, Father Longobardi, in his *Traité sur quelques points de la religion des Chinois*, in which the priest asserts that the ancient Chinese do not make a clear distinction between spiritual (God or angels) and material substances, because they lack the concept of creation out of nothing by an infinite power. Leibniz points out that in that case 'for the same reason Plato could not have identified a god, either'³ On the contrary, Leibniz believed that although biblical revelation was absent from Chinese theology, there could still have been the acknowledgement of a supreme God.⁴ Indeed, the demonstration of the existence of the First Principle could be achieved through what he believed to be the best means, namely 'natural' reason. In his *Discours préliminaire* of the *Theodicy*, he states: «Or nous n'avons point besoin de la foy révélée, pour savoir qu'il y a un tel principe unique de toutes choses, parfaitement bon et sage. La raison nous l'apprend par des demonstrations infaillibles» (*Theodicée*, Discours, § 44, GP VI, p. 75).

Thus, Leibniz believes that creation, which is an example of 'truth above reason', is a 'complementary truth' to the existence of a First Principle demonstrable through reason alone. The concept of creation as 'truth above reason' integrates or completes with added information what pure reason has achieved, which does not mean to say that revealed truth or mystery, once accepted, can or even need to be further analysed in detail to understand 'how' this comes about. As he states in § 54 of his *Discours préliminaire*:

3 «Par la même raison Platon n'auvoit [sic] point reconnu une divinité». Cf. N. Longobardi, *Traité sur quelques point de la religion des Chinois*, Section X in Leibniz 2002, p. 129; translation mine.

4 On this point see Patrick Riley's 2008 masterful analysis of Leibniz's 1714 Vienna lecture on *The Greeks as Founders of a Sacred Philosophy* (the title is provided by Riley himself). The conclusion of the writing, which is untitled, merely ends with «Recitata in Academia quadam Viennae 1.jul[iii] 1714».

Ainsi nous convenons que les mysteres reçoivent une explication, mais cette explication est imparfaite. Il suffit que nous ayons quelque intelligence analogique d'un mystere, tel que la Trinité et que l'Incarnation, afin qu'en les recevant nous ne prononcions pas des paroles entierement destituées de sens: mais il n'est point necessaire que l'explication aille aussi loin qu'il seroit à souhaiter, c'est à dire; qu'elle aille jusqu'à la comprehension et au comment. (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 54, GP VI, p. 80)

I shall now provide another example of Leibniz's view. Take, for example, two concepts such as the soul's immortality and the afterlife, two metaphysical truths that Leibniz believes demonstrable on the basis of the same principles within his own system. The simplicity of simple substances/souls prevents them from perishing (cf. *Monadologie*, § 4-5, GP VI, p. 607); and in the same way organic bodies can never be annihilated, but only evolve or diminish (cf. § 73-76, pp. 619-620). Now, all these philosophical considerations, dealt with in a separate section in the *Theodicy*, evidently adhere to the concept of revealed truth which addresses the afterlife.

A third example of Leibniz's arguments, which is more challenging, is the concept of the 'real presence' of Christ in the Eucharist. In this case it is the metaphysical premises based on the ontological rules of matter and body that guarantee the conclusion that Jesus Christ's words, uttered at the Last Supper, should be taken literally in a 'reasonable' manner. Let us examine this issue more closely as it is set out in Leibniz's *Discours préliminaire* (already discussed in his *Nouveaux Essais*, Book 4, ch. 18).

In § 16 Leibniz introduces the question stating that applying philosophy to theology has been much debated amongst Christians and that the Mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation and the Eucharist have been the most disputed (cf. *Théodicée*, Discours, § 16, GP VI, p. 59). His account of the defence of orthodox Christianity against the Socinians (also known as 'Photinians') by scholars such as Abraham Calovius or Johann Adam Scherzer (his old master in Leipzig) and other worthy scholars enables Leibniz to address the distinction between what is or is not necessary and indispensable in natural or philosophical truths when dealing with the Protestant dispute over the Eucharist. The dispute concerns various doctrinal differences between the 'Reformed' (Zwingli's followers) and the 'Evangelicals'. The former reduced the Eucharist to mere representation, as they affirmed that 'a body can only be in one place at a time', while the latter, like Luther, believed in the real presence of Christ, interpreting a more literal meaning of the Scriptures. At this point Leibniz, evidently having reflected at length, believes he can provide a better explanation of the position of the Evangelicals:

Ils rejettent, à la vérité, le dogme de la Transsubstantiation qu'ils croyent peu fondé dans le Texte; et ils n'approuvent point non plus celui de la Consubstantiation ou de l'impanation, qu'on ne peut leur imputer que faute d'être bien informé de leur sentiment, puisqu'ils n'admettent point l'inclusion du corps de Jesus Christ dans le pain, et ne demandent même aucune union de l'un avec l'autre: mais ils demandent au moins une concomitance, en sorte que ces deux substances soyent reçues toutes deux en même temps. Ils croyent que la signification ordinaire des paroles de Jesus Christ dans une occasion aussi importante que celle où il s'agissoit d'exprimer ses dernieres volontés, doit être conservée; et pour maintenir que ce sens est exempt de toute absurdité qui nous en pourroit éloigner, ils soutiennent que la maxime philosophique, qui borne l'existence et la participation des corps à un seul lieu, n'est qu'une suite du cours ordinaire de la nature. (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 18, GP VI, pp. 60-61)

The philosophical maxim regarding the impossibility of a body to be in two places at the same time is thus valid for Evangelicals *only in reference to the ordinary course of Nature, without destroying the presence of the body of Christ* – says Leibniz – ‘*in keeping with the most glorified body*’.⁵

Further on, Leibniz discusses the dispute between Nicolaus Vedelius and Johann Musäus, two theologians, in order to introduce the question of applying reason to faith. He states that their views concerning the main rules of the use of reason are basically similar, and that conflict arises over the manner of applying these rules (cf. *Théodicée*, Discours, § 20, GP VI, p. 62). What Leibniz sets out here is substantially also what he believes himself, namely that revelation cannot contradict truths whose necessity is ‘logical’ or ‘metaphysical’. On the contrary, revelation can deny principles whose necessity is ‘physical’, as it is founded only upon the laws prescribed by God for the ordinary course of Nature. According to Leibniz, the initial question of whether a body can occupy several places at once in the supernatural order (a question that concerns the application of the rule just mentioned), could be solved through reason, *only by explaining exactly in what consists the essence of body*. In fact, he decides not to proceed further and the only thing he does is to mention the Cartesian extension as primary attribute of body (cf. *Théodicée*, Discours, § 20, GP VI, p. 62).

This brief affirmation and abrupt conclusion implies that his own conception of bodies and matter, originating in his monadological doctrine,

5 «Ils ne detruisent pas pour cela la presence ordinaire du corps de nostre Sauveur, telle qu'elle peut convenir au corps le plus glorifié» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 18, GP VI, p. 61).

could represent a method to acknowledge or make room for truths of faith such as the *real presence*, in this case a truth founded on the literal meaning attributed to Christ's words at the Last Supper. Thus, the real presence in the Eucharist is a further example of the truth of faith that is acknowledged because 'prepared', 'admitted' or 'tolerated' by reason.⁶

2 On the Correct Way, According to Leibniz, to Interpret Controversial Passage in the Scriptures and Mysteries

At this point it is worth examining briefly the issue of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, addressed by Leibniz in the *Nouveaux Essais*:

Mais il me semble qu'il reste une question que les auteurs dont je viens de parler n'ont pas assés examinée, que voicy: Supposé que d'un costé se trouve le sens literal d'un texte de la *Sainte Ecriture*, et que de l'autre costé se trouve une grande apparence d'une impossibilité Logique, ou du moins une impossibilité physique reconnue; s'il est plus raisonnable de renoncer au sens literal ou de renoncer au principe philosophique? (*Nouveaux Essais*, Book 4, ch. 18, A VI, 6, p. 499)

Leibniz answers the question according to the principle mentioned above:

Il est seur qu'il y a des endroits où l'on ne fait point difficulté de quitter la lettre, comme lors que l'*Ecriture* donne des mains à Dieu, et luy attribue la colere, la penitence, et autres affections humaines. Autrement il faudroit se ranger du costé des Anthropomorphites, ou de certains fanatiques d'Angleterre, qui crurent qu'Herode avoit esté metamorphosé effectivement en un renard, lors que Jesus Christ l'appella de ce nom. (*Nouveaux Essais*, Book 4, ch. 18, A VI, 6, pp. 499-500; cf. *Théodicée*, Discours, § 21)

Although a literal interpretation is sometimes preferred, as seen with the example of the Last Supper, in general Leibniz's position is to reject any kind of fanaticism or extreme point of view. Indeed, he is more inclined to choose the most 'reasonable' or 'likely' interpretation. This is why in the *Theodicy* Leibniz refrains from speculation such as that put forward by Robert Fludd, for example, on the notion that the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden was a poison, instead limiting himself

⁶ See Leibniz's fundamental analysis of this question in the critical edition of collected writings, entitled *Demonstratio Possibilitatis Mysteriorum Eucharistiae* (cf. A VI, 1, pp. 501-517).

to saying that «we cannot enter into this detail».⁷ Later on, Leibniz briefly attempts to explain the events in the *Book of Genesis* in terms of natural causes, as when he refers to the ‘separation of light from darkness’, with the purpose to reconcile this event with past cataclysms and concluding that, as can be seen, ultimately order emerges out of apparent chaos (*Théodicée*, § 245, GP VI, p. 263).

Although justifying or in any case acknowledging ‘truths above reason’ such as mysteries, which are truths based on particular passages of revelation, Leibniz believes that necessary and eternal truths should not be abandoned, because doing so would only fuel the arguments of those enemies of religion who challenge religion and mysteries (cf. *Théodicée*, Discours, § 22, GP VI, p. 64). According to Leibniz, mysteries should not be taken to absurd lengths, as this would make the notion of mystery itself absurd. He believes that it is beyond dispute the fact that generally truths of faith are contrary to our experience and are implausible if only considered from the point of view of reason. Nevertheless, nothing absurd should be included. For instance, in order to uphold the Holy Trinity one cannot abandon the logical principle that if two things are the same as a third, then they are the same as each other, as by abandoning the basis of logic and principle of contradiction there would no longer be the means to reason with certainty. In the case of applying this rule to the Holy Trinity, Leibniz specifies that the word ‘God’ ultimately has two separate meanings.⁸

What is ‘against reason’ is that which is contrary to logical or metaphysical necessary truths, namely truths that are absolute and indispensable in all cases. On the other hand, what is ‘above reason’ is only against ordinary experience and understanding (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 23, GP VI, p. 64). Leibniz considers this distinction ‘well founded’ and he goes on to say:

Une verité est au dessus de la raison, quand nostre esprit (ou même tout esprit créé) ne la sauroit comprendre: et telle est, à mon avis, la Sainte Trinité; tels sont les miracles réservés à Dieu seul, comme par exemple, la Création; tel est le choix de l’ordre de l’Univers, qui depend

7 «Mais nous ne pouvons pas entrer dans ce detail» (*Théodicée*, § 112, GP VI, p. 164).

8 «Il s’ensuit de là que certains Auteurs ont été trop faciles à accorder que la Sainte Trinité est contraire à ce grand principe, qui porte que deux choses, qui sont les mêmes avec une troisième, sont aussi les mêmes entr’elles; c’est à dire, si A est le même avec B, et si C est le même avec B, qu’il faut qu’A et C soyent aussi les mêmes entr’eux. Car ce principe est une suite immediate de celuy de la contradiction, et fait le fondement de toute la Logique; et s’il cesse, il n’y a pas moyen de raisonner avec certitude. Ainsi lorsqu’on dit que le Père est Dieu, que le Fils est Dieu, et que le Saint Esprits est Dieu, et que cependant il n’y a qu’un Dieu, quoyque ces trois Personne different entr’elles, il faut juger que ce mot Dieu n’a pas la même signification au commencement et à la fin de cette expression. En effect, il signifie tantôt la Substance Divine, tantôt une Personne de la Divinité» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 22, GP VI, pp. 63-64).

de l'Harmonie Universelle, et de la connoissance distincte d'une infinité de choses à la fois. Mais une verité ne sauroit jamais être contre la raison [...]. (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 23, GP VI, p. 64)

In the event that reason provides water-tight objections to a purported dogma or mystery and therefore the two cannot be reconciled, Leibniz argues that we should have to consider such dogmas or mysteries as *false* and not 'incomprehensible'.⁹

In § 29 of the *Discours préliminaire*, in order to illustrate the dangers of literal interpretation Leibniz provides an exegetical analysis of a famous passage in the Sacred Scriptures. To say that the wisdom of God is 'foolishness to men', and moreover, citing verse from the *First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, that «l'Évangile de Jesus Christ est une folie aux Grecs, aussi bien qu'un scandale aux Juifs», never means that 'foolishness' ['folie'] may be interpreted as meaning 'absurdity'. Similarly, he refers to hyperbolic statements such as those to be found in *De Carne Christi* by Tertullian («mortuus est Dei Filius, credible est, quia ineptum est; et sepultus revixit, certum est, quia impossibile»), which can only be understood in the sense of «an appearance of absurdity» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 50, GP VI, p. 78).

Thus, Leibniz certainly does not consider reason as a 'coureuse qui ne sait où s'arrêter' (like Bayle), which, like Penelope 'destroys her own work'. Indeed, Leibniz believes Bayle should condemn the abuse of reason rather than condemn reason itself (cf. *Théodicée*, Discours, § 46, GP VI, p. 76). This reflects Leibniz's essential approach to his own faith, ultimately dictated by the fact that 'the light of reason is no less a gift of God than that of revelation'.¹⁰ Hence, it is the light of reason itself that acknowledges the validity of the 'motives of credibility' that give way to faith as before a new light (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 29, GP VI, p. 67).

3 The Sanctity of Reason and *Synderesis*

Now, at first glance we could be tempted to say that it is quite simple to show how the famous specular Augustinian phrases on seeking knowledge 'credo ut intelligam' and 'intelligo ut credam' as interpreted by Leibniz results in a definite inclination towards 'intelligere'.¹¹ The anti-Bayle stance

9 «Si les mysteres étoient irreconciliables avec la raison, et s'il y avoit des objections insolubles, bien loin de trouver le mystere incomprehensible, nous en comprendrions la fausseté» (*Théodicée*, § 294, GP VI, p. 291).

10 «La lumière de la Raison n'est pas moins un don de Dieu que celle de la Revelation» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 29, GP VI, p. 67).

11 Although this expression does not appear in St. Augustine's works, the expressions in Sermon 43 are highly significant (my grateful thanks to Prof. Giovanni Catapano for all his help).

in the work certainly reflects this, seeing as we know that Leibniz accused Bayle of wishing to silence reason «après l'avoir fait trop parler» (*Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 39). In the *Theodicy* Leibniz, pleading for God's cause, at the same time offers himself as reason's advocate. However, as here reason is considered 'sacred' it becomes evident that the apparently simple idea is rather more complex than had previously been thought. I shall now attempt to explain why and in what way for Leibniz reason assumes connotations of 'sanctity' as mentioned in the title, a characteristic which could contribute to putting back into perspective what is so often dismissed as Leibniz's 'religious intellectualism'.

Let us go back to section § 29 of the *Discours préliminaire* seen above. Here Leibniz clearly states that the light of reason is a gift of God («la lumière de la Raison n'est pas moins un don de Dieu que celle de la Revelation»: *Théodicée*, Discours, § 29, GP VI, p. 67). Again, later on in the *Discours préliminaire*, Leibniz expresses this idea of a 'divine gift' and to this he adds an important point, namely that such a gift consists in a «natural light that has remained with us in the midst of corruption».¹² Moreover, in the second 'resumptive table' of the *Causa Dei* the light of the intellect, together with freedom of will, is defined by Leibniz as 'vestiges of integrity' left after original sin (*Causa Dei*, Tab. II, GP VI, p. 462).

Now, right from the beginning of the work Leibniz argues that reason consists of a 'linking together of truths',¹³ specifying in § 63 of the *Discours* that this is apprehended through the 'light of nature'.¹⁴ In § 26 of the First Part reason is recognized as the 'image of Divinity',¹⁵ just as in § 147 of the Second Part the 'image of Divinity' is also called by Leibniz the 'intelligence' that God has given to man.¹⁶

Thus, when Leibniz refers to reason he does so in a narrow and technical sense, interpreting it as (1) the logical linking together of truths, also

12 «Mais comme cette portion de Raison que nous possédons est un don de Dieu, et consiste dans la lumière naturelle qui nous est restée au milieu de la corruption; cette portion est conforme avec le tout, et elle ne diffère de celle qui est en Dieu, que comme une goutte d'eau diffère de l'Océan, ou plustost comme le fini de l'infini» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 61, GP VI, p. 84).

13 «La Raison consistant dans l'enchaînement des vérités [...]» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 1, GP VI, p. 49).

14 «Je reponds, comme j'ay déjà fait, que la Raison icy est l'enchaînement des vérités, que nous connoissons par la lumière naturelle» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 63, GP VI, p. 86).

15 «[...] la Raison, qui est une image de la divinité [...]» (*Théodicée*, § 26, GP VI, p. 118).

16 «Voicy encor une raison particuliere du desordre apparent dans ce qui regarde l'homme. C'est que Dieu luy a fait present d'une image de la divinité, en luy donnant l'intelligence» (*Théodicée*, § 147, GP VI, p. 197).

defined as the ‘inviolable linking together of truths’,¹⁷ but he interprets reason in a wider sense as (2) *the natural light of intelligence* by means of which the linking together of truths appears to us or, we could say (pointing out another key term), to our *minds*.

The difficulty with terms that arises as a result of this interpretation can be traced to the similarly complex biblical concept of ‘image of the Divinity’. On this point it is well worth considering St. Augustine’s famous comment on the *Book of Genesis* as a model for all subsequent interpretations and shifting of positions or of importance between the terms ‘reason’, ‘mind’ and ‘intelligence’:

[...] cum dixisset: *ad imaginem nostram*, statim subiunxit: *et habeat potestatem piscium maris et volatilium caeli et ceterorum animalium rationis expertium*, ut videlicet intellegamus in eo factum hominem ad imaginem Dei, in quo irrationalibus animantibus antecellit. Id autem est ipsa ratio vel mens vel intellegentia vel si quo alio vocabulo commodius appellatur. (St. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, 3, 20, 30; 1989, p. 146)

If the ‘precious gift’ that distinguishes rational souls or spirits from all other creatures in the universe is a divine gift, then all the premises based on blind, steadfast faith in the potentiality of this gift change. As we have seen, this is a gift that Leibniz believes is untainted by original sin, and thus, since the gift of reason is from God, whether in the form of *ratio*, *mens* or *intellegentia*, it can be considered ‘holy’. At the end of the day, a well-known medieval concept is being revisited here, namely the concept of *synderesis* (συντήρησις), which we shall now consider.

The concept of *synderesis* runs through the history of Scholastic philosophy, and its treatment can be found in the works of Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart and Rusbroeck, probably rooted in Neo-Platonic thought to the extent that philosophers often associated the most noble, divine or ‘purest’ part of the soul with the idea of light or ‘spark of conscience’, a term introduced by St. Jerome, who is credited with being the founder of this tradition (cf. St. Jerome, *Comm. In Ezech.*, I, c. I).

The concept of *synderesis* may also be found in famous passages of biblical exegesis in reference to the image of reason/light, such as in the *Book of Proverbs*: «The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man; it searches

17 «Car j’ay remarqué d’abord que par LA RAISON on n’entend pas icy les opinions et les discours des hommes, ny même l’habitude qu’ils ont prise de juger des choses suivant le cours ordinaire de la nature, mais l’enchaînement inviolable des verités» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 23, GP VI, p. 64).

out his inmost being».¹⁸ This was then expanded by the Cambridge Platonists, in particular Whichcote and Culverwell with their famous vision of the spirit as ‘candle of the Lord’ (cf. Greene 1991). The Scholastic tradition largely viewed the *scintilla conscientiae* as that part of the spirit uncontaminated by the Fall, by virtue of which man could discern the primary principles of moral action.

Although Leibniz does not explicitly use the term *synderesis*, he still refers to ‘pure reason’, a reason instilled in man by God and free of corruption. There are two key sections in the *Theodicy* that illustrate this point and which, to conclude, we shall now consider: § 91 and § 397.

4 Sections 91 and 397 in the *Theodicy*

With regard to the question of the origin of ‘substantial forms’ and ‘souls’, in the *Theodicy* Leibniz argues that the theories of ‘traduction’ and ‘education’ are equally inexplicable when it is a question of finding the origin of the soul, whether of man or beast (§ 89) and proposes his own ‘creationist’ solution (§ 90) consisting in the preformation of the bodies of living organisms so that the ‘generation of an animal’ is nothing but ‘transformation’ and ‘augmentation’. Similarly, once the soul is created and conserved, so is the whole animal, whose apparent death is seen as a simple ‘envelopment’. Once he has set out these general rules that concern all living beings, Leibniz goes on to consider the conception of man: «ainsi je croirois, que les ames, qui seront un jour ames humaines, comme celles des autres especes, ont été dans les semences, et dans les ancetres jusqu’à Adam, et ont existé par consequent depuis le commencement des choses, tousjours dans une maniere de corps organisé» (*Théodicée*, § 91, GP VI, p. 152).

Such souls remain in the state of sentient souls or animals, able to perceive and feel, but not to reason, until the moment when they are generated as man, when they are provided with reason. The two alternatives suggested in order to explain how the soul acquires reason are the following: «soit qu’il y ait un moyen, naturel d’élever une ame sensitive au degré d’ame raisonnable (ce que j’ay de la peine à concevoir) soit que Dieu ait donné la raison à cette ame par une operation particuliere, ou (si vous voulés) *par une espece de transcreation*» (*Théodicée*, § 91, GP VI, p. 153; italics mine).

Indeed, in § 91 it is precisely the latter solution favoured by Leibniz, a solution which is moreover supported by revelation:

¹⁸ Pr. 20,27 in *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament, Four Volumes in One Genesis-Malachi* (Gran Rapids (MI): Zondervan Publishing House, 1987, p. 547. See also Psalm 4,6: «Many are asking, ‘Who can show us any good?’ Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord». Cf. *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament*, 350.

Ce qui est d'autant plus aisé à admettre, que la revelation enseigne beaucoup d'autres operations immediates de Dieu sur nos ames. Cette explication paroît lever les embarras, qui se presentent icy en Philosophie ou en Theologie, puisque la difficulté de l'origine des formes cesse entierement, et puisqu'il est bien plus convenable à la justice Divine de donner à l'ame, déjà corrompue physiquement ou animalement par le peché d'Adam, une nouvelle perfection qui est la raison, que de mettre une ame raisonnable par creation ou autrement, dans un corps, où elle doit être corrompue moralement. (*Théodicée*, § 91, GP VI, p. 153)

Thus, it appears evident that through this 'immediate operation by God' and 'kind of transcreation' occurs, as it were, the miraculous instilling of the 'pure/immaculate gift' mentioned above, which comprises the 'mind', 'reason', 'intelligence', or using another key expression, 'natural light'. Towards the end of his work, in § 397 Leibniz goes back to reconsider the content of the paragraph highlighting the most important points, and here he provides more on what he had termed earlier as a 'kind of transcreation':

J'ay même montré un certain milieu entre une creation et une préexistence entiere, en trouvant convenable de dire que l'Ame préexistante dans les semences depuis le commencement des choses, n'étoit que sensitive, mais qu'elle a été élevée au degré superieur, qui est la raison, lorsque l'homme, à qui cette ame doit appartenir, a été conçu, et que le corps organisé, accompagnant tousjours cette ame depuis le commencement, mais sous bien de changemens, a été déterminé à former le corps humain. (*Théodicée*, § 397, GP VI, p. 352)

Leibniz acknowledges that he also said that such an elevation of sentient souls can be attributed to the extraordinary or 'miraculous' operation of God. Nevertheless, at this point he adds a further comment:

Cependant il sera bon d'ajouter, que j'aimerois mieux me passer du miracle dans la generation de l'homme, comme dans celle des autres animaux: et cela se pourra expliquer, en concevant que dans ce grand nombre d'Ames et d'Animaux, ou du moins de corps organiques vivans qui sont dans les semences, ces ames seules qui sont destinées à parvenir un jour à la nature humaine, enveloppent la raison qui y paroitra un jour, et que les seuls corps organiques de ces ames sont preformés et predisposés à prendre un jour la forme humaine [...]. (*Théodicée*, § 397, GP VI, p. 352)

In this last solution reason is presented as something which has always been present in chosen and predestined souls (and bodies). How this is

present is not explained. However, reason is clearly presented as the *potential characteristics of some souls* (and bodies), namely only those souls who will become human souls, and so 'spirits', one day. Through this solution reason is somehow 'preserved' or mysteriously safeguarded until the time when the individual is generated to which the soul belongs. This is why Leibniz refers to this last solution as 'a kind of *traduction*' according to which «it does not derive the soul from a soul, but only the animate from an animate», (in this way denying the process as being miraculous).¹⁹ Up to now, each of the various solutions seen here more or less markedly reveal Leibniz's emphasis on the 'exceptional' or should we say 'divine' nature of reason.

In his *Discours préliminaire* Leibniz was convinced that he had managed to settle the conflict between reason and faith, placing reason 'at the service of faith'.²⁰ He was also certain that he had proved that reason and faith were far from being incompatible with one another and that both were on an equal footing when it came to confirm and reconcile «ce que la lumière naturelle et la lumière révélée nous apprennent de Dieu et de l'Homme par rapport au Mal» (*Théodicée*, § 1, GP VI, p. 102). Hence, 'natural light' is on a par with 'revealed light' in a kind of inseparable relationship to which Leibniz appeals when tackling some issues, as for example when dealing with the thorny question of the fate of unbaptised children when they die:

Beaucoup de Prelats et de Theologiens de France qui sont bien aises de s'éloigner de Molina, et de s'attacher à Saint Augustin, semblent pencher vers l'opinion de ce grand Docteur, qui condamne aux flammes éternelles les enfans morts dans l'age d'innocence avant que d'avoir reçu le bap-tême. [...] Mais il faut avouer que ce sentiment n'a point de fondement suffisant *ny dans la raison, ny dans l'Écriture*, et qu'il est d'une dureté des plus choquantes. (*Théodicée*, § 93, GP VI, p. 154; italics mine)²¹

19 «Cette production est une maniere de Traduction, mais plus traitable que celle qu'on enseigne vulgairement: elle ne tire pas l'ame d'une ame, mais seulement l'animé d'un animé, et elle evite les miracles frequens d'une nouvelle creation, qui feroient entrer une ame neuve et nette dans un corps qui la doit corrompre» (*Théodicée*, § 397, GP VI, pp. 352-353).

20 «Après avoir réglé les droits de la Foy et de la Raison, d'une manière qui fait servir la Raison à la Foy, bien loin de luy être contraire» (*Théodicée*, § 1, GP VI, p. 102).

21 The conciliation of reason with revelation as the basis of a common ground is to be found again in Leibniz's correspondence with Des Bosses, in this case to refute the idea that angels are totally disembodied: «Sententia de omnimoda sejunctione Angelorum a corporibus, *non rationem, non scripturam*, sed solam opinionem communem scholarum pro fundamento habet» (GP II, p. 319; italics mine).

By virtue of the knowledge and acceptance of 'creation' and the incorruptible nature of 'natural light', in Leibniz reason and revelation are united with a common purpose, a unity which would subsequently be divided under Kant and German Idealism. Indeed, it would be interesting to develop this particular line through a lexicographical analysis of Leibniz's expression 'pure reason' and compare it with Kant's subsequent use of the same term, and the difference Kant draws between the terms *Verstand* (Understanding) and *Vernunft* (Reason).

Bibliography

- Agostino (1989). *Opera omnia di Sant'Agostino*, vol. 9/2, *La Genesi alla lettera*. Traduzione, note e indici di L. Carrozzi. Roma: Città Nuova.
- Cook, Daniel J. (2009). «Leibniz on Creation: A Contribution to His Philosophical Theology». In: Dascal, Marcelo (ed.), *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist*. Berlin; Dordrecht; Heidelberg; New York: Springer, pp. 449-460.
- Greene, Robert A. (1991). «Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis». *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52, pp. 617-644.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (2002). *Discours sur la Theologie naturelle des Chinois*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Loemker, Leroy E. (1972). *Struggle for Synthesis: The Seventeenth Century Background of Leibniz's Synthesis of Order and Freedom*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Riley, Patrick (2008). «Leibniz, Platonism, and Judaism: The 1714 Vienna Lecture on *The Greeks as Founders of a Sacred Philosophy*». In: Cook, Daniel J.; Rudolph, Hartmut; Schulte, Christoph (Hrsg.), *Leibniz und das Judentum*. Stuttgart: Steiner, pp. 109-113.