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## **G.W. Leibniz's Anti-Death Perspective: Spontaneity of Death and Absolute Immortality**

Enrico Pasini

1. In 1775, nearly sixty years after Leibniz's own death, a booklet appeared in Halle. Modeled after David Fassmann's series of *Gespräche im Reiche der Todten* ("Dialogues in the realm of the dead"), who had introduced into Germany the vogue of the *Dialogues des morts*, Fontenelle's and Fénelon's take at the dialogues-of-the-dead genre that sourced from Lucian's satirical archetype, it was titled *Plato und Leibnitz jenseits des Styx* ("Plato and Leibniz beyond the Styx").<sup>1</sup>

The mise en scène featured the two philosophers strolling together in the hereafter, forgetful of all their past deeds and thoughts: they discuss the permanence of personality in afterlife and, while Plato again puts forward reminiscencies of life past, Leibniz takes objection to it and argues that changes in the organic body must of necessity entail a disconnection in memories and thoughts. Now, either they have the same body as they had in the preceding life, and in such case ought to recall everything of it; or they do not, and thus will not be able to remember anything. This, in the intention of the anonymous author, serves both to disqualify Platonic reminiscence of innate ideas, a purpose on which Leibniz would have agreed up to a certain point, and to make of Leibniz an advocate of the dependence of ideas—that is, of any mental content—from the modifications of our body: consequently, as we have seen, if the same body is not there, then any recollection of one's previous life is impossible.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See Anon., 1775. On Fassmann, see Dreyfürst 2014.

2 Christian Jacob Kraus, the eventual introducer of Adam Smith's works to Germany, planned a review of this work, and a sketch is extant in his *Werke* as Beilage 2 to Kraus 1819, 425-457, where the passage we are considering (Anon., 1775, 32) is discussed at p. 454.

The only public reaction came from a popular philosopher, H.A. Pistorius, who reviewed it and tried to slash this all too naturalist perspective; as a “Recensenten diesseit des Styx” (1777, 257) he felt unmoved by the experimental arguments and repelled by the theoretic ones. And he could not imagine Leibniz maintain an argument that could entail the mortality of the soul. This meant confusing Minerva’s beloved, who had laid out the plans of the divine wisdom for the best of possible worlds, with a phantom who sought to demonstrate the impossibility of that very plan:

der Liebling Minervens, der diese Gründe und diesen Plan der ewigen Weisheit billiget, mir unendlich besser gefällt, als dies traurige Phantom, das die Unmöglichkeit des besten Plans demonstrieren will. *Heu! quantum mutatus ab illo!* (Pistorius 1777, 261)

The reasonings of this ‘phantom Leibniz’ incorporated indeed some true Leibnizian ideas, in particular that no soul can ever be without a body. As he wrote in the preface to the *New Essays on Human Understanding*: “all souls, all simple created substances, are always joined to a body, and [...] souls are never completely separated from bodies” (AG, 298; A VI 6, 58);<sup>3</sup> and in the *Monadology*, §72, we read: “there are also no completely separated souls, nor spirits [Genies] without bodies. God alone is completely detached from bodies” (AG, 222; GP 6, 619).

Nevertheless, Leibniz had developed and presented an argument concerning immortality that was precisely the opposite of what beyond-the-Styx forgetfulness would have him frame in the dialogue: that is, that after-death memory is needed by the very idea of a morally relevant immortality of the soul: “For without memory immortality would be worthless” (L, 337; A II 2, 81). It first appears in texts unknown to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, like the *Discourse on metaphysics*, at §34:

For it is memory or the knowledge of this self that renders it capable of punishment or reward. Thus the immortality

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3 Abbreviations for Leibniz’s writings (largely the same used in *Studia Leibnitiana*) are detailed in the Reference List.

required in morality and religion does not consist merely in this perpetual subsistence common to all substances, for without the memory of what one has been, there would be nothing desirable about it. (AG 66; A VI 4, 1584)

There is a strong connection with a memory-based theory of personal identity: should an ordinary citizen “all of a sudden becomes the king of China”, on the condition of completely forgetting what he had been, practically, “wouldn't that be the same,” Leibniz writes, “as if he were annihilated and a king of China created at the same instant in his place?” (AG 66; A VI 4, 1584).<sup>4</sup> Leibniz would explain this connection better in later works, that would be published by him, as the *Theodicy* in 1710, or in not-too-posthumous editions, like the *New Essays* in 1765. In §89 of the *Theodicy*, Leibniz makes an important distinction between ‘indestructibility’ and ‘immortality,’ “whereby is understood in the case of man that not only the soul but also the personality subsists [...] what makes the identity of the person”. This requires conserving “the *consciousness*, or the reflective inward feeling” (GP 6, 151).<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, this allows Leibniz to endow beasts with memory, and with imperishable souls, without bestowing on them ‘true’ immortality. On the other hand, memory remains as the foundation of this reflective sentiment: “cognitionem sui, sive memoriam priorum” (A VI 4, 531), memory of previous things, as he had written already in 1683. He explains in the *New Essays* that, although we can be deceived by a memory across an interval of time,

a present or immediate memory, the memory of what was taking place immediately before—or in other words, the consciousness or reflection which accompanies inner activity—cannot naturally deceive us. If it could, we would not even be certain that we are thinking about such and such a thing; for this too is silently said only about

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4 See also the letter to Molanus translated in AG, 243. On 18<sup>th</sup>-century—especially Wolffian—developments of Leibniz’s theory of identity, see Thiel (2011, ch. 9 and 10).

5 I am quoting the *Theodicy* from the Haggard translation, easily available in a variety of printed and electronic forms.

past actions. (RB, 238; NE II 27, §13; A VI 6, 238)

This process, Leibniz clarifies, can stand minor interruptions, such as drunkenness, sleep, delirium, since the witness of others can suffice to reestablish continuity in the personal apperception of one's actions. Thus a more or less complex memory-based process seems to provide the fundamental connection (precisely that connection that Hume will take issue with) between the successive elements—the various states—of self-conscious, moral, rational personalities that are capable of meaningful immortality.

2. Leibniz has no good feeling about death. To him, death means not peace or rest, or, in later 18<sup>th</sup>-century vogue, past greatness alluded to by a pleasurable ruine, but sheer absence of life—and life is good, coextensive with true unity and real being as a character of individual soul-like substances, or monads. In the universe, he often declares, there is nothing dead, nothing, as he writes in the famous §69 of the *Monadology*, incapable of life:

Thus there is nothing fallow, sterile, or dead in the universe, no chaos and no confusion except in appearance, almost as it looks in a pond at a distance, where we might see the confused and, so to speak, teeming motion of the fish in the pond, without discerning the fish themselves (AG 222; GP 6, 618-9)

A distinction between 'dead' and 'living' forces has particular importance in Leibniz's dynamics. Force is in fact twofold:

One force is elementary, which I also call dead force, since motion does not yet exist in it, but only a solicitation to motion, as with the ball in the tube, or a stone in a sling while it is still being held in by a rope. The other force is ordinary force, joined with actual motion, which I call living force. (AG 121; GM )

'Dead force' is an infinitesimal force that equals the Cartesian quantity of motion; such forces characterize equilibrium without motion, or the beginning of motions. Leibnizian dynamics is born out of a law of conservation of 'living' forces ( $mv^2$ , like kinetic

energy), which will be the object of hefty debates for a century. Leibniz's monads, living soul-like sources of true metaphysical unity, and the only real beings in the created universe, are identified in turn with centers of force, principles of action. To designate this aspect Leibniz revives the Aristotelian word 'entelechy'. This character of substances is the bridge between metaphysics and physics, since, as we read in Leibniz's correspondence with Johann Bernoulli, matter and material bodies arise from the 'complication' (interaction) of primitive forces:

However, I think that primitive entelechies, that is, lives, are different from dead forces. Dead forces perhaps always arise from living forces, as it appears from the fact that the conatus for receding from a center, which ought to be counted among dead forces, arises from the living force of rotation. But life or the primary entelechy is something more than some simple dead conatus. (AG, 169; GM 3, 552)

Even bodies apparently inanimate, that do not have, as living immaterial substances, perceptions and appetition, still "have something of that sort in them, as worms are in cheese" (AG, 169; GM 3, 560). Consequently, only Cartesian or atomist matter is 'dead matter'; instead, in any mote of dust, in the tiniest atoms, there can be "worlds not inferior in beauty and variety to ours". To this Leibniz adds, to his correspondent's imaginable astonishment, this bewildering remark:

And (what could be considered even more amazing) nothing prevents animals from being transported to such worlds by dying, for I think that death is nothing but the contraction of an animal, just as generation is nothing but its unfolding. (AG, 169; GM 3, 553)

Bewildering indeed, but corresponding precisely to the standard treatment of death (and, less conspicuously, of birth)—those events that ordinarily characterize finite beings, including rational ones—in Leibniz's mature philosophy: an overall denial.

3. According to Leibniz, individual substances, be they reasonable

or not, since they all are indivisible and incorporeal, can only be created and destroyed by the supreme Author: “a substance can begin only by creation and end only by annihilation” (AG, 42; A VI 4, 1541). This implies, as Leibniz writes in a private note, “either that souls are created every day, or, as I prefer, that they are coeval with the world” (A VI 4, 1494).

If they last as long as the universe and, at the same time, they are principles of life, thus never completely deprived of an organic body, some consequences follow. Apparently there are two primary meanings of life: one is the never-ending life of the individual substance, or monad, in the created universe; the other is the finite, indeed brief life of sentient and rational beings as we ordinarily conceive of it; neither ends with a proper death, nor does the end of ordinary life, and this is the more surprising part, entail leaving this world. In fact, not only substances are indestructible, but they also never abandon the created universe until the end of time. In this setting, it is expectable that Leibniz’s principal philosophical manifesto, the *Système nouveau* of 1695, presents the following as the “greatest question” concerning souls:

what becomes of these souls or forms at the death of the animal or at the destruction of the individual organized substance? [...] it hardly seems reasonable that souls should remain uselessly in a chaos of confused matter. (AG 140; GP 6, 480)

There is only one reasonable view to take, according to Leibniz, namely, “the conservation not only of the soul, but also of the animal itself and its organic machine”;<sup>6</sup> this is made possible by “the destruction of its larger parts”, that reduces it “to a smallness which escapes our senses, just as it was before its birth” (AG, 141; GP 6, 480). Leibniz, who had thought for a while that

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6 Precisely from the conservation of the soul Leibniz declares to assume that “the animal is also conserved, and that apparent death is only an envelopment, there being no likelihood that in the order of nature souls exist entirely separated from all body” (*Théod.*, §90; GP 6, 172). See also Hügli (1972), Rensoli (1996), Smith (2007).

rational beings might get their soul by a special miraculous creation, ends up with clinging exclusively to this theory of transformation. As he states in §6 of the *Principles of Nature and Grace*,

There are small animals in the seeds of large ones, which, through conception, assume new vestments that they appropriate for themselves, which give them the means to nourish themselves and grow in order to pass to a larger stage and to bring about the propagation of the large animal.

But the souls of human spermatic animals do not become rational “until conception settles that these animals will have a human nature”. Accordingly, since animals are not strictly born in ordinary generation, “they do not fully perish in what we call death”. They do not begin nor end in the order of nature:

Thus, abandoning their mask or their tattered dress, they merely return to a smaller stage, where they can, nevertheless, be just as sensitive and as well-ordered as in the larger. (AG, 209; GP 6, 601)

These are the comely microscopic worlds to which, as we have already seen, animals are being transported after death—which is in truth a very different condition from that which Leibniz should have shared with Plato beyond the Styx, that of forgetful separated souls with a new transmigrated life. Both rational souls and, likely, the merely sentient ones, come on the stage of the great universal theatre only once, the same state of contraction occurring before and after ordinary life.

And since there is no first birth or entirely new generation of an animal, it follows that there will not be any final extinction or complete death, in a strict metaphysical sense. (AG, 141; GP 6, 481)

This opposition of broad and strict sense, of ordinary and ‘metaphysical’ meaning of death, calls to mind a commentary by Eugen Fink: “Elaborate understanding of being, i.e. metaphysics,



cannot conceive of death”: consequently, “Leibniz denies any reality to death, and explains it as the extreme point of reduction of clarity in representation. [...] Death has lost its sting”.<sup>7</sup> Possibly so—and to take this sting away might well have been a paramount concern of Leibniz’s, although he expressed it seldom.

4. Leibniz experienced death as unfathomable loss in 1705, when Sophie Charlotte, queen of Prussia, who was Leibniz’s most longstanding friend and inspirer in Berlin—and maybe the person he held most dear in his whole life, as maybe a father or a soupirant might have—this accultured, intelligent, open-minded, lovely queen suddenly died at 36 of pneumonia. The gloomiest circumstance<sup>8</sup> led Leibniz to discontinue a major philosophical projects (the completion of his *New Essays* was abandoned and publication happened not before 1765), and eventually to devote himself to the *Theodicy*, that was among other aspects a literary testament to the philosophical and theological discussions at the Lutzenburg queenly palace.

The sorrowing philosopher turned poet, as he sometimes did, to expressed his wretchedness. He had done it eagerly as a student, to show his prowess in Latin versification, and later to fulfil his courtly duties with an impeccable poem on the death of Duke Johann Friedrich, also in Latin. He had amused French acquaintances with rhymes on the death of Mlle de Scudéry’s parrot. But for this more personal mourning Leibniz had recourse to his mother language, and composed a German *Epicidium*<sup>9</sup> of

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7 “Das ausgearbeitete Seinsverständnis, die Metaphysik, kann den Tod nicht denken. [...] Leibniz leugnet die Realität des Todes, deutet ihn in einen Extremwert der geringsten Deutlichkeit des Vorstellens [...] Der Tod hat hier keinen Stachel” (Fink 1969, 187).

8 When Princess Sophie herself—Sophie Charlotte’s mother and a lifelong backer, friend and correspondent—died in 1714, Leibniz was in Vienna: he was not especially moved, neither did he move for the funerals; indeed he left for Hanover only when he knew that Sophie’s son had become king of Britain and was departing for London with the court.

9 All quotations will come from Hankins (1972).

more than one hundred tetrameter Alexandrine verses that is his most inspired piece of poetry. Its technical refinement notwithstanding, it is a quite emotional composition, that opens comparing Sophie Charlotte's death to the disappearance of a sun, the very dissolution of Virtue and Beauty:

Der Preußen Königin verläst den Kreiß der Erden,  
Und diese Sonne wird nicht mehr gesehen werden;  
Des hohen Sinnes liecht, der wahren Tugend schein,  
Der Schönheit heller Glanz soll nun erloschen seyn.

There was in her "something super-human" and this was the "harshest of all losses", invaluable and unredeemable. Only remembrance—again—can give solace. But memories are double-edged: they alone can sweeten our sorrow, and yet they have us weep; they are all that remains, yet they make us sigh. "Erinnerung allein ist was uns übrig bleibt. / Erinnerung allein ist was uns Seufzer treibt". Therefore such *Erinnerung* is refused: oh, that she may be forgotten, Leibniz writes, that we may not think that she is alive no more, and we find a dream to pleasure our soul, instead of the deep sorrow that pierces our bosom:

Köndt so die Königin uns in Gedancken schweben,  
Daß man nicht dächt dabey, wie Sie nicht mehr im Leben,  
So wär der süße Traum noch unser Seelen Lust,  
Da nun der tieffe Schmerz durchdringt die schwehre Brust.

Did all of her just disappear, asks Leibniz, like smoke that drifts away, like hours that go past? This raises grave theological and metaphysical doubts: are human beings, God's image and likeness, nothing more than a dream, lasting less than sleep?

Ist Gottes Ebenbild, das Kunststück seiner Krafft,  
So wenig als ein Traum im Schlawfe dauerhaft?

No hint of *contemptus mundi*, though, appears in this poem, as it would still be common at the time. Take into consideration, f.i., Friedrich von Spee. A 17<sup>th</sup>-century Jesuit whose poems were much appreciated by Leibniz, he wrote about death in this fashion: "O Narrheit groß, willst nackt und bloß / Bald, bald von hinnen

reisen; / Dein Hab und Gut, dein Frisches Blut / Soll Tod und Würme speisen”.<sup>10</sup> Leibniz’s consolation is found, instead, in the philosophical contemplation of the goodness of the created universe, and of the creator’s wisdom. The latter is found in every thing: “Die Weißheit läßet sich in allen Dingen spühren”. And those souls who have a union with God, and possess reason so they can adore him, who are indeed in this world like so many small gods, these souls will forever be the citizens of his divine republic.

Die Seelen die mit Gott in Innung können treten,  
Die fähig ihr Verstand gemacht Ihn anzubeten,  
Die kleine Götter seyn und ordnen was wie Er,  
Die bleiben seines Staats Mitglieder immermehr.

By what, again, would this eternal afterlife citizenship be qualified? By not forgetting oneself, by not losing the sentiment of self that founds their moral constitution:

Und werden nimmermehr, was sie nun seyn, vergeßen,  
Sonst wären sie dem Lohn und auch der Straff entseßen.

So memory comes back before us in the same role, that of the basis of self-consciousness—the necessary condition of individual suitability for morally qualified immortality. However, here it is perfectly clear that this applies to the everlasting life that, in Christian terms, follows the universal judgment.<sup>11</sup> For this world, yet, would immortality be solely based on remembrance? Surely such can be the case in metaphorical terms, and then remembrance needs not always have a bitter taste for survivors or posterity, as for Leibniz and Sophie Charlotte. Think of mathematicians, whose immortal memory can be preserved by the attribution of a

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10 ‘O big folly—you will so soon leave this world stripped and naked. Your stuff, your goods, and your fair blood, shall nourish death and worms’ (Spee 1908, 363).

11 And the share of the concerned is not clearly determined. Although Leibniz refused in general terms Origenism and universal salvation, his interest for such chiliastic perspective is witnessed even in the *Theodicy*; see Costa 2014.

theorem: “A single momentous observation or demonstration is enough to be immortalized and deserve the homage of future generations” (A VI 4, 699).

That said, it is important to keep in mind what we have already seen: that for Leibniz, in a way that is different from that of human personal relations, death does not concern souls: they—indeed all individual substances—are coeval with the created world, and do not begin or end naturally. This brings us back to indestructibility, and to what happens when an indestructible soul sees the end of its corporeal life.

5. “One short sleep past, we wake eternally”: thus sounds John Donne’s description of the intermediate state of afterlife in his sonnet *Death, Be Not Proud*. In Christian perspectives, between one’s death and the universal resurrection there comes for the separated soul either an immediate judgement, and the consequent punishment, penitence, beatification, respectively; and this is in particular the Catholic view, when purgatory be included. Or the soul is put instead in a state of waiting, and either might be dead and resurrected with the body on doomsday, or it must get a pleasant slumber, and wake when Jesus “comes at the little tomb, knocks, and says: *Wake up, doctor Martinus!*”—which is how Luther (1883-2007, 37, 151) fancies it in a sermon. In fact, while Calvin coins the word *psychopannia* to describe the vigilance of the separated soul, Luther (1883-2007, 22, 99) teaches that after death we enjoy a tranquil, “brief and sweet sleep”.<sup>12</sup>

The origins of this vision of death as sleep are usually traced back by Christian writers to the words with which Jesus announces his intention to resurrect Lazarus: “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep”. The disciples do not understand: “Jesus spake of [Lazarus’] death: but they thought that

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12 Only in his late writings Luther finds a compromise with Calvin’s position: the slumber of the separated soul would be so deep, that the soul may be vigilant in a way, and hear and see God and the angels (Luther 1883-2007, 43, 360); they sleep in peace nonetheless: “certi sumus [post hanc vitam] vivere animas, et dormire in pace” (43, 359).

he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep” (*John* 11:11-13). The exchange ends in an abrupt manner Leibniz might not like: “Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead” (*John* 11:14). But since Leibniz, as we shall see, shares in the end the Lutheran vision of death as sleep in connection to his own view of birth and death as transformations of imperishable beings, he mentions with devotion this very passage:

there is no more difficulty in conceiving the preservation of souls (or rather, on my view, of the animal), than in conceiving the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, or the preservation of thought during sleep—to which Jesus Christ has sublimely compared death. (RB, 58; NE *Préf.*; A VI 6, 58)

No stroll beyond the Styx with a new body and no memories, as it happens, for Leibniz. <sup>13</sup> “On my hypotheses”, he writes, souls “inherently express” those portions of matter “with which they are and must be united” in an orderly way.

So if they passed into a new coarse or sensible body, they would still retain the expression of everything of which they had had any perception in the old one; and indeed the new body would have to feel the effects of it, so that there will always be real marks of the continuance of the individual. (RB 240; NE II, 27, §14; A VI 6, 240)

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13 Although he was unfavorable to any comparison between the soul of a sleeper and the separated soul, “since the soul of the sleeper uses the organ of imagination wherein corporeal images are impressed; which cannot be said of the separated soul”, yet Aquinas had already constructed an argument for memory after death: memory can be referred to the “sensitive part”, and thus to corporeal imagination; but also to “that part of the imagination which pertains to the intellective faculty, in so far namely as it abstracts from all differences of time, since it regards not only the past, but also the present, and the future [...] Taking memory in this sense the separated soul will remember” (*Comm. Sent.*, l. 4, dist. 44, q. 3, sol. 2 ad 3<sup>um</sup> et 4<sup>um</sup>; transl. according to Aquinas 1912-25, q. 70 art. 3 suppl.).

Souls, after the apparent natural death, attached as they still are to the tiny animal body that remains with them and that somehow bears the marks of its past actions on the greater stage, fall into slumber at the same time as they fall into microminiaturization. It is “a long stupor, which arises from a great confusion of perceptions”, that must not be confused “with death strictly speaking, in which all perception cease” (AG, 208; GP 6, 600). But how can this *long etourdissement* be compatible with the exigency of continuity, and the memory that is thereby demanded, as condition for personal morality, to which sleep seems contrary?

A well-known doctrine of Leibniz’s is that concerning the so-called ‘minute perceptions’. Halfway between representational states of the individual substance that mirror the whole universe from its point of view, and ordinary perceptions that are part of our conscious perceptual life, they are perceptions of which, “we are not aware in our present state”; “all our undeliberated actions result from a conjunction of minute perceptions” and they are the “insensible parts of our sensible perceptions”.<sup>14</sup> By virtue of these minute perceptions, in every substance, and thus in the whole universe, “the present is big with the future and burdened with the past” (RB, 55; NE *Préf.*; A VI 6, 55).

When considered in relation to the spiritual self, this allows for a preciser explanation of the required continuity of personality that we have already met, not only in perspective future life after the universal judgement, but already in the stuporous condition of worldly after-death:

These insensible perceptions also indicate and constitute the same individual, who is characterized by the vestiges or expressions which the perceptions preserve from the individual’s former states, thereby connecting these with his present state. (RB 240; NE II, 27, §14; A VI 6, 240)

Those minute perceptions “also provide the means for recovering this memory at need”, as a result of successive

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14 RB 134, 115, 57; A VI 6, 134, 115, 57.

improvements which one may eventually undergo, maybe by the intervention of a superior mind.

*That is why death can only be a sleep, and not a lasting one at that: the perceptions merely cease to be sufficiently distinct; in animals they are reduced to a state of confusion which puts awareness into abeyance but which cannot last.* (RB, 55; NE, *Préf.*; A VI 6, 55; my italics)

We have now nearly all the ingredients of Leibniz's anti-death programme. Yet, still one point ought to be raised. This connection of past, present, and future, corresponds to the metaphysical fact that the various representational states of the individual substance express themselves mutually: the substance represents at any moment not only the present state of the universe, but the memory of past states and the expression of its future states as well, accompanied by an appetite toward its next state. This happens in obedience only to an internal law of development, coessential with the individual substance itself since its creation and equivalent to that character of activity and primitive force that, as we have already seen, characterizes Leibnizian substances. For this reason, Leibniz maintains that his simple individual substances enjoy a perfect spontaneity: "the true nature of what is spontaneous is to be itself its own principle, and not something external".<sup>15</sup> In the *Discourse on metaphysics*, §32, Leibniz declares

that every substance has a perfect spontaneity (which becomes freedom in intelligent substances), that everything that happens to it is a consequence of its idea or of its being, and that nothing determines it, except God alone. (AG, 64; A VI 4, 1581)

Leibniz adds at §33 that the very idea of the soul "carries with it the fact that all its appearances or perceptions must arise spontaneously from its own nature" (AG, 64; A VI 4, 1582), faithfully corresponding to what happens in the rest of the universe

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15 "Et in hoc consistit vera natura spontanei, ut ipsum sit principium, non externum" (A VI 4, 1453). On this let me refer readers to Pasini (2011).

and in particular in its own body. Eventually he explains to Arnauld that “every present state of a substance happens to it spontaneously and is only a result of its preceding state” (AG, 76; A II 2, 53).

This implies another quite extraordinary aspect. It is true that monads, in strict metaphysical terms, never die; but moreover, when they naturally and ordinarily die, even if such circumstance be most often repelled in their conscious mental life, yet then, in strict metaphysical terms, they die spontaneously.

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