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Justice, Happiness, and Perfection in Leibniz's City of God[1]

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The Greek etymology of the word "theodicy," coined by Leibniz, suggests the meaning, *theou dikē*, God's justice, as the "title topic" of his *Essais de théodicée*. The vindication of God's justice is certainly one of the central aims of the book. Nothing, I believe, more clearly marks Leibniz, with all his personal and institutional conservatism, as a theological forerunner of the loosely defined movement known as the Enlightenment than his emphasis on justice as an attribute of God, and the way in which he conceives of it.

The first section of my chapter is devoted to elucidation of Leibniz's conception of divine justice. In the second section I will argue that his vindication of God's justice, so conceived, depends on more than the perfection of the actual *world*, which Leibniz famously emphasizes. It depends also, or even primarily, on the happiness and virtue of the City of God, which Leibniz conceives as composed of all intelligent substances, with God as its ruler. This discussion will be continued in sections 3 and 4 with attention to Leibniz's claims about the happiness of those who love God, and the punishment of others, in the City of God, and will conclude, in the fifth and final section of the chapter, with exploration of the epistemological modality of some of these claims.

1. Justice

Leibniz declares that "[God's] goodness and his justice, as well as his wisdom, do not differ from ours, except that they are infinitely more perfect."[2] Though not novel in Leibniz's time, the univocal attribution of moral properties to God and to human beings is also an Enlightenment theme that still resonates in John Rawls's insistence

[1] I am indebted to Larry M. Jorgensen, and to an anonymous reader for the press, for suggestions that were helpful in the final revision of this chapter.

[2] T pd 4.

that "the basic judgments of reasonableness must be the same, whether made by God's reason or by ours."[3]

Rawls does not discuss the univocity of *justice* as an attribute of God and humans, and he might have had more problems with that. In his view justice is primarily a predicate of complete political societies, and the most important case of justice as an attribute of a human individual is that of supporting the justice of such a society as a member of it, accepting the fair share it assigns one in the burdens, opportunities, and risks of human life in such a society. That can hardly be a way in which God is just, apart from incarnation as a rational but quite finite social animal.

Leibniz's political theory allows him, more easily than may be possible for Rawls, to predicate justice univocally of God and humans. He argues that "the principle of [God's] justice . . . will not be that equity, or that equality, which obtains among men," and which leads to the maxim "to do unto others as we would have them do unto us." God's motive must rather be "that of perfection," to "aim at the good and at perfection so far as possible."[4] In accordance with this judgment, Leibniz offers his favorite definition of justice, "Justice is the charity of the wise," adding that "This follows from the nature of God."[5]

Leibniz argues that "this same motive has a place in truly virtuous and generous men, whose supreme function [*degré*] is to imitate divinity, insofar as human nature is capable of it."[6] This applies most easily to the case of a wise and benevolent magistrate. In Leibniz's political vision, equality[7] and individual autonomy do not have the central place that Rawls, or the French Revolution, would claim for them. It is clear that he expected the wise to be few.[8] The just state would accordingly be paternalistic in a somewhat authoritarian way.[9] In such a political vision, justice as charity of the wise can without obvious incongruity be ascribed univocally to human magistrates and to God.

Having defined justice as "charity conformed to wisdom," Leibniz goes on to say that "charity is a universal benevolence," and that "benevolence is a disposition to love" and "to love is to find pleasure in the good, the perfection, the happiness of another."[10] How universal is charity's benevolence? Leibniz's answer is that it extends

[3] John Rawls, "On My Religion," in Rawls, *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith, with On My Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 268. The quoted document, written in the 1990s, is noncommittal as to whether God exists, but quite definite as to how God's moral attributes should be conceived.

[4] R 56–8.

[5] Grua 392; cf. G III.386, VII.549; T 179; cf. PNG 9. See also a plethora of texts cited in Gaston Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle et théodicée selon Leibniz* (Paris: Presses Universitaires do France, 1953), 166 n. 23; 211–12 nn. 329–31.

[6] R 57–8.

[7] Cf. R 56.

[8] R 58, 103–4; T Preface/G VI.25.

[9] Cf. R 77–9, 98–9, 107–8. See also Gaston Grua, *La justice humaine selon Leibniz* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), 363–71.

[10] G VII.549.

to all and only rational beings—not only "the whole human kind," but "rather the whole kind of users of reason."[11] That is also the domain of justice, in his view. In 1696 he writes that "Justice [is] nothing but the order that is observed with regard to the evil and good of intelligent creatures."[12] And in his Latin summary of the *Theodicy* he states that "Goodness related specifically to intelligent creatures, conjoined with wisdom, constitutes *Justice*."[13]

For justice, according to Leibniz, is a *social* virtue.[14] It governs attitudes and actions in social relations among rational beings who can recognize each other as persons. Non-rational creatures are not included in the domain of justice. As he wrote to Arnauld in 1687, "God governs brute substances following material laws of force or of communication of motion, but [governs] Minds following spiritual laws of Justice of which the others are incapable."[15] "Strictly speaking," he says, "rights [*jus*] belong only to intelligent beings."[16]

This is connected with the fact that *happiness* of its objects is an essential end of charity, and hence of the motive of justice, in Leibniz's view. When explaining the nature of justice as the charity of the wise, Leibniz sometimes mentions both the happiness and the perfection of the beloved, but commonly only the happiness, as the end at which that charity aims. And he denied that non-rational creatures are capable of happiness or misery, strictly speaking. "Of all the creatures that surround us," he declares, "there is none but the human mind that is capable of a true happiness."[17] And to Arnauld, in the letter I quoted earlier, he says that because the souls of lower animals are "incapable of reflection or consciousness," they are "not susceptible of happiness or unhappiness"[18] —which is not, I think, to say that they have no pleasures or pains, and is certainly not to say that there is no good or perfection at all in their existence.

That Leibniz excludes non-rational creatures from the domain of justice does not mean that he believes that the good of such creatures counts for nothing in the practical deliberations of the just or wisely charitable. He says in the *Theodicy*, "It is certain that God sets more store by a human being than by a lion; nonetheless I do not know if one can be sure that God prefers one single human being to the whole species of lions in all respects."[19] Similarly, I think Leibniz's denial of rights to non-rational beings should not be understood as implying that a just human ruler could not, at some net cost to human happiness, take steps to prevent the extermination of a whole species of non-rational animals. These judgments suggest, and I believe Leibniz must have supposed, that the good or perfection of non-rational creatures is taken into account by the wisdom that regulates God's charity, though the charity itself is a motive concerned

[11] A VI.iv.2891.
[12] Grua 379.
[13] T cd 50.
[14] R 77.
[15] A II.ii.257–8 = LA 124.
[16] Grua 676.
[17] A VI.iv:2234.
[18] A II.ii.259 = LA 126; cf Grua 676.
[19] T 118.

only with the good of rational creatures. This also seems to imply that God's most comprehensive motive is not the motive of justice, but a more comprehensive love of goodness or perfection which can in principle motivate wisdom to constrain the operation of the motive of charity that is essential to justice.[20]

2. The City of God

Famously central to Leibniz's attempted vindication of God's goodness in creating this one of all possible worlds, despite all the evils it contains, is the claim that God did the right thing, because this is the best of all possible worlds. The most troubling problem about this claim finds its classic expression in Candide's question: "if this is the *best* of all possible worlds, what must the others be like?"[21]

Voltaire scores, I think, a rhetorical but not a philosophical triumph in aiming his satire at the claim that this is the best of all possible worlds.[22] Candide's question is motivated by human sufferings caused by earthquakes, diseases, crimes, and war crimes. But Leibniz can and does agree that such things often happen.[23] The best of all possible worlds might not be the most accommodating to human beings. In determining which world is the best, one might argue as Leibniz does in the *Theodicy* that considerations of the good of intelligent creatures can in principle be outweighed on some points by considerations of the good or perfection to be realized in the existence of other, less excellent but more numerous creatures, and by considerations of order and harmony of the world as a whole.[24] And if we can manage to step back in a way from our human point of view, some of us may find it natural enough to regard the world as a whole as a marvelous thing, beautiful and awe-inspiring in its magnitude, variety, intricacy, and order, and perhaps even in its apparent making no exceptions for us. In a large metaphysical perspective one might hesitate to say that it would be a better *world* if it were better *for us*.[25]

But that does not get Leibniz off Voltaire's hook, insofar as his project is to vindicate God's *justice*. For maximal goodness of the world as a whole is not sufficient to manifest God's perfect justice, which is a social virtue that can be manifested only in God's treatment of intelligent creatures, or persons. Things might perhaps have gone somewhat better for rational creatures in a world that a Creator both charitable and wise would

[20] It also implies that the definition of wisdom as the science of happiness, which often occurs in Leibniz's discussions of justice (e.g. G VII, 549), can hardly be for him the last word about God's wisdom.

[21] Voltaire, *Candide*, ch. 6, in Voltaire, *Romans et contes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 151. I have translated freely to capture the rhetorical impact.

[22] A rhetorical triumph may, of course, be precisely what Voltaire wished to achieve. On the development, and the limits, of Voltaire's engagement with Leibniz's theodicy, see W.H. Barber, *Leibniz in France from Arnauld to Voltaire: A Study in French Reactions to Leibnizianism, 1670–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), especially chapter XII.

[23] T pd 43.

[24] T 118; T a 2/G VI.377–9.

[25] Cf. Diogenes Allen, *The Traces of God in a Frequently Hostile World* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1981).

choose for other reasons. Wisdom's regard for other values may limit the operation of charity's specific focus on the good of rational creatures. But the destiny of intelligent creatures in the best possible world must still be quite splendid on the whole, if justice is to be worth singling out for celebration as an attribute of the Creator. And Leibniz does insist that "the happiness of intelligent creatures is the principal part of God's designs."[26] Presumably it must be one of the chief excellences of the best world—or, perhaps, if the most perfect possible world whole were a truly miserable place for intelligent creatures, then God would not have created anything at all.[27]

No less important for Leibniz's theodicy, therefore, than his concept of the best possible world is his concept of *the City of God*. He says that God "makes of Minds the most excellent [*le plus beau*] of conceivable governments," to which he refers as "the City of God" or "the republic of Minds." Its membership includes *all* intelligent beings: humans, intelligent extraterrestrials (if any), also angels (assuming their existence, about which Leibniz says little), and God, too, as member and Monarch of the City.[28] As Leibniz says of it in "The Principles of Nature and of Grace" of 1714,

> all Minds, whether human or superhuman [*genies*], as they enter . . . into a kind of Society with God, are members of the City of God, that is, of the most perfect state, formed and governed by the greatest and best of Monarchs, where there is no crime without punishment, no good deeds without proportionate reward, and finally as much virtue and happiness as is possible.[29]

It is in this City of God, and not least in its happiness, that the justice of God, as a social virtue and a species of charity, must be manifested.[30] Accordingly Leibniz is prepared to argue from God's perfection to the excellence of the City of God. He claims to have shown in the *Theodicy*

> that it is a consequence of the supreme perfection of the Sovereign of the universe that the Kingdom of God is the most perfect of all possible States or governments, and that consequently what little evil is there is required for the completion [*le comble*] of the immense good that is found there.[31]

Read in isolation, these passages might seem to imply that no possible world contains a more perfect state or government, with more virtue and happiness, than could be found in the City or Kingdom of God in the actual best of all possible worlds. Consistency with the *Theodicy* as a whole might require a more restrained interpretation: as much virtue and happiness and perfection as is permitted by the order of

[26] T 118.
[27] Cf. T 8.
[28] DM 36; T 130, 146, 112, 247; T aII; Mon 84.
[29] PNG 15.
[30] I think the same is true of what Leibniz means in many contexts in speaking of God's "goodness" [*bonté*]. In the "Monadology" he says of the City of God, that "it is . . . in relation to this divine city that [God] has goodness [*Bonté*] in the strict sense, whereas his Wisdom and Power are shown everywhere" (Mon 86; cf. T cd 50).
[31] T a 2/G VI.379.

the universe and a due regard to the perfection of non-rational creatures.[32] But notwithstanding any compromises that divine wisdom might ordain among competing values in the universe, Leibniz is clearly committed to the claim that the perfection and happiness enjoyed by rational creatures in the City of God, or "Kingdom of Grace," are great indeed.

Because of its relevance to the question of divine justice, this claim about the City of God is as crucial for Leibniz's theodicy as his claims about the best possible world, and is, I believe, the part of his theodicy that is most exposed to Voltairean objections. How can Leibniz's assertion of the immense actual virtue and happiness of rational creatures be defended against such objections? As I have noted, his positive argument for this assertion is an appeal to God's "supreme perfection." But the credibility of that argument may be strained in the absence of plausible responses to Candide's questions about human suffering in natural and social disasters.

Where and when is the life of rational creatures so gloriously better and happier than it often seems to be in our here and now? Leibniz's responses to such questions regularly involve appeals to ignorance; but he seeks starting points in what he thinks we do know about the universe. Invoking "modern discoveries," as a resource for theology,[33] he finds in Copernican astronomy larger views of the works of God, providing a distant view of plenty of room for societies of rational creatures far happier and more perfect than we are.

> [O]ur earth is merely a satellite of one Sun, and there are as many Suns as fixed stars. And it is credible that there is immense space beyond all the fixed stars. So nothing rules out [the possibility] of either the Suns, or especially the region beyond the Suns, being inhabited by happy creatures. Yet even planets may be or become as happy as Paradise.[34]

More important, Leibniz believed he had adequate metaphysical reasons, as well as the support of divine revelation, for affirming the immortality of souls.[35] And a future life beyond the veil of death affords plenty of room for manifestations of virtue and happiness not yet experienced by us. Eschatology plays a central part in Leibniz's theodicy. He locates in a future life the best parts of the perfection and happiness of the City of God, quoting St. Paul's declaration (in Romans 8:18) that "the afflictions of this [present] time are not worthy [to be compared] with the future glory that will be revealed in us."[36]

[32] That may be suggested by Leibniz's statement, in one of the Appendices to the *Theodicy*, that God "chose not only to create human beings but also to create human beings as happy as is possible *in this system*" (T k 22/G VI.426, my italics). Similarly, in 1697 Leibniz writes: "nor would the universe be perfect enough if as much care were not taken for individuals as consistency with the universal harmony allows" (G VII.307/L 490).

[33] T 19.

[34] T cd 58; cf. T 19, T a II.

[35] T 89–90; PNG 9; Mon 76; T Preface/G VI.26.

[36] T cd 54; cf. T a 2; PNG 18.

Eschatology also has its problems for Leibniz. As he notes, doctrines of punishment—indeed eternal punishment—in the future life threaten to aggravate enormously the difficulty of the theological problem of evil;[37] and much of the *Theodicy* responds to this problem, directly or indirectly. Leibniz's argument for the happiness of those who love God, in this life and the next, will be the topic of section 3 of this chapter, and his views on the destiny of less virtuous souls will be discussed in section 4.

3. Perfection, Happiness, and Love for God

In the *Theodicy*, and in many other writings,[38] sometimes indeed with evangelistic fervor, Leibniz proposes intellectual enlightenment, and his philosophy in particular, as a way of salvation, or of blessedness, as he might prefer to call it. This way of blessedness is built around a conception of essential relationships among love, perfection, and happiness. In the *Theodicy* and elsewhere, Leibniz evinces a deep conviction that "the love of God above all things . . . is . . . the principle of true religion." He is willing to add that "this love is greater in proportion as it is more enlightened [*plus éclairé*]."[39] And by the very nature of love, Leibniz claims, this love has power to make the lover happy. Defining the nature of love, in "The Principles of Nature and of Grace," in 1714, he states that "pure, genuine love consists in the state that makes one taste pleasure in the perfections and the happiness of the object of one's love," and reasons that "since God is the most perfect and the happiest . . . of substances, that Love must give us the greatest pleasure of which one is capable, when God is its object."[40]

Leibniz sees such blessed love for God as arising from knowledge of God's perfections. To love God, he says in the *Theodicy*'s Preface, "it suffices to envisage [God's] perfections."[41] Indeed, he holds that "one loves God more, the more one can give a reason for one's love."[42] That is why the way to blessedness he recommends is an intellectual, indeed a philosophical way. Leibniz's univocal attribution of properties to God and to creatures, including us, helps prepare this way of blessedness. It is "easy" to envisage God's perfections, Leibniz says in the Preface to the *Theodicy*, "because we find in ourselves their ideas," because they are unlimited versions of perfections "of our own souls."[43]

[37] T 17.

[38] For example, A VI.iv.1364–6, 2240–83.

[39] Grua 161. I have discussed this topic at greater length than is possible here, and with more citations from Leibniz's writings, in Robert Merrihew Adams, "Leibniz's *Examination of the Christian Religion*," *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (1994): 526–36.

[40] PNG 16. Similarly he says in the Preface to the *Theodicy* that "there is nothing so agreeable as loving what is worthy of love . . . and there is nothing more perfect than God, nor anything more charming" (T Preface/G VI.27).

[41] T Preface/G VI.27; cf. A VI.iv.1364–6.

[42] A VI.iv.1994f./L 280 f.

[43] T Preface/G VI.27.

This univocity thesis instantiates a fundamental doctrine of Leibniz's theology, and of his metaphysics. He defined God as *ens perfectissimum*, the most perfect being, or more precisely as a being that has all perfections—by which he means, all the absolutely simple purely positive qualities, from which all other positive qualities must be derived, by conjunction or by limitation.[44] Understanding *reality* in a sense in which a thing has reality just to the extent that it has positive qualities, Leibniz infers that the reality of all the less perfect beings, including our reality, must be constituted by limited versions of the divine perfections.[45]

Why would knowledge of God's perfections give rise to love for God? How or why would one be disposed to find pleasure and happiness in God's perfectness? Leibniz's answer to this question is rooted in his conceptions of pleasure and happiness. He defines happiness [*felicité*] as "a durable state of pleasure."[46] He typically defines pleasure simply as a feeling (*sensus*, *sentiment*, *Empfindung*) of perfection.[47] There are places where he defines pleasure rather as the feeling of an *increase* in perfection.[48] More often, however, he seems to ignore this complication, and I will ignore it here too.

A more urgent question is raised by passages in Leibniz's writing (such as DM 15) that could be read as suggesting that the felt perfection that constitutes one's pleasure must be *one's own* perfection. This suggests at best a useless precision, as Gaston Grua rightly remarks in his magisterial study of Leibniz's ethics, "for knowledge and love transport into us the perfection of the object."[49] Leibniz gives a more complete account of his view when he says, "Pleasure is a knowledge or feeling of perfection, not only in ourselves, but also in another, for then some perfection is evoked in us."[50] The perfection of a created substance, in Leibniz's monadological metaphysics, is perfection of its perceptions and powers of perception. The *Monadology* (§§ 49–50) suggests the distinctness of the perceptions as a measure of the substance's perfection. Leibniz's writings

[44] A VI, iii, 574, 579/L 167. For fuller discussion, and more textual references, see Robert Merrihew Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), ch. 4.

[45] Cf. PNG 9, Mon 48. In this Leibniz ascribes to God, in effect, one of the roles of the Platonic Form of the Good. A similar view of the essences of creatures as ways of imitating God can be found in much of the Western tradition of philosophical theology. I have tried to place Leibniz in part of that story in Robert Merrihew Adams, "The Priority of the Perfect in the Philosophical Theology of the Continental Rationalists," in *Rationalism, Platonism and God: A Symposium on Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Michael Ayers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 149), 91–116. I cannot claim that Leibniz had a well-developed account of the derivation of limited perfections from the divine perfections, or indeed of the relations among different types of perfection more generally. That may give rise to problems for his conception of the best of all possible worlds, but is not, I think, a crucial problem for his claims about divine justice in the City of God.

[46] Grua 579. He also gives more complex definitions, in which happiness is durable joy or gladness [*laetitia*], which in turn is defined in terms of a preponderance of present pleasures over present pains or griefs (e.g. Grua 589, 603–4).

[47] See Grua, *La justice humaine selon Leibniz*, 48 n. 9, and Gregory Brown, "Leibniz's Moral Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*, ed. Nicholas Jolley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 413, for many citations of texts in which Leibniz gives such a definition.

[48] A VI.iv.2760, 2234/L 218; cf. DM 15, G VII.112.

[49] Grua, *La justice humaine selon Leibniz*, 48.

[50] Grua 579; cf. G VII.86.

on love suggest that perfection of the object perceived also adds to the perfection of a perception, as one might expect in a philosophy of broadly Platonic inspiration.

In view of these considerations we may expect, as Leibniz sees things, that a person who has an unclouded knowledge of God's perfections will find great pleasure in knowing them—indeed, greater pleasure in knowing them than in knowing anything else. And this state, if durable, will constitute the greatest happiness possible for us—and at the same time, a love for God above all else, in accordance with Leibniz's definition of love.

Therefore we should not be surprised that Leibniz makes clear in a number of his writings that he believed that a pure love of God above all things is a sufficient condition of supreme and eternal happiness or blessedness. I believe, indeed, that he regarded that as a truth of reason, with which truths of faith must be in conformity. He was less ready to say that a pure love of God is also a necessary condition of supreme blessedness; but I think he believed that too, and he did say something theologically akin to that in a set of notes written in the mid 1680s: "No one can be justified without a true love for God."[51]

This line of thought is not without its problems for Leibniz. In particular, he confronted questions about the theological orthodoxy of the thesis that a pure love for God above all things is sufficient for blessedness, now and in eternity. The problem, and Leibniz's view about it, are clearly articulated, relatively early in his career, in a dialogue that he wrote in 1679 for Duke Johann Friedrich of Hanover. The dialogue is thought to be a lightly fictionalized version of conversations that actually took place between Leibniz (represented in the dialogue by Theophile, a Lutheran) and Nikolaus Steno, the Roman Catholic apostolic vicar at the court of Hanover (represented by Poliandre).

Theophile introduces the topic with his thesis: "You'll agree that those who love God above all things are in a condition [*en estat*] to be saved." The problem is voiced by Poliandre:

> A pagan Philosopher can love God above all things, since reason can teach him that God is a being infinitely perfect and supremely lovable. But he will not be a Christian, for all that, for perhaps he will not have heard tell of Jesus Christ, without whom there is no salvation. Therefore love of God is not enough.

Theophile replies irenically, suggesting that the sufficiency of love for God can be reconciled with the necessity of knowing Christ, in accordance with

> the thought of several learned and pious Theologians, who believe that God enlightens all those who seek him sincerely, at least at the point of death, by revealing to them, even internally, what they need to know of Jesus Christ.

[51] A VI.iv.2355.

Theophile adds that this follows "that incontestable rule, that God does not refuse his grace to those who do what depends on them." Poliandre finds this resolution of the matter agreeable, and changes the subject.[52]

The problem receives essentially the same discussion thirty-one years later in the *Theodicy*.[53] Similar treatments of the issue of the salvation of non-Christians occur fairly often in Leibniz's writings.[54] It is clear that Leibniz cared deeply about the issue. He expressed himself with biting bluntness, unusual for him, in a letter of 1690 to his Roman Catholic friend Count Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels. Citing Antoine Arnauld as saying he "finds it strange that so many millions of pagans have not been condemned," Leibniz comments, "I would find it much stranger if they were condemned. I don't know why we are so moved to believe people damned or plunged into eternal miseries even when they could not help it. But that occasions thoughts that are hardly compatible with the goodness and justice of God."[55]

It remains the case that on Leibniz's own showing, the way of religious blessedness that he most enthusistically commends can be followed (up to the point of death, at any rate) in an intellectual framework of philosophical theology without reference to Jesus Christ. This may add to suspicions that Leibniz's piety is only superficially Christian. Such supicions are understandable, but I think not entirely fair. The role that Leibniz most articulately ascribes to Jesus Christ in God's plans for human perfection and happiness is that of divine educator and lawgiver.[56] That is certainly one of the roles traditionally ascribed to Christ; indeed, no role has been more widely accepted in Christian theologizing about Christ's "work" than that of Teacher. It is the main role ascribed to Christ in much modern Christian theology. Leibniz presents Christ's teaching as needed by human beings generally, even if less clearly needed individually by some of the more philosophically gifted. I will have more to say in section 5 about the place of that need in Leibniz's thought.

Quite explicitly, moreover, and I think sincerely, Leibniz does not exclude other ways (perhaps above reason but not contrary to it) in which Christ may be important or essential for salvation. In the *Causa Dei*, his Latin summary of the *Theodicy*, Leibniz says that "Christ the God-man was the biggest Reason for [God's] choosing the best series of things (namely this one)," and speaks of him as the "Foundation of Election,"

[52] A VI.iv.2220–1.

[53] T 95–8.

[54] Well known when the *Theodicy* was published was a document he sent to the French Catholic writer Paul Pellisson-Fontanier, which Pellisson published in 1691 without getting Leibniz's permission. In it Leibniz discusses the view that "there is no revealed article [of belief] that is absolutely necessary, and that thus *one can be saved* in all Religions, *provided that one truly loves God above all things* with a friendship-love based on his infinite perfections" (A I.vi.78–9). He presented the view as that of some respected Roman Catholic theologians, and opposed by Protestant theologians; he did not say that it was his own. But the warmth with which he presented the view, and the perfunctory treatment he gave to the less adventurous alternative he mentioned, left little doubt in the minds of contemporary readers, including Pellisson, that Leibniz believed the view. Leibniz seems to have suffered little or no this-worldly harm from such perceptions.

[55] A I.vi.107–8.

[56] G VI.26–7.

in which the elect "participate."[57] These are ideas with which other theological writers have done very interesting things; but they are not original with Leibniz, and (so far as I have seen) he does not explain or develop them, or integrate them with anything distinctively his own.

4. Punishment in the City of God

Leibniz's argument that a pure love of God above all things is intrinsically beatifying is not the whole story about his City of God. In that "city" there are not only virtue and its rewards, but also crime and punishment. Recall that in "The Principles of Nature and of Grace," Leibniz describes God's City as one in which "there is no crime without punishment, no good deeds without proportionate reward."[58]

Historically the most discussed aspect of Leibniz's treatment of punishment in the City of God is his attitude toward the doctrine of eternal punishment. Three things are clear about this. One is that in his writings Leibniz repeatedly endorsed the doctrine and never rejected it.[59] A second is that one of the grounds of justification of punishment that Leibniz accepts, though not the only one, is purely retributive. He holds that the justification of punishment can be "grounded in a relation of fitness which satisfies not only the offended party, but also the Wise who see it, as a beautiful piece of music, or again a good piece of architecture, satisfies cultured minds."[60] The *Theodicy* does not support this retributivism with much argument, and the suggestion of cultured minds finding aesthetic satisfaction in the punishment of wrongdoers is hardly winsome.[61]

Considerations of retributive fitness do function, however, to limit the extent of justified punishment. They appear to motivate a third and most characteristic feature of Leibniz's views on eternal punishment. He holds that only those who go on sinning forever will be punished forever; "punishment is not eternal unless sin is also eternal."[62] This is Leibniz's reply to the objection that there is a "disproportion . . . between

[57] T cd 49, 134, 140.

[58] PNG 15.

[59] I take that as established by Lloyd Strickland in his meticulously documented and extremely illuminating paper, "Leibniz on Eternal Punishment," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009): 307–31. I am indebted to Strickland's paper for leading me to many relevant texts on this topic.

[60] T 73. This sort of partly aesthetic rationale for divine punishment is by no means original with Leibniz. See St. Augustine of Hippo, *On Free Choice of Will,* translated by Thomas Willaims (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, Co. 1993), 87–91 (*De Libero Arbitrio*, Book III, ch. 9).

[61] In a draft of a passage I quoted earlier from a letter to Count Ernst, Leibniz himself says something he might take to heart in this context: "I don't know why we take so much pleasure in believing people are damned. Isn't there a bit of vanity and corruption of the human heart that finds a secret joy in the bad things that happen to someone else, in exalting oneself above so many people that one thinks are miserable?" (A II.ii.340–1). The idea of retribution as an aspect of harmony may be evoked more persuasively when Leibniz speaks of "the very law of justice dictating that each one have a part in the perfection of the universe, and in happiness of his own, in proportion to his own virtue and to the will by which he is moved toward the common good" (E 149/L 490). But that articulates no reason why *misery*, as distinct from lesser degrees of happiness, should be a product of the charity of the wise.

[62] Grua 249.

an eternal punishment and a limited crime." He declines to argue that a finite creature could commit a sin that is infinite because it offends an infinite God. For "it [is] enough to say that the duration of the fault caused the duration of the punishment."[63] "Even if we . . . conceded that no sin is infinite in itself, nonetheless it can certainly be said that the sins of the damned are *infinite in number*, since they persist in sinning through all eternity."[64] On this view there is never a time at which anyone has been sentenced to eternal punishment for sins already committed. The lost souls "are always able to be set free, but they never will it," as Leibniz puts it in one of his earliest writings on this subject.[65]

The thesis that never-ending punishment, if just, must be based on never-ending sin drew profoundly interesting comment in the early 1770s, in an interchange between two notable fans of Leibniz, Johann August Eberhard and Gottfried Ephraim Lessing. The main topics of the interchange were whether the doctrine of eternal punishment really fits or belongs in Leibniz's philosophy, and whether Leibniz really believed the doctrine. Eberhard, now remembered mainly as a leading Leibnizian critic of Kant, seemed to be for the negative on both questions, at least initially; and Lessing, now remembered for many things, was emphatically for the affirmative on both questions.

Eberhard drew attention to the fact that the justification of punishments going on forever on the basis of sins going on forever provides grounds only for thinking it *possible* that God would have good reason for punishing forever, since it also seems *possible* that no one would go on sinning forever.[66] But Eberhard also noticed an argument in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Metaphysics* from which Eberhard and Lessing between them, by the end of the interchange, had developed, and agreed on, a way in which a sort of never-ending punishment could be seen as deeply rooted in Leibnizian metaphysics. The crucial point, in Lessing's words, which Eberhard endorsed, is

> the fruitful proposition that nothing in the world is isolated, nothing is without consequences, and nothing is without eternal consequences[.] Thus if no sin can be without consequences, and these consequences are the punishments of sin, how can these punishments be anything but eternal in duration?[67]

[63] T 133, 266.

[64] Leibniz, Preface to a planned republication of a work by Ernst Soner which argued that eternal punishment would be unjust (my italics). Leibniz's brief preface was first published by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in his essay, "Leibniz on Eternal Punishment," and can be found in the original in Lessing, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1956), 459–60, and in English in Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 41–2.

[65] A VI.iii.138/CP 81. See Strickland, "Leibniz on Eternal Punishment," 310.

[66] Johann August Eberhard, *Neue Apologie des Sokrates, oder Untersuchung der Lehre von der Seeligkeit der Heiden*, vol. I (Berlin: Friedrich Nikolai, 1776; first published 1772), 395–6.

[67] Lessing, "Leibniz on Eternal Punishment" in Lessing, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, 476/Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, 52. Eberhard accepted the point in his *Neue Apologie des Sokrates*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Friedrich Nikolai, 1778), 482–3. Baumgarten's argument was noticed in Eberhard, *Neue Apologie des Sokrates*, vol. I, 427–9.

There is obviously a natural place for this point in Leibniz's philosophy, inasmuch as he holds that every soul (indeed every substance) always has in it vestiges of everything that has ever happened to it,[68] though of course it could be debated whether the vestiges of virtue and of sin would indeed amount to rewards and punishments respectively.

In the judgment of both Lessing and Eberhard, these punishments would not necessarily dominate a person's psychological state at any moment. On the assumption that all of us have sinned in some ways, all of us would be punished eternally. But that would not necessarily keep us from also being rewarded, and perhaps attaining blessedness, at the same time.[69] In the end I think neither Eberhard nor Lessing is committed to the thesis that some sinners will be denied eternal happiness.

Although this line of thought coheres well with Leibniz's metaphysics, I think he would probably reject it, because it implies that a single sin of finite duration could have (indeed would have) a punishment of infinite duration. That is evidently contrary to his conception of God's justice, which is why he says that punishment can go on forever only if sinning goes on forever. In a somewhat different way, many theologians might find it disturbing in Lessing's and Eberhard's scheme that it does not seem to provide for a forgiveness that blots out past sins entirely.

More significantly, perhaps, Lessing notes that punishment could be infinite in duration, and thus *extensively* infinite, without being *intensively* infinite by being infinitely painful at a single time. Eberhard goes further and argues that Leibniz's view that the only way in which punishment of a finite individual can justly be infinite is by being extensively infinite in duration does not allow for punishment that is intensively infinite.[70] Taken together the arguments of Eberhard and Lessing suggest a view of eternal punishment much milder than traditional visions of fire and brimstone. Lessing explicitly denies that physical torture is an ingredient in divinely ordained punishment after death; only natural psychological consequences of sin are to be part of that.[71]

To what extent would Leibniz accept this softening of the conception of punishment after death? What is his view of the nature or quality, and specifically the *intensity*, of punishments in the City of God? Reflection on points made by Eberhard and Lessing suggests that for issues of theodicy this question is at least as important as the question of *duration* of punishments.

Particularly important, I believe, is the question whether any intelligent creature's existence will be so unhappy, so miserable, in the end and on the whole, that it would be preferable for that creature if it had never existed. At least at first glance, one might think that a negative answer to this question would be more propitious for vindication of the wise Creator's charity. And Leibniz does sometimes employ a line of argument

[68] DM 8.

[69] Lessing, *Gesammelte Werke*, VII.477–83/*Philosophical and Theological Writings*, 53–7; Eberhard, *Neue Apologie des Sokrates*, II.483–5.

[70] Eberhard, *Neue Apologies des Sokrates*, vol. II, 486–90.

[71] Lessing, "Leibniz on Eternal Punishment" in Lessing, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 7, 478–80/Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, 54–5.

that seems to presuppose that every intelligent creature will have an existence at least marginally worth having—though I do not know whether Leibniz ever noticed in the argument a need for such a presupposition.

The need for the presupposition is perhaps clearest in a fragment of dialogue that may have been written about 1690.[72] In it Leibniz's imaginary interlocutor brings up the theological problem of evil in the mode of personal complaint, asking, in a fairly deterministic context, why God didn't give him more strength to resist temptation. The answer that Leibniz gives exploits a feature of his own determinism. To the question "Why didn't God give you more strength?" he replies, "I answer: if he had done that, you would not be, for he would have produced, not you, but another creature."[73]

This response, however, does not work to vindicate God's justice toward the complainant except on the assumption that the complainant has good reason to be glad that he exists rather than not. Otherwise, he could reasonably reply as follows. "That's right: I wouldn't exist. For me, however, existence is not preferable to non-existence. That's what I'm complaining about!" That complaint would not pose the question whether the complainant deserved to suffer, given that he already existed and had committed crimes. The issue it would raise is whether a wisely charitable God would have created, in the first place, an intelligent being for whom it would be better never to have existed.

A further consideration might press Leibniz to say "No" to this question. He defines *the world* as "the aggregate of finite things."[74] And he assigns a low metaphysical status to aggregates as such, and also to intersubstantial relations, regarding them as mere appearances. In view of that, we may ask: Do holistic properties of the world-aggregate, and relations (however harmonious) between individual substances, have too little reality, and therefore too little metaphysical perfection, to give a charitable divine wisdom reason enough to create an intelligent being that would be permanently, utterly miserable? Mustn't the net *internal* value of each existing substance's existence make a *positive* contribution to the sum of value of the best possible world? Perhaps this line of thought never crossed Leibniz's mind. It never crossed *my* mind until I was writing this chapter. But it should have.

I have noticed only two passages in Leibniz's works in which there is clear, explicit articulation of the question, whether anyone's existence will on the whole be worse than never existing. One is in notes for his own use that he wrote in 1705 on an English religious pamphlet. Discussing issues about the creation of persons destined to be damned, the author, known to us only as "J. C.," poses the question I have in mind: "Were it not better such Persons never had been?" J. C. answers,

[72] For a much earlier hint of the argument, but perhaps not quite so clear in its bearing on theodicy, see A VI.iii.148/CP 107.

[73] A VI, iv, 1639.

[74] G VII.302/L 486.

A Beeing even in a condemned Sinner, is preferable to no Beeing, as far as his Beeing is the work of his Creator, for it is simply better to be something than nothing; but the dismal Miseries and Torments attending the Sinner and annex'd to his Crime are no positive Beeing, but a privation of well-Beeing, The sole effect and product of Malice and Sin.[75]

One might think Leibniz should have agreed with these views. He is committed to the thesis that everything in the created universe has perfection to the degree that it is positively real, and that evil is rooted in privation.[76] He also holds that every created substance perceives completely, albeit more or less confusedly, the best of all possible worlds. At the most fundamental level, in the Leibnizian universe, there is nothing to be perceived but perfection, in higher or lower degree. So if pleasure *is* perception of perfection, why shouldn't Leibniz hold that the existence of *all* substances capable of pleasure or displeasure is predominantly pleasant? Couldn't he thus give an argument that all of us will at worst get to Limbo?

So far as I know, Leibniz never goes there—not explicitly, anyway. Commenting on the passage I've quoted from J. C., he says,

I would distinguish, and say that for such a man himself it would be better not to be, as Christ too says explicitly that for such a man it would be better not to have been born. But it is better for the universe itself for the matter to be as it is.[77]

Perhaps respect for texts of Scripture cited in this passage (Matthew 26:24; Mark 14:21) kept Leibniz from affirming the thesis, otherwise so well suited to his optimistic philosophy, that even those, if any, who are eternally punished have an existence that is preferable to non-being.

The other passage in which the question emerges explicitly is more public and seems intentionally indecisive. It is in the *Theodicy*, at the end of the Appendix on Archbishop King's *Essay on the Origin of Evil*. Leibniz describes King as doubting "whether it isn't better to be damned than to be Nothing," since the damned may find in their misery the source of a perverse pleasure that they take in criticizing the ways of God. Leibniz comments: "These thoughts are not to be despised, and I have sometimes had similar ones, but I am not inclined to pass final judgment on them."[78]

King's verdict on the thought that it is better to be damned than to be nothing is negative. He says, "'Tis better for [the damned] indeed not to be than to be; but only in the opinion of wise Men, to which [the damned] do not assent."[79] When he wrote *The Confession of a Philosopher*, almost forty years earlier, Leibniz might have agreed

[75] J.C. *An Answer to the Query of a Deist, concerning the Necessity of Faith* (1687), 11.

[76] This is an Augustinian thesis. On the thought that "A Beeing even in a condemned Sinner, is preferable to no Beeing," cf. Augustine, *On Free Choice of Will*, III.8.

[77] Grua 252.

[78] T k 27/G VI.436; cf. T 270–1.

[79] William King, *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, translated from the Latin (London, 1731, reprinted New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1978), 309; cf. 310–11 (Appendix, section II.x–xi).

precisely with King.[80] In the *Theodicy* he declines quite publicly, if somewhat vaguely, to pass a final verdict on the thought.

This is by no means the only passage in which Leibniz expresses himself indecisively, tentatively, or with highly nuanced modalities of approval and disapproval, regarding opinions about divine punishment. Consider, for instance, the sequence of treatment of the rival doctrines of universal salvation and eternal punishment, at their first major appearance on the stage of the *Theodicy*. In section 17 Leibniz remarks that the doctrine of eternal damnation seems to redouble the severity of the problem of evil, "since there will be many called, and few elect or saved." He passes immediately to a description of views that are less harsh, beginning with authors highly regarded in church traditions, including St. Paul,[81] who said things that might suggest that the number of the damned will at least be much smaller. Then explicit universalism comes on the scene, represented by "several pious and learned, but daring persons" who are reviving the opinion of Origen, the great 3rd-century Alexandrian Christian theologian who held that "the good will gain the upper hand in due time, in everything and everywhere, and that all rational creatures, even the bad angels, will in the end become holy and blessed."[82] At the end of the universalist train appears M. Le Clerc, who has "ingeniously pleaded the cause of the Origenists, though without declaring himself for them"—a lawyerly figure doing a sort of thing that Leibniz himself sometimes did. In all this not a word of evaluation from Leibniz himself on the doctrine of universal salvation.

Section 18 brings the entry of what Leibniz calls "the amusing fantasy [*chimere*] of a certain Astronomical Theology," offering a fabulous version of Origen's "restoration of all things." Leibniz says in his Preface to the *Theodicy* that he included this to lighten up a subject that may have seemed too serious for some readers.[83] I note that it also gave him a version of the doctrine of universal salvation about which he could say, "I in no way approve of" its "arbitrary suppositions," without saying anything of the sort about Origen's version of the doctrine. Having thus rejected at least one form of the doctrine of universal salvation, Leibniz can begin section 19 saying, "In holding ourselves therefore to the established doctrine that the number of human beings eternally damned will be incomparably greater than that of the saved"—from which he goes on to explain how he thinks that doctrine can be reconciled with the bestness of this

[80] See A VI.iii.142/CP 93. This passage may express the "similar thoughts" that Leibniz says he has had. It does suggest that the damned may have a perverse pleasure similar to that suggested by King.

[81] The allusion is to Romans 11:26–36, a favorite text for Leibniz. Worth noting also is T cd 49, one of the most strongly Christological passages associated with the *Theodicy*, in which Leibniz concludes by saying that through Christ "the whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." The words just quoted are taken verbatim from the Latin Vulgate translation of Romans 8:21, except that Leibniz has added the adjective "whole" [*omnis*], giving his statement (if taken literally) an even more emphatic resonance with Origen's idea of complete restoration than the biblical original has.

[82] Two of the authors mentioned in this series, Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa, seem to have been among Leibniz's favorite ancient Christian writers; cf. G III.190.

[83] G VI.47.

actual world and the glorious happiness of the City of God. We might note also that in arguing again for that reconcilability in section 263 of the *Theodicy*, Leibniz remarks parenthetically that the "supposition" that there will be more damned than saved "is not . . . absolutely certain."[84]

Given such contexts in which Leibniz's own propositional attitudes are hard to pin down, it is not surprising to find Eberhard hypothesizing that in trying to commend his philosophy to all parties, Leibniz "posited their doctrines as suppositions, and assigned them a tolerable sense, in accordance with which he reconciled them to his system, without committing himself to them."[85] Certainly Leibniz not only tried to reconcile the doctrine of eternal punishment with his system, but also argued that an "Origenist," a partisan of the doctrine of universal salvation, would be "even easier to satisfy,"[86] as Eberhard points out.[87] I believe that Leibniz did in fact commit himself to a doctrine of eternal punishment. But such a characterization is too simple to do justice to the complexities of Leibniz's attitudes. To understand them, we need to take into account the placement of theology in Leibniz's epistemology.

5. Theology as Jurisprudence for the City of God

An important discussion of the epistemology of theology is found in a letter that Leibniz wrote to the Scottish nobleman Thomas Burnett of Kemney in February 1697.[88] There he divides "Theological truths and inferences" into "two species." Those that "can be demonstrated absolutely, with metaphysical necessity and in a way that is not contestable," have "metaphysical certainty." The others have at most "moral certainty." For Leibniz this is the chief partition in theology. Metaphysical certainty trumps all other epistemic modalities for Leibniz; in that way faith must be in conformity with reason.[89] Leibniz sees this distinction as largely coinciding with the distinction between natural theology and revealed theology. Much, at least, of natural theology belongs to the metaphysically certain sort.[90] That includes the principles of divine justice, and what

[84] A peripheral but striking example of delicately nuanced attitudes is found in a letter of 1712, in which a form of the doctrine of universal salvation, contained in a religious epic poem whose publication he was encouraging, is described by Leibniz as "an opinion which I condemn least of all, but am unwilling to make my own" (D V.297). This case and its context are described at length in Strickland, "Leibniz on Eternal Punishment," 327–30.

[85] Eberhard, *Neue Apologie des Sokrates*, vol. I, 396–7. In the second (and later) volume of the *Neue Apologie*, responding to Lessing's critique, Eberhard insists he did not mean to accuse Leibniz of vanity or anything dishonorable (II.491–2).

[86] T 211.

[87] Eberhard, *Neue Apologie des Sokrates*, II.496.

[88] G III.193–4.

[89] This thesis was largely accepted in scholastic theology, as Leibniz insists. However, he pushed it farther than many theologians would, as reflected in Arnauld's dismissive reaction (A II.ii./LA 15–16) to Leibniz's insistence that he could not in good conscience join the Roman Catholic Church if it would not tolerate certain "philosophical opinions, of which [he believed he had] a demonstration" (A I.iv.320–1).

[90] Cf. T pd 44.

follows from them, such as that God will not damn the innocent, and that "the necessary grace will not be denied to one who does what is in his power."[91] I believe Leibniz also thought it absolutely certain, and a part of the true natural theology, that God will not damn anyone who has a pure love of God above all things. But what depends on "History and the facts," or on "the interpretation of texts," as *revealed theology* does, belongs to the sort of theology that cannot have more than moral certainty.[92]

In the letter to Burnett Leibniz divides philosophy too into two parts. "Theoretical philosophy is founded on true analysis, of which the Mathematicians give examples . . . But practical Philosophy is founded on . . . the art of estimating the degrees of proofs," or as we would say, of probabilities. Thus Leibniz assigns merely probable reasoning as such, to the *practical* part of philosophy. Why does Leibniz do that? For the same reason, I think, that the highest degree of probability is called *moral* certainty. That means a strong enough probability of truth to *act* on[93]—indeed, I think we should add, strong enough to act on decisively in matters of the greatest importance. The practical character of probable reasoning is underlined when Leibniz tells Burnett that "only the Jurists," whose reasoning, of course, is required to be practical, "have given examples . . . that can serve as a beginning for forming a science of proofs, suitable for verifying historical facts and for giving the meaning of texts." Hence Leibniz goes on to say that a well established discipline of theology requires "a moral Dialectic, and a natural Jurisprudence."

Although Leibniz classified the science of proofs or probabilities as part of practical philosophy, it is clear that he thought that the degrees of probability can be determined theoretically, and that a high degree of theoretical probability is required for rational acceptance of a merely probable proposition.[94] The most plausible interpretation of his view, I believe, is that for any degree of probability less than metaphysical certainty, practical reason, and not just theoretical reason, is required to justify the conclusion, "Therefore I (or we) should accept this proposition." That is because how much probability is required to justify acceptance depends on what is at stake. In terms native to our discourse of probability, not Leibniz's, where the probability of a proposition is less than 1.0, acceptance of the proposition must be justified by expected utilities, and not by theoretical probabilities of truth alone.

On this reading, Leibniz did recognize purely theoretical beliefs about probabilities of propositions, but did not also recognize purely theoretical beliefs that have as objects merely probable propositions themselves, rather than their probabilities. Instead he recognized beliefs that consist in commitment to *act* on an assumption of truth, based on a judgment that the assumed proposition is prudent or safe to act on—or, in his role

[91] T 95.

[92] In the *Theodicy* also it is clearly Leibniz's view that the "proofs" or "motives of credibility" of revealed religion "can give only a moral certainty" (T pd 5; cf. T pd 1).

[93] Cf. Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, IV.205 (CSMK, vol. 1, 289).

[94] See Adams, *Leibniz*, 200–1.

as jurist, that it is just to act on it. To what extent that was only an epistemological view that Leibniz accepted, and to what extent he actually lived his mental life that way, is something about which we can hardly have moral certainty. But there are many places in his theological writings, including the *Theodicy*, where the reasons that he seems to give as his decisive basis for adopting some merely probable view are that it is the *safest* one to hold, or that rejected alternatives are *harmful*.

Discussion of the question, whether theology is a theoretical or a practical science goes back at least to the 13th century. St. Thomas Aquinas argued that theology is primarily a theoretical science; but St. Bonaventure argued that it is primarily a practical science, on the ground that its principal end is "that we should become good," and particularly that we should be moved to love God.[95] Leibniz is not an innovator in assigning revealed theology to the province of practical reason, though the extent of his epistemological pragmatism in theology may be surprising.

What are the ends of revealed theology that shape the expected utilities in Leibniz's thinking about it? I am sure that Leibniz would agree with Bonaventure in giving a pre-eminent place to the goal of fostering love for God. Indeed, Leibniz does in a number of places in the *Theodicy* argue against views on the ground that they do not allow an adequate basis for loving God. But another end that theology is supposed to serve also looms large in the *Theodicy*. We meet it early in the Preface, where he narrates a brief history of religions—or at any rate a history of the religions of Europe and the Mediterranean world. It can fairly be called a narrative of enlightenment—or of "the education of the human race," as Lessing would later put it in the title of a celebrated essay.[96] It is a history of the development of "natural religion" and particularly of its attainment of public authority in and through what would later be called the "positive religions." Nothing is more emphasized in this narrative than the achievement of the revealed religions of ancient Israel and Christianity in "making natural religion pass into law." That, Leibniz says, is what ancient philosophers among the Gentiles could not accomplish, though they already possessed (as he implies) truths of natural religion. But with the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire, "the religion of the wise became [the religion] of the peoples."[97]

The connection of Christian revelation with law is a fixed point in Leibniz's theological thinking. In the mid-1680s, in his largest work in systematic theology, he wrote that God "as legislator declares his particular and public [*apertam*] will regarding the acts of minds and the governance of his city, and fixes rewards and punishments, and *for that purpose* instituted revelations."[98] And in a private document of 1693, he wrote,

[95] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 4; St. Bonaventure, *In primum librum sententiarum,* Prooemium, q. 3, in Bonaventure, *Opera omnia*, vol. 1 (Quaracchi, 1882), 12–14.

[96] "The Education of the Human Race" ["*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*"] in Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, 217–40.

[97] T Preface/G VI.26–7.

[98] A VI.iv.2361, italics added.

"Theology is a sort of divine jurisprudence, explicating the legal principles [*jura*] of our association with God."[99] In other words, it is jurisprudence for the City of God.

Why this connection between revelation and law? Why does Leibniz, an adherent of what we call the Lutheran church, think religion should become law? There certainly are traditions in which law is absolutely central to religious piety, but Lutheran Christianity was not originally one of them. The answer to this question most clearly indicated by Leibniz is that the making known of rewards and punishments set by God is necessary if the religion of the wise is to become the religion of the many. It is needed as a motive for the majority of human beings to move toward moral and spiritual improvement and health, since relatively few attain in this life to a pure love of God above all things.[100]

Leibniz clearly believed that these benefits depend greatly on established religious institutions, to interpret God's will, with the aid of established doctrines about God's particular dealings with human beings. I believe this is a major motive of his theological conservatism, his reluctance to abandon doctrines established in a sufficiently wide range of Christian churches. According to the *Theodicy*,[101] doctrines that deserve this trust must be grounded in a revelation that has sufficient proofs or "motives of credibility." For the most part these will be largely scripturally attested miracles connected with the historic giving of the revelation. Another motive of credibility that Leibniz mentions elsewhere is "the holiness of the doctrine."[102] Leibniz argues that even though doctrines of revealed religion established in this way have only *moral* certainty, it is rational to refuse to abandon any of them unless an objection to the doctrine is proved with *metaphysical* certainty.[103]

I believe the rationality thus affirmed by Leibniz must be understood as practical. This is not to say, however, that the doctrines defended in this way are all exclusively ethical precepts and other directly practical applications. On the contrary, Leibniz vigorously defended doctrines of revealed theology of highly theoretical content, such as those of Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity.[104]

These considerations may facilitate our understanding of the epistemic modality of Leibniz's acceptance of the doctrine of eternal punishment. With that in mind I will comment on just two more texts. In January 1695 Leibniz wrote a letter to one Lorenz Hertel, in which he said about the rival doctrine of universal salvation,

> All that can be said about it is that it would be true if it were possible, and if divine justice could allow it. But as we do not know the depths of [divine justice], it is safer not to advance opinions

[99] Grua 241.
[100] R 58–9.
[101] T pd 1–5.
[102] Grua 30.
[103] T pd 3.
[104] See especially Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation: Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Gerald Parks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) with many citations and quotations of texts.

which are not soundly established and can be harmful since they are capable of keeping sinners in their security.[105]

Against the background of his epistemology, I think it is fair to say that in this text Leibniz grants that he does not *know* whether all humans (or all rational creatures) will be saved in the end or not. Given his insistence that sinful acts of creatures are contingent, and that eternal punishment depends on eternal sinning, he has reason to think it is not certain that any sinful creature will never repent and be saved. But he argues (wrongly, in my opinion) that it is *practically unwise* to adopt universalism because we can foresee moral and spiritual harm that might result from it, and because it is not ecclesiastically established as a revealed doctrine as the rival doctrine of eternal punishment is.

Much the same stance is expressed, less fully but very elegantly, in a statement that can be viewed as crowning the *Theodicy*'s discussions of this subject. After discussing a number of texts bearing on the question whether it is possible for a damned person to be "delivered," Leibniz concludes that "it must be confessed that this whole case [*tout ce detail*] is problematic, God having revealed to us what is needed for fearing the greatest of woes, and not what is needed for understanding it."[106] Here knowledge seems to be denied. Rather, a practical spiritual advantage is claimed for belief in eternal punishment—or more precisely, for fearing it.

This does not mean that Leibniz could not sincerely profess belief in eternal punishment. I assume that he was sincerely committed to speak, and more generally to act, on the assumption that the doctrine is true, and that he sincerely regarded the doctrine as having at least the minimum theoretical probability required to sustain such a commitment to a practically advantageous proposition. Given his epistemology, what more by way of sincerity of belief can we reasonably expect of him?

In the practical reasoning of these theological texts, the lawyerly voice of Leibniz, accustomed to advise princes and courts of Germany on the interpretation of the Roman law tradition, seeks to advise leaders and peoples of the whole world on the interpretation of divine legislation for the City of God of which they all are members. The reasoning in the interpretation is broadly consequentialist. A God whose goodness is consequentialist enough to insist on creating a world if and only if it is the best of all possible worlds[107] might be expected to approve.

[105] A I.xi.21. [106] T 277. [107] T 8.