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**The Battle of the Endeavors: Dynamics of the Mind and Deliberation in
New Essays on Human Understanding, book II, xx-xxi**

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Corrected version

List of corrections to the printed version in “Für unser Glück oder das Glück anderer”. Vorträge des X. Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses, Hannover, 18. – 23. Juli 2016, Herausgegeben von Wenchao Li in Verbindung mit Ute Beckmann, Sven Erdner, Esther-Maria Errulat, Jürgen Herbst, Helena Iwasinski und Simona Noreik, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, 2016, Band V, pages 73-87:

p. 74 line 5 add “volition” to the list of mental elements

p. 81 3rd line from bottom: the sentence starting with “Each deliberation” should be read as follows: “Each deliberation takes place as it were mechanically, as the conflict between the efforts determines the final direction of the will.”

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In *New Essays on Human Understanding* (NE) Leibniz presents an interesting picture of the human mind. It is a busy place where perceptions, volitions and appetitions fill each corner. These are well-known features of the Leibnizian mind, but it is seldom acknowledged that volitions and appetitions can be regarded as tendencies or inclinations which have a force-like character.¹ This may partly be because of Russell's and others skepticism of extending physical forces outside of the realm of physics.² In my view, a benevolent reading of *New Essays* should remove these reservations - when one reads chapters xx-xxi of book II, one is bound to find endeavors that are opposed to each other at each moment which makes the Leibnizian mind a dynamic whole: it is like a battlefield with victories and losses, large battle that goes on and on and smaller skirmishes which have an effect on the main battle. In what follows, I will present an overview of the dynamics of the mind in the *New Essays* and argue that Leibniz employed more or less explicitly two different models of decision-making in illustrating these mental processes.

Entelechy and Efforts

As Leibniz argues in *Monadology*, §11-13, the monad's natural changes come from an internal principle. Besides the principle, of which I will say more in a moment, there must be diversity in that which changes. The diversity is produced by perception, which is 'the passing state which involves and represents a multitude in the unity or in the simple substance'.³ There is a hierarchy of perceptions of varying clarity and distinctness in the mind which Leibniz discusses in his 1684 article *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas*.⁴ A systematic discussion of the role of confused knowledge in the mind, however, had to wait until *New Essays* where Leibniz relates it to many other mental elements, among others appetite, volition, emotion and instinct which can be seen as force-like desires or tendencies.⁵

Chapter xxi of the second book of NE is titled 'Of Power and Freedom' and in §1 Leibniz argues that power in general can be described as the possibility of change, but says that it is not only a faculty, but also an endeavor which can be distinguished into entelechy and efforts. Entelechy is related to primitive active force and efforts to derivative forces. When entelechy is accompanied with perception, it is a soul. In addition, there is a special passive force in bodies which is not in the mind (primary matter). (§4).

In *Monadology*, §18 Leibniz describes the entelechy or appetite as follows: '[Monads] have in themselves a certain perfection; they have a sufficiency that makes them the sources of their

¹ A notable recent exception is Martha Brandt Bolton: "Change in the Monad", in: Eric Watkins (ed.): *The Divine Order, the Human Order and the Order of Nature. Historical Perspectives*, New York 2013, S. 175-194. I will use the terms 'endeavor' and 'force' interchangeably.

² See Richard T. W. Arthur: *Leibniz*, Cambridge 2014, S. 124-125.

³ *Monadology*, §14; GP VI, 608; AG, 214. See also *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, §2. I refer to the following editions in English: G. W. Leibniz: *The Leibniz-De Volder Correspondence*, translated and edited by Paul Lodge. New Haven: 2013 (LvD), *Leibniz's 'New System' and Associated Contemporary Texts*, translated and edited by R. S. Woolhouse and Richards Francks, Oxford 1997 (WF), *New Essays on Human Understanding*, translated and edited by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett, Cambridge 1996 (RB), *Philosophical Essays*, edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, Indianapolis 1989 (AG), *Theodicy. Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, translated by E. M. Huggard, La Salle 1985 (H) and John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, edited with an introduction, critical apparatus and glossary by Peter H. Nidditch, Oxford 1975 (E).

⁴ A VI, 4 A, 585-592.

⁵ The idea of a dynamical mind is already in the very early *Confessio philosophi* (1672-73) where Leibniz identified the affects of the mind with conatuses in the bodies (A VI, 3, 141). On Leibniz's early views on this topic, see my "Affects and Activity in Leibniz's *De Affectibus*", in: Adrian Nita (ed.): *Between Continuity and Transformation: Leibniz on Substance and Substantial Forms*, Dordrecht 2015, S. 73-88.

internal actions, and so to speak, incorporeal automata'.⁶ However, power and self-sufficiency is not all that the entelechy has – in *New System of Nature* Leibniz writes: 'I found ... that the nature of substantial forms consists in force, and that from this there follows something analogous to feeling and desire; and that they must therefore be understood along the lines of our notion on souls'.⁷ The entelechy or substantial form in substances is the source of active power and an internal principle or law-of-the-series, but also a certain desire or feeling for something which relates it to final causes.⁸

An occurrence of this power in the mind is will. When in II, xxi, §5 Philalethes argues that we have a power to begin, continue or end an action which is called will and that the actual exercise of that power is called volition, Theophilus agrees and adds in §19 that we can will only what we think good.⁹ Therefore the will in the mind is a power to initiate action and it is always directed to the apperceived apparent good.

The will as an occurrence of power has to be distinguished from volitions which are actual exercises of that power. Leibniz calls volitions efforts and argues in II, xxi, §5 that his view of volitions goes deeper than Locke's: 'I shall say that volition is the effort or endeavor (*conatus*) to move towards what one finds good and away from what one finds bad, the endeavor arising immediately out of one's awareness of those things'.¹⁰ Volitions are thus efforts founded on apperceived perceptions which initiate actions that lead us to the apparent good unless we are somehow prevented or limited to exercise the power of will. The exercise of will is not only an act of the mind, but also cause movement in our bodies due to psychophysical parallelism.

The second kind of effort arises from insensible perceptions: 'I prefer to call them 'appetitions' rather than volitions, for one describes as 'voluntary' only actions one can be aware of and can reflect upon when they arise from some consideration of good and bad'.¹¹ Appetitions consist of minute or insensible, confused cognition and can incline us to goals we are not aware of. Whereas volitions are founded on the present perceptions and exhausted when they lead to actions, involuntary thoughts or appetitions come to us both from the body where outer objects affect our senses and from our mind, as a result of often undetectable traces that are left behind by earlier perceptions which continue to operate and mingle with new ones. Appetitions are inclinations arising from sensible qualities, such as sounds, odors etc., which constantly affect our judgment due to their vividness, leading the mind away from clearly and distinctly perceived goods which are the objects of the will.¹²

Thus we can find that there is a constant opposition between the derivative endeavors, that is, efforts of volition and appetite. Each volition is important, as Leibniz emphasizes that through them we often indirectly prepare the way for other voluntary actions. Self-perfection is a sort of systematic virtuous habit which requires that we are successful in the process of fighting against involuntary appetitions which may incline us to unwanted goals without us noticing it.¹³

Weakness of Will

A classic example to illustrate this battle between voluntary and involuntary thoughts is employed in NE II, xxi, §35, where the dialogue turns to the problem of *akrasia* or weakness of the will. Philalethes says:

⁶ GP VI, 609-610; AG, 215.

⁷ GP IV, 479; WF, 12.

⁸ See *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, §3.

⁹ See also A, VI, 1, 284.

¹⁰ A VI, 6, 172; RB, 172.

¹¹ NE II, xxi, §5; A VI, 6, 173; RB, 173.

¹² See NE II, xxi, §12.

¹³ NE II, xxi, §23 & §29.

Let a drunkard see, that his health decays, his estate wastes; discredit and diseases, and the want of all things, even of his beloved drink, attends him in the course he follows; yet the returns of disquiet [uneasiness in Locke's *Essay*] to miss his companions' drives him to the tavern at his usual time, 'though he has in view the loss of health and plenty, and perhaps of the joys of another life' – joys which he cannot regard as inconsiderable, and which on the contrary he confesses to be far better than the pleasures of drinking 'or the idle chat of a soaking club.'¹⁴

Locke alludes to Ovid's classic formulation of *akrasia* which shows that he is aware of the traditional problem.¹⁵ In response, Theophilus argues that our ideas of real goods are often symbolic or blind, empty of sensibility, which is why the more vivid sensual images draw our attention to them: 'Thus, if we prefer the worse it is because we have a sense of the good it contains but not of the evil it contains or of the good which exists on the opposite side...the finest moral precepts and the best prudential rules in the world have weight only in a soul which is as sensitive to them as to what opposes them'.¹⁶

If our will is not seasoned enough, it may be swept away by disquiet which is Leibnizian term for Lockean uneasiness, signifying a disposition to suffering rather than the suffering itself.¹⁷ Leibniz cites Cicero who said that if our eyes could see the beauty of virtue we would love it ardently.¹⁸ In this skirmish between the efforts of volition and appetite the problem really comes down to the epistemological status of what we perceive as good or pleasant although Leibniz does also recognize cases where we knowingly choose the less good proposed course of action.¹⁹ If our idea of the good is confused, we do not see all the dimensions it has, especially its effects to the future good. Leibniz goes on to argue: 'This struggle between [flesh and spirit] is nothing but the conflict between different endeavors – those that come from confused thoughts and those that come from distinct ones. Confused thoughts often make themselves vividly sensed, whereas distinct ones are usually only potentially vivid'.²⁰

As volitions are the exercises of the will, it is important to acknowledge that the conflict between the endeavors does not only concern the efforts as separate inclinations, but that it extends to the formation of the volition itself. The disquiet which arises from minute perceptions is part and parcel of the formation of final volition, and because of this it may happen that volitions are not necessarily directed to real, objective goods or that the goods we are aware of are reached only partially in the moral act that follows from the deliberation. The confused elements in the process may distort or overcome the clearly and distinctly perceived goods and the final effort is a kind of dynamical outcome of all the present inclinations:

Various perceptions and inclinations combine to produce a complete volition: it is the result of the conflict amongst them. There are some, imperceptible in themselves, which add up to a disquiet which impels us without our seeing why. There are some which join forces to carry us toward or away from some object, in which case there is desire or fear, also accompanied by a disquiet but not always one amounting to pleasure or displeasure. Finally, there are some impulses which are accompanied by actual pleasure or suffering. All these perceptions are either new sensations or the lingering images of past ones (whether or not accompanied by memory): these images revive the charms which were associated with them in those earlier sensations, and thereby also revive the former impulses in proportion to the liveliness of the imagining. The eventual result of all these impulses is the prevailing effort, which makes a full volition.²¹

Therefore, at each moment there is a conflict going on in the mind between the efforts or derivative forces. As there is always some disquiet present, the volitions are always somewhat affected by the

¹⁴ A VI, 6, 184-185; RB, 184-185.

¹⁵ E, 253-254.

¹⁶ NE II, xxi, §35; A VI, 6, 186, RB, 186.

¹⁷ NE II, xx, §6.

¹⁸ A VI, 6, 186.

¹⁹ See NE I, ii, §11.

²⁰ NE II, xxi, §35, A VI, 6, 186-187, RB, 186-187. In what follows, Leibniz lists various methods of preparing the mind against the temptations of the senses. On this topic, see my "Deliberation and Self-Improvement in Leibniz", in: Herbert Breger/Jürgen Herbst/Sven Erdner (Hrsg.): *Einheit in der Vielheit*. VIII. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress, Hannover 2006, Vorträge 2. Teil, S. 856-63.

²¹ II, xxi, §39; A VI, 6, 192; RB, 192.

appetitions. All the different inclinations are in conflict with each other and contribute to the final volition which often deviates from the path of the distinctly perceived apparent good because of the conflict between distinct and confused elements in the mind.

There may also be cases where there is no fully developed desire for the good present in the mind which results in indecision, a state where one is in a state of disquiet, not knowing what she wants.²² Another case of disturbance in the will is a case of *velleitas* where a defect or imperfection in the will (such as the proposed course of action harming one's friends) prevents it to rise to full power.²³ Thus there may be cases when disquiet is predominating the deliberation, but there never are deliberations where volitions are not affected by the appetitions.

A Model for Analyzing Concurrent Goods

I will now leave the *New Essays* for a moment and introduce a model for decision-making which Leibniz was developing as an alternative to the Aristotelian practical syllogism in his early practical memoirs in 1660's and 1670's.²⁴ The model is founded on the idea that there might be several simultaneous goods competing with each other and one has to take them all into account in the final decision instead of choosing one good to be realized.

This model, which Simo Knuuttila has called a vectorial model of rational decision-making,²⁵ was designed on the basis of behavior of forces in nature²⁶ and therefore I believe it is suitable for illustrating the battle of endeavors in the mind. In addition, the vectorial model can be seen closely related to the Leibniz's discussions in metaphysical mathematics, where different rays of light, for example, follow paths or variations of which only one is the best or optimal one.²⁷ Leibniz applied the same idea to the design of the best world of which he said in *On the Ultimate Origination of Things* (1697): 'Hence it is very clearly understood that out of the infinite combinations and series of possible things, one exists through which the greatest amount of essence or possibility is brought into existence.'²⁸

In the vectorial model efforts, that is, different inclinations to goods or away from evil, are conceptualized as vectors leading to different directions. The final volition, the outcome of the conflict between the different inclinations takes place as it were in mechanics and leads to the direction/good which results from all the inclinations/goods taken together. As the efforts resist each other, the outcome is a trade-off where all the goods are included but in a reduced form or as limited in power. In other words, the final volition is a compromise between the goods involved. This is why the final volition usually reaches the clearly and distinctly willed good only partially.

The vectorial model illustrates Leibniz's description of divine decision-making in *Theodicy*, §22: 'Consequent will, final and decisive, results from the conflict of all the antecedent wills, of those which tend towards good, even as of those which repel evil; and from the concurrence of all these particular wills comes the total will'.²⁹ This description seems to be very similar to formation of volition in *New Essays* discussed above. There are inclinations to the good and away from evil involved and from all of those results the final volition.

In fact, later in *Theodicy*, §325 Leibniz argues that human deliberation is analogous to divine decision-making. The difference is that while God deliberates perfectly due to his nature, in men the deliberation results in more or less good final volition, depending on the present inclinations:

²² NE II, xxi, §39; A VI, 6, 192.

²³ NE, II, xxi, §30.

²⁴ For a more extensive presentation of the vectorial model and case-studies of its use, see my *Leibniz on Rational Decision-Making*. Helsinki 2007. Available from <http://philpapers.org/rec/ROILOR>

²⁵ Simo Knuuttila: 'Old and New in Leibniz's View of Rational Decision', in Stephen F. Brown (ed.): *Meeting of the Minds. The Relations Between Medieval and Classical Modern European Philosophy*. Turnhout 1998.

²⁶ See Jaakko Hintikka: 'Was Leibniz's Deity an Akrates?', in: Simo Knuuttila (ed.), *Modern Modalities*, Dordrecht 1998, S. 98-99.

²⁷ See *Tentamen anagogium*, GP VII, 270-279.

²⁸ AG, 150.

²⁹ GP VI, 116; H, 137.

As very often there are divers courses to choose from, one might, instead of the balance, compare the soul with a force which puts forth effort on various sides simultaneously, but which acts only at the spot where action is easiest or there is least resistance. For instance, air if it is compressed too firmly in a glass vessel will break it in order to escape. It puts forth effort at every part, but finally flings itself upon the weakest. Thus do the inclinations of the soul extend over all the goods that present themselves: they are antecedent acts of will; but the consequent will, which is their result, is determined in the direction of that which touches most closely.³⁰

It is evident that Leibniz is here applying the same model. Inclinations to particular or antecedent apparent goods ('goods that present themselves') can be seen as variations or vectors inclining to different directions, much like forces in Leibniz's philosophy of nature.³¹ In addition, there is a force which puts effort on various sides simultaneously. This can be seen as the primitive active force or entelechy, as the faculty of will is understood to be part of that power. The final volition is determined by the concurrence of antecedent goods – it is 'the result of a number of vector-like forces pulling the agent (so to speak) in different directions', to quote Hintikka.³² An essential feature of the calculus of variations which Leibniz anticipated in his *Tentamen anagogicum* is that it is possible to find an optimal path or variation of which Leibniz uses the term easiest – later on, Maupertuis popularized the same idea as the principle of least action. In terms of the mind, it is the inclination/good which seems best to the deliberator, or, as formulated here, 'direction of that which touches most closely'.³³ Note that the 'direction of that which touches most closely' is not necessarily the same direction as that of the unmodified will.

To return to *New Essays* I think that this passage in II, xxi, §40 is very similar to the one in *Theodicy* above:

Since the final result is determined by how things weigh against one another, I should think it could happen that the most pressing disquiet did not prevail; for even if it prevailed over each of the contrary endeavors taken singly, it may be outweighed by all of them taken together...the mind should make provision for this from a distance, for once battle has been engaged there is no time left to make use of such artifices: everything which then impinges on us weighs in the balance and contributes to determining a resultant direction, almost as in mechanics; so that without some prompt diversion we will be unable to stop it.³⁴

The resultant direction of the conflict of various efforts may be unexpected and to avoid these kinds of situations we should prepare our minds in good time for difficult deliberations where we can easily be swept away by vivid inclinations to unwanted goods. Although we may have a strong, apperceived desire for some good, it may be outweighed by other inclinations taken together and the final course of action may be directed to some other good. In other words, if we are not prepared properly, the temptations in the situation may overcome our pre-determined intention to act in a certain way. But when our mind is trained, the appetitions have less effect on the exercise of the will. When one looks at Leibniz's formulations, such as "contributes to determining a resultant direction", it is easy to see that the Leibniz had the vectorial model in mind also in *New Essays*.

But this is not all. A central asset of the model is the possibility to employ geometrical figures to help conceptualization of the concurrent goods. In this way the vectorial model can act as a heuristic tool for rational decision-making in finding reasonable combinations of goods with respect to criteria determined by the deliberator (Leibniz always employs two criteria). In II, xxi, §66 Leibniz alludes to this feature of the model. The context is Philalethes's discussion of calculated risks and Leibniz argues that one can estimate the expected desirability by multiplying desirability by probability. This can be illustrated with a geometrical figure as follows:

The question of how inevitable a result is heterogeneous from – i. e. cannot be compared with – the question of how good or bad it is. So in trying to compare them, moralists have become muddled, as can be seen from writings

³⁰ G VI, 309, H, 322.

³¹ Compare also Leibniz's comment to Bayle: 'The soul, even though it has no parts, has within it, because of the multitude of representations of external things...a great number, or rather an infinite number, of variations (WF, 101).

³² Hintikka: 'Was Leibniz's Deity an *Akrates*?', S. 99.

³³ See *Tentamen anagogicum*, GP VII, 270-279.

³⁴ A VI, 6, 193; RB, 193.

on probability. The fact is that in this as in other assessments which are disparate, heterogeneous, having more than one dimension (so to speak), the magnitude of the thing in question is made up proportionately out of two estimates; as with a rectangle, where two things have to be considered, namely its length and its breadth.³⁵

It is obvious that the vectorial model for assessment and decision-making can be applied in many kinds of difficult deliberations concerning concurrent goods. Leibniz's descriptions of the model are very abstract, but it is clear that he employs Descartes's analytical geometry to show how one can map and assess different combinations of goods. The combinations are results of multiplication rather than of addition as Leibniz explains to Arnauld in a letter in 1671 when he tried to show how to estimate the beauty of a man according to canon law. According to him, if a man has wisdom of the third degree and power in the fourth, his total estimation would be twelve and not seven, since wisdom can be of assistance to power.³⁶ This idea can be fruitfully illustrated in a co-ordinate system.

Activity and Passivity

I hope to have shown that Leibniz's philosophy of action is very complex and that in his view there is a constant conflict between different endeavors in the mind. To recap: the soul is constituted by an entelechy consisting of primitive active force together with perception, from which arise efforts of volition and appetite. Each deliberation takes place as it were mechanically, as the conflict between the efforts determines the final direction of the will. The efforts are derivative forces which modify the primitive active force of the entelechy. This battle of endeavors in the mind can be regarded as analogous to interaction of endeavors in bodies of which Leibniz wrote to Jaquelot as follows:

There are two sorts of force in bodies, a primitive force which is essential to it, and derived forces, which also depend on other bodies. And we have to realize that derivative or accidental force, which we cannot deny to moving bodies, must be a modification of primitive force, just as shape is a modification of extension. Accidental forces could have no place in a substance without essential force, because accidents are only modifications or limitations, and can never contain more perfection or reality than does the substance.³⁷

Following this description, one might say that the primitive active force in the mind or will is modified or limited by derivative forces which contain less perfection than the primitive force. This kind of interaction is analogous to the efficacious causation in bodies although there is no prime matter in the minds.

Each modification of the will is related directly to activity and passivity in the soul and indirectly to epistemological clarity and various moral qualities such as goodness or evil and pleasure or displeasure. In Leibniz's metaphysics, activity and passivity has a central metaphysical role, as can be seen from this passage in an appendix to *New System of Nature*: 'Since everything that can be understood in substances reduces to their actions and passions, and to the way they are arranged to produce those effects, I do not see that it is possible to find in substances anything more basic than the principle of all of that – that is, than force...'³⁸

The chapter xxi of book II of *New Essays* both starts and ends with discussion of action and passion. In §1 Leibniz characterizes power in general as possibility of change and continues: 'Since change or the actualization of that possibility – is action in one subject and passion in another, there will be two powers, one active and passive.'³⁹ In the end of the chapter Leibniz adds epistemological and affective aspects to the picture:

If we take "action" to be an endeavor towards perfection, and "passion" to be the opposite, then genuine substances are active only when their perceptions are becoming better developed and more distinct, just as they are passive

³⁵ A VI, 6, 205-206; RB, 205-206.

³⁶ A II, 1, 174.

³⁷ WF, 201; See also Leibniz's letter to De Volder 21. 1. 1704, GP II, 262; LVD, 286-287.

³⁸ WF, 35.

³⁹ A VI, 6, 169; RB, 169. See also *Monadology*, §49-52.

only when their perceptions are becoming more confused. Consequently, in substances which are capable of pleasure and pain every action is a move towards pleasure, every passion a move towards pain.⁴⁰

This is a rich account. When we start to dismantle it, we can distinguish between active and passive elements of the mind. Action involves more distinct perceptions, that is, a process towards distinct cognition as well as a process towards pleasure and perfection. Passion is an opposite of these, that is, process towards confused perceptions and displeasure or pain and imperfection. One might think that the soul is always either active or passive, but this is not the case. Rather there is a constant change going on in the soul - in II, xxi, §36 it is argued that we are never without some activity and motion, simply because nature continually labors to be more completely at ease. Therefore we are never completely in equilibrium and can never be evenly balanced between two oppositions.⁴¹ This is due to minute, insensible perceptions which are omnipresent in our deliberation.

Pleasure and Happiness

I will now turn to affections of the mind which are essentially related to activity, perfection and final causes. In II, xx, §9 Theophilus argues that emotions are not beliefs as the Stoics took them to be, but endeavors or modifications of endeavor which arise from beliefs or opinions and are accompanied by pleasure or displeasure.⁴² Therefore emotions are related to the efforts. As emotions arise from pleasure or displeasure, which again can be divided to minute semi-pleasures or semi-sufferings,⁴³ they are usually related to appetitions. In that case they are feelings or disquiet and only when they grow or accumulate and find an object, one can discuss of passions relating to some apperceived good.⁴⁴

Emotions as efforts can effectively either affirm or limit the striving of the entelechy towards the good and perfection. This is because pleasure and displeasure are closely related to perfection and imperfection: 'Although pleasure cannot be given a nominal definition, any more than light or color can, it can like them be defined causally: I believe that, fundamentally, pleasure is a sentiment of perfection, and pain a sentiment of imperfection, provided that each is notable enough to be apperceived'.⁴⁵

If we are aware of the pleasure in our minds, we are sensing or feeling perfection and if we are aware of feeling displeasure or pain, we are sensing imperfection. The corresponding passions are joy and sorrow - joy is defined in xx, §7 as a state when pleasure predominates in a man and sorrow in §8 as a state when displeasure dominates over pleasure.⁴⁶ However, Leibniz argues that there can be displeasure even when we are joyful and vice versa.⁴⁷ Joy motivates us in our striving for the good and sorrow discourages us, but it also indirectly motivates us in giving us reasons to overcome the displeasure we suffer from. In this way the will can be modified by intellectual passions of joy, hope and love which relate to perfection and which promote activity.

In addition, Leibniz argues that we are instinctively disposed towards pleasure. In NE, I, ii, §2 he says:

Although it is correct to say that morality has indemonstrable principles, of which one of the first and most practical is that we should pursue joy and avoid sorrow, it must be added that that is not a truth which is known solely from reason, since it is based on inner experience – on confused knowledge; for one only senses what joy and sorrow are.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ NE II, xxi, §72; A VI, 6, 210; RB, 210.

⁴¹ A VI, 6, 188.

⁴² A VI, 6, 167.

⁴³ NE II, xx, §6. Leibniz notes that this is actually a good thing as in an opposite case our whole attention would be captured by fleeting semi-sufferings (A VI, 6, 165).

⁴⁴ On Leibniz's theory of emotions, see my 'Leibniz on Hope', in Sabrina Ebbersmeyer: *Emotional Minds*, Berlin 2012, S. 161-178.

⁴⁵ NE II, xxi, §41; A VI, 6, 194; RB, 194.

⁴⁶ See also II, xxi, §64.

⁴⁷ A VI, 6, 167.

⁴⁸ A VI, 6, 89; RB, 89.

It is evident that the instinct is related to feeling or sensing perfection as Leibniz argues that it is based on confused knowledge and it leads us towards joy and away from sorrow. In §9 he argues that it is related to feelings that comes from an innate truth:

That natural feeling is the perception of an innate truth, though very often a confused one as are the experiences of the outer senses. Thus innate truths can be distinguished from the natural light (which contains only what is distinctly knowable) as a genus should be distinguished from its species, since innate truths comprise instincts as well as the natural light.⁴⁹

The moral instinct seems to be a sort of aid to reason and does not only lead to affections, but also to science and reasoning as it finds future pleasures in them.⁵⁰ Leibniz does not explicate the relation between the will and the instinct, but as they both are directed to the good it seems probable that they are both instances of the appetite, the will functioning in the level of distinct cognition and the instinct in the level of confused cognition.⁵¹

In the larger picture Leibniz gives in *New Essays*, minute perceptions and the disquiet which arises from them are not only harmful to our moral action, but necessary for our happiness:

Nature's accumulation of continual little triumphs, in which it puts itself more and more at ease – drawing closer to the good and enjoying the image of it, or reducing the feeling of suffering – is itself a considerable pleasure, often better than the actual enjoyment of the good. Far from such disquiet's being inconsistent with happiness, I find that it is essential to the happiness of created beings; their happiness never consists in complete attainment...but in continual and uninterrupted progress towards greater goods.⁵²

Thus passive, confused cognition can in fact produce activity by stimulating and motivating the will to develop one's understanding, to gain small victories when displeasure or suffering is overcome by pleasure piece by piece. Happiness is not a state, but rather an ongoing process of lasting joy. Therefore, passivity is an essential part of the human condition, although one has to learn to moderate the appetitions and disquiet with strong will which in turn requires a trained mind: 'The more developed the faculty of understanding is the better are the choices of the will. And in the other direction, in so far as a man wills vigorously, he determines his thoughts by his own choice instead of being swept along by involuntary perceptions'.⁵³

But sometimes even vigorous willing is not enough: 'Even when the desire is strong enough in itself to arouse us if nothing hinders it, it can be blocked by contrary inclinations, either consisting in a mere propensity, like the germ or beginning of a desire, or amounting to an actual desire.'⁵⁴

To sum up, we are instinctively disposed towards pleasure and joy which lead us to activity, goodness and perfection and away from displeasure and sorrow which are related to passivity, evil and imperfection. If we perfect our understanding systematically, we may be able to act according to the final causes and strive for lasting joy or happiness without interruption. In this case the confused elements in the deliberation have less effect on the clear and distinct ideas of the good and the final volition affirms the choices of the will. However, each deliberation is different and it is often not possible to predict the outcome of the conflict of efforts.

Balance of Reason

We have seen that there are active and passive elements in the soul, constantly affecting each other within the skirmishes that are deliberations or formations of final volition. I have argued that these

⁴⁹ A VI, 6, 94; RB, 94.

⁵⁰ NE I, ii, §3.

⁵¹ This conjecture is supported by Leibniz objections to Stahl, where he says: "confused perception and a corresponding appetite (which, with some, you might term instinct)". Cited in Bolton: "Change in the Monad", S. 185.

⁵² NE II, xxi, §36; A VI, 6, 189, RB, 189.

⁵³ II, xxi, §18; A VI, 6, 180; RB, 180. See also A VI, 6, 200. Leibniz even claims that certain perfections bring with them greater imperfections (A VI, 6, 201).

⁵⁴ NE II, xxi, §47; A VI, 6, 195; RB, 195.

can be illustrated by the vectorial model where the resulting outcome is a kind of compromise of the inclinations present. This can be compared to behavior of forces in nature and consequently to be understood more in terms of efficient causation than final causation although the deliberator can influence her decisions indirectly by developing her mind beforehand.

For the great battle between primary and derivative forces another kind of model is required. The overall balance between the endeavors, or rather the consequences that the individual skirmishes produce should be thought in terms of final causes, that is, moral goodness and moral evil and metaphysical goodness or perfection and metaphysical evil or imperfection. One can see singular deliberations and the resulting moral acts as producing more or less perfection and the continuous series of these singular exercise of the will is what one can call the moral development of a moral agent or a rational being.

The model I have in mind can be called, following Marcelo Dascal, the balance of reason.⁵⁵ The model can be illustrated by a traditional pair of scales and one can put weights into the right or left pans in order to see to which side the pair of scales inclines to. The model is very old and Leibniz applied it especially to cases in jurisprudence: ‘I present here a certain balance of the law, a new kind of instrument with which it is possible to estimate the value, not of precious metals and stones, but of something more precious than that: the weights of reasons.’⁵⁶ If we think of the single deliberations based on the principle of sufficient reason, we have here an instrument of weighing reasons from which the happiness of men consists of.⁵⁷

Let me explain what I have in mind. Each single skirmish between the efforts where the confused elements in the mind interact with the clear and distinct ideas of the good ends up to an outcome which affirms or limits the striving of the entelechy to the good. If we take the outcome of each single formation of volition and put in on either the pan representing goodness or perfection or the pan representing evil or imperfection, we can at each moment see a reflection of the degree of perfection of the law-of-the-series of the soul. The pair of scales is not likely to be wholly on either side or in equilibrium as each deliberation can affect the balance. For the same reason, the inclination between the pans is likely to be very small and change often unless the agent decides systematically to develop one’s virtue, that is, train her mind and strengthen her will in which case the deliberations are likely in most deliberations to affirm the will which is always directed to the good and perfection.

The nearest Leibniz comes in explicitly employing the model is in II, xxi, §67, soon after he introduced the vectorial model: ‘Indeed, for the right decision to be made in a case where reasons have to be weighed against one another, many things are needed. That is much the way it is with merchant’s account books...the book-keeper...carefully adds up the columns on each page.’⁵⁸

One can regard this model to illustrate moral action on a higher level as it represents the long run-moral action of a rational agent. As we have seen, self-perfection can happen only indirectly as the individual deliberations can fail due to strong passions or other reasons why we prefer the worse course of action to the apperceived ideas of the good. While the smaller skirmishes can be seen to have almost random consequences, a cunning general or a woman of virtue can direct the great battle wisely. By following clear and distinct ideas she will find that the balance inclines eventually to victory or goodness/perfection/happiness and the forces at play will turn out to work as planned.

⁵⁵ See Marcelo Dascal, “The Balance of Reason”, in: Daniel Vanderveken (ed.), *Logic, Thought and Action*, Dordrecht 2005, S. 22-47.

⁵⁶ ‘Towards a Balance of Law concerning the Degrees of Proofs and of Probabilities’, C, 211; G. W. Leibniz: *The Art of Controversies*, translated and edited by Marcelo Dascal, Dordrecht 2006, S. 36.

⁵⁷ We saw earlier that the vectorial model was designed for situations with concurrent goods – the balance of reason is a model where the question is of separate goods and where the options can rule each other out.

⁵⁸ A VI, 6, 207; RB, 207.