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Relational Space and Places of Value¹

Pauline Phemister

My dog and I take an early morning walk on the beach. The tide is out and we head to the firmer still-wet sand. He runs after the birds as they breakfast on worms. I feel the wind in my hair, the movement of my limbs, hear the lapping of the waves and the cry of the gulls. I look at the sun as it rises, spreading soft pink shades up into lightening sky. I notice the soft subtle colourings of the pebbles and shells and find a few crabs in the rockpools. There's a distinctive smell of seaweed and I taste the saltiness in the air as, in a light breeze, it comes off the sea.

In the evening, I recall my morning walk. I suppose that the tide has come in and is again receding. Are the birds congregating before they sleep? What of the fish in the sea, the worms and crabs in the sand and insects in the air? What would the beach be like if there were no living things on it; if there was no living being experiencing it? Would it have any colour? Would the air be 'salty'? Would the seaweed still have its distinctive smell? In the morning, I walked on golden sand, but is the sand still golden in the dark or when it is not perceived by any creature with the capacity for colour-perception? Perhaps during such periods, the golden colour of the sand – even the sand itself -- is only what John Stuart Mill called 'a permanent possibility of experience', merely something that would be perceived if someone or some other being was actually experiencing it.

Is the beach in itself no more than a mass of atoms, gases, chemical elements, molecules, sub-atomic particles, quarks, electro-magnetic forces and gravitational fields such as physicists and chemists describe? We would be in select company if we agreed. Current thinking on these matters follows a tradition that goes back to Democritus and Aristotle, through Bacon and Galileo, and that was awarded empirical and philosophical validation during the scientific revolution of the early modern period, for the most part through the efforts of philosophers and scientists, including René Descartes, Pierre Gassendi, Christiaan Huygens, Robert Boyle and John Locke. The result was a separation, in theory if not in fact, of the mental and the physical.

The separation appears most starkly in Cartesian metaphysics. According to Descartes, the essence of body consists in its being an extended thing, a *res extensa*. Individual bodies are only portions of matter extended in length, breadth and depth. They are divisible and measurable, amenable to mathematical description. They move and are moved according to strict rules of motion and deterministic laws of nature. They do not act freely, nor do they think or perceive. Minds, in sharp

¹ A revised and shorter version of this paper will appear in *Transformative Values: Human-Environment Relations in Theory and Practice*, edited by Emily Brady and Pauline Phemister (Springer).

contrast, think, perceive, desire and sense, but they are not spatially extended. Nor are minds divisible, measurable or quantifiable or subject to physical laws. However, their free will and self-consciousness mean that they are subject to moral judgment, reward and punishment. Not one of the attributes of bodies is attributable to minds, nor are any of the attributes of minds attributable to bodies. Descartes concludes from this that each is completely independent of the other and neither has any need of the other in order to exist (*Meditations on first philosophy*, meditation six: AT VII 78, CSM II 54).

In this way, Descartes secured the possibility of the mind's (or soul's) immortality: if the mind can exist independently of the body, then it can survive the dissolution of its body. So too, bodies may survive the annihilation of all minds or souls. Minds are conceived, not as parts of nature, but as above or outside nature. The natural world, including its mechanical, purely corporeal plants, animals and fish, does not depend upon anything mind-like. For Descartes, the beach, even when no one perceives it, exists as extended body. It exists as physical space, variously modified by its moving parts into the sand, sea, rocks, birds and fish, which are themselves composed of physical moving particles, indefinitely divisible into increasingly smaller material parts. These parts have motion, size, shape and other so-called 'primary' qualities, but are essentially mere cogs in a physical machine. Even though Descartes acknowledges life and sensation in non-human animals, he usually explains these in purely mechanical terms. Life, for instance, is merely the heat of the heart, while sensations are granted only insofar as they result from the bodily organs (to More, 5 February 1649: AT V 278, CSM III 366). The birds and fish at the beach are mere mechanisms, 'responding' to external stimuli in much the same way as a sleepwalker does (to Marquess of Newcastle, 23 November 1646: AT IV 573, CSM III 303), or, we might infer, in the way a grain of sand is moved by the motion of the wave that laps onto the shore.²

On the Cartesian model, our sensations of colours, smells, tastes and other 'secondary qualities' are nothing more than mental representations of underlying lifeless primary qualities. They are no more attributable to the beach as it is in itself than are the thoughts, emotions and desires that passed through my mind as I walked. Descartes' near contemporary, John Locke, placed such secondary qualities in objects, but only as causal 'powers' that objects have because the primary qualities of their constituent particles are able to produce ideas or sensations of secondary qualities in minds (*Essay concerning human understanding*, II.viii.10). For Locke, as for Descartes, the beach can be described entirely in material terms, without reference to anything mental or spiritual.

Although the Cartesian-Lockean model quickly established itself as scientific orthodoxy, its rise to dominance did not proceed unchallenged even in its infancy. The separation of the physical and the mental, the divorce of the material or natural from the spiritual or supernatural, was opposed, for example, by the neo-Platonists, Henry More and Ralph Cudworth. They postulated causally efficacious 'vital

² Tensions and ambiguities in Descartes' account of animal sensation are outlined in Cottingham (1998). See also Clarke (2003), 71-7.

principles' (More) and 'plastic natures' (Cudworth) throughout the world of matter. Today, a growing number of panpsychists favour a new understanding of the 'physical' that incorporates the mental in a non-reductive manner, conceiving bodies as capable of experiences or feeling in all their parts.³

Subscribing to a panpsychist metaphysics of nature does not inevitably lead to the adoption of a benevolent attitude towards non-human constituents of the universe. Nonetheless, the panpsychist proposal that these constituents are not only physical, but also experiencing beings, does encourage empathetic affinities with the non-human. Believing that the world of nature consists of living, experiencing and feeling things certainly makes it harder for us to treat the world with impunity, to regard it solely as a resource for our own gratification or to lack remorse when we do so. Care, we insist, should be taken to minimise suffering wherever it is found. However, this is easy to say and less easy to do. Not knowing from the inside, so to speak, how other beings experience the world, we fall back to concern for their physical well-being and invariably resort to purely scientific management of them and of the places they inhabit. In what follows, I explore the possibility of conceiving those places we share, not just as physical places filled by material objects, but also as spiritual places filled by experiencing mind or mind-like things. Exploring mental dimensions of space may in turn clear a way for a new spatial paradigm to emerge, one that will facilitate co-operation between the natural sciences and the humanities towards a truly ecological management of the environment. To explore this theme, I propose to revisit the scene of seventeenth century dissent to listen anew to one of the voices raised then in opposition to Descartes' dualist separation of mind and body. That voice belongs to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

Leibnizian panpsychism

Leibniz's anti-Cartesianism ranges across all aspects of Descartes' thought, but is particularly scathing in its criticism of Descartes' stark separation of mind and body. Even though God could have created a single disembodied mind or soul, actually every perceiving, appetitive mind, soul or entelechy (the Aristotelian term Leibniz appropriates to signify the 'form' of the body)⁴ is joined to its own organic body with which it forms an indivisible, unified living creature or 'corporeal substance' (to De Volder, 20 June 1703: GP II 252, AG 177).⁵ Each mind, soul or entelechy always has an organic body that is attached to it as its own body: other than God, 'there are ... no *separated souls*, nor spirits [*Génies*] without bodies' (*Monadology* §72: GP VI 619, AG 222).

³ E.g. Strawson (2006).

⁴ The terms, mind, soul and entelechy, signal differences of degree (of activity and distinct perception) rather than of kind.

⁵ In what follows, I assume the non-idealist, 'corporeal substance' interpretation of Leibniz. See Garber (2009), esp. chapter 2; Phemister (2005); Smith & Nachtomy, eds. (2011).

Each organic body is itself a composite of other living creatures or corporeal substances:

...each living body has a dominant entelechy, which in the animal is the soul; but the limbs of this living body are full of other living beings, plants, animals, each of which also has its entelechy, or its dominant soul. (*Monadology*, §70: GP VI, 619, AG 222)

The dominant soul or entelechy preserves the unity, indivisibility and identity of the animal or corporeal substance, but its organic body is in constant flux: no 'soul has a mass or portion of matter of its own, always proper to or allotted to it'. On the contrary, 'all bodies are in a perpetual flux, like rivers, and parts enter into them and depart from them continually' (*Monadology* §71: GP VI, 619, AG 222).

According to Leibniz's metaphysics, nature is imbued throughout with such living unities. Even inanimate things are nonetheless aggregates or collections of living corporeal substances. Tables and chairs, rocks and mountains, are not alive – they have no dominant entelechy – but they are compounded from living creatures. Divide the table and eventually we will reach living beings whose organic bodies are further divided into other living beings that feel and sense the world around them, in response to physical changes wrought on their organic (organised) bodies by external things. Consequently, Leibniz's beach is no mere inert mass of lifeless particles. Instead, in every part of the beach 'there is a world of creatures, of living beings, of animals, of entelechies, of souls' (*Monadology*, §66: GP VI 618, AG 222).

As both ensouled and embodied, these living creatures belong at one and the same time to what Leibniz calls the natural kingdom of efficient causes and to the natural kingdom of final causes. The first is composed of bodies, acting and being acted upon in accordance with the laws of motion and resistance. The second is populated by perceiving, appetitive souls that act through final causes, governed by laws that lead them invariably to pursue what they perceive as good or beneficial and to shun what they perceive as bad or harmful (*Monadology*, §79: GP VI 620, AG 223).

Every soul or entelechy has desires and appetites, aims at certain goals and acts always in pursuit of what, often sub-consciously, it perceives as conducive to the preservation of its being. The parasite searches for a hospitable host; the dog seeks a warm, dry comfortable place to sleep. Meanwhile, despite there being no actual interaction between souls and bodies, their bodies move in ways suited to these desires, bringing into being a harmony pre-established by God. One consequence of this system is that every event is explicable by both final and efficient causation. Leibniz's act of writing serves as illustration:

There is an infinity of past and present shapes and motions that enter into the efficient cause of my present writing, and there is an infinity of small inclinations and dispositions of my soul, present and past, that enter into its final cause. (*Monadology* §36: GP VI 613, AG 217)

Leibniz's present writing results, we may suppose, from his free, conscious choice. Freedom grounds a further distinction: that between the kingdom of nature and the

kingdom of grace. The moral kingdom of grace comprises self-conscious minds who recognise the final causes by which they act as goals or ends they have themselves freely chosen to pursue. Although souls that lack self-consciousness also pursue final ends, they are incapable of acknowledging these goals as their own and are therefore excluded from the moral kingdom of grace. Leibniz explains:

Since earlier we established a perfect harmony between two natural kingdoms, one of efficient causes, the other of final causes, we ought to note here yet another harmony between the physical kingdom of nature and the moral kingdom of grace, that is, between God considered as the architect of the mechanism of the universe, and God considered as the monarch of the divine city of minds (*Monadology*, §87: GP VI 622, AG 224)

Leibniz here marks a sharp distinction between, on the one hand, the two kingdoms of nature (efficient and final) and, on the other, the third kingdom of grace, but it is clear that all three kingdoms are in fact 'natural' in a wide sense of the term. The kingdom of grace, comprising minds self-consciously following their own final causes, is obviously a subset of the natural kingdom of final causes – a kingdom that encompasses *all* beings that act by final causes, whether self-consciously or not. The natural world is *both* an extended physical world of moving bodies and their efficient causes *and* a world of perceiving, desiring and willing beings and their final causes, some of which are recognised as personal goals by minds aware of themselves and capable of acting responsibly and freely.

In respect of the natural world conceived in terms of bodies and efficient causes, Leibniz developed a relational theory of physical space according to which bodies' relational qualities ground their spatial relations.⁶ However, we have seen that Leibniz also conceives the natural world in terms of minds, souls, entelechies and final causes. Might the qualitative perceptual and conative qualities of biological entities provide a way of conceiving spaces and places in terms of values and goals? Might the Leibnizian account of relational physical space based on the *physical* characteristics of living corporeal substances serve as a model for the construction of a parallel 'value-space' grounded in the relationality of the bare feelings, sensations, perceptions, appetitions, impulsions, desires and volitions that characterise the *psychical* aspects of living beings?

Extended relational space and places

In correspondence with Samuel Clarke, Leibniz defended his relational theory of physical space against the Newtonian theory of absolute space, a space that could in theory be devoid of any objects whatsoever. Leibniz regards absolute space as a mere fiction or abstraction and proposed instead that space is 'nothing else but an order of the existence of things, observed as existing together' (Fifth letter to Clarke:

⁶ Commentators who read Leibniz as an idealist (e.g. Adams (1994), Rescher (1979)) understand spatial relations as founded upon monads' perceptions.

GP VII 395, HTA 63).⁷ Space, considered only in itself, is an ideal thing (ibid.: GP VII.396, HTA 64), an imaginary geometric structure or theoretical construction. Leibniz's account to Clarke is as follows:

The ratio or proportion between two lines, L and M, may be conceived three several ways; as a ratio of the greater L, to the lesser M; as a ratio of the lesser M, to the greater L; and lastly, as something abstracted from both, that is, as a ratio between L and M, without considering which is the antecedent, or which the consequent; which the subject, and which the object. ...

In the first way of considering them, L the greater; in the second, M the lesser, is the subject of the accident, which philosophers call relation. But which will be the subject, in the third way of considering them? It cannot be said that both of them, L and M together, are the subject of such an accident; for if so, we should have an accident in two subjects, with one leg in one and the other in the other; which is contrary to the notion of accidents. Therefore, we must say, that this relation, in this third way of considering it, is indeed out of the subjects; but being neither a substance, nor an accident, it must be a mere ideal thing... (Leibniz's fifth letter: GP VII 401, HTA 71)

The spatial relation, *qua* spatial relation considered in the third way, is ideal. However, in the first and second ways, each of the terms or subjects possesses the accident or quality of being in relation to the other. So, for instance, line L has the relational quality of being longer than M; line M has the relational quality of being shorter than L. When co-existing things stand thus in relation to each other, the places they fill are real or concrete (ibid.: GP VII 395, HTA 63). Actual space requires particular existing things or substances that are the subjects whose relational qualities⁸ establish the order of co-existence that in turn constitutes space.

Although relational theories of space regard space as arising only from the relational qualities inherent in existing things, we think of ourselves as moving through space from place to place and we consider the places as the same when we return. Strictly speaking, everything is in motion and no place remains the same even from one moment to the next. However, some changes of relations among the constituents of a place are slower than others and this allows us to suppose or to feign, that, '... among those co-existents, there is a sufficient number of them, which have undergone no change'. We may then stipulate that 'those which have such a relation to those fixed existents, as others had to them before, have now the *same place* which those others had' (Leibniz's fifth letter: GP VII 400, HTA 69). So, we may be said to return to the same place, as when we re-enter a room, because the changes in the relations between the things in the room retain their relations to each other fairly well intact during our absence. More generally, we can consider ourselves as moving through space as we move from one place to another because

⁷ Leibniz's view is here sketched only in broad outline. For a detailed analysis, see Vailati (1997), chapter 4.

⁸ Here, and in the discussion of perception below, I do not accept the Russellian view that relational predicates are founded upon monadic non-relational predicates. Rather, I contend that all monadic predicates are relational. See Mugnai (1992), p.125; Phemister (2005), pp.135-8.

space, as Leibniz confided to Clarke, is simply that 'which results from places taken together' (ibid.: GP VII 400, HTA 70).

This space and its component places can exist only if there are individual things that possess relational qualities that ground their spatial relations to other things. The relational predicates attributed to subjects in this case describe physical characteristics, specifying the shape, size, location and locomotion of living and non-living things. The resulting space is filled with material objects and organic bodies whose mechanistic activity is presumed explicable by efficient causation.

However, Leibniz has supposed that each living thing has, in addition to its body, a dominant entelechy or soul that perceives and has appetites and desires. Correlative to the natural realm of bodies and efficient causes is the natural realm of souls and final causes. Focusing on the latter, is it possible to construct a non-physical or mental qualitative relational space of values, goals and interests along lines similar to those by which Leibniz describes the construction of physical extended space? What would such a space be like? What happens to our understanding of relational space and its component places when we consider also the relational qualities creatures possess on account of their perceiving, appetitive minds and souls? Before exploring this more concretely, we must first examine the qualities that characterise the mental.

Perceptions and appetitions

The internal mental qualities belonging to Leibnizian monads or simple substances are its perceptions (sensations, imaginations, thoughts as well as feelings of pleasure and pain, emotions and passions) and its appetitions (impulses, appetites, desires, volitions)(*Principles of Nature and of Grace*, §2: GP VI 598, AG 207). All are inherently relational. Our perceptions are always perceptions of something; our appetitions are always focused on a desired object or possible state of affairs. Through its perceptions, each mind, soul and entelechy represents everything in the universe. Perceiving minds, souls and entelechies are like mirrors that represent the whole universe (*Discourse on Metaphysics* §9: GP IV 434, AG 42). Hidden deep in our representative states are perceptions even of what is happening on Jupiter and Saturn, the ocean beds and among the minute particles of the earth. Nothing happens in the universe without it being registered at some level in our mental state. Correspondingly, everything that is happening to us is registered in turn in the mental states of all the others. I perceive the gull as it flies past, but so too, it perceives me. As I walk, I subconsciously register the tiny organisms within each grain of sand, but they too insensibly perceive me stepping on them. In the words of David Abram in a discussion of Merleau-Ponty,

To touch the coarse skin of a tree is thus, at the same time, to experience one's own tactility, to feel oneself touched *by* the tree. And to see the world is also, at the same time, to experience oneself as visible, to feel oneself *seen*. (Abram (1996), p. 68)

Mutual representation of all by all is important, but so too is the manner in which we perceive the world. For the most part, we perceive things confusedly. We perceive as wholly inanimate, objects that are, in Leibniz's opinion, aggregates of living things. When we perceive distinctly, we recognise not only that we are ourselves perceiving, appetitive beings, but also that the things that we perceive are themselves perceiving, appetitive beings or are aggregates of such beings. I perceive the gull more distinctly when I recognise not only that I perceive it, but also that it perceives me. I perceive the other more distinctly when I recognise the other as a being with its own desires and needs.

Whether perceptions are distinct or confused is a function of the appetitive force responsible for the transition from one perception to the next. How well I perceive the universe depends upon the amount of appetitive force propelling my mind onwards. The greater the force, the more distinctly the universe will be represented in the ensuing perception (*On the Method of Distinguishing Real from Imaginary Phenomena*: GP VII 322, L 365). Appetition is also, by an indirect route, responsible for the attitude that we take towards that which is represented in our perception, as for instance, whether we regard the things we perceive with compassion, care and love or with disdain, indifference or even hatred. Why this should be so lies in a set of connections Leibniz discerns between the perception of beauty, order and perfection and feelings of happiness, joy and love.

In the distinct perception of nature's diversity, order, interconnectedness and sheer magnificence, Leibniz finds the source of human joy. He emphasises the fact that when we learn to appreciate the order and harmony of the world, it pleases us. We experience joy. 'Joy', he writes, 'is a pleasure which the soul feels in itself.' It consists in a sense of perfection; pain, on the other hand, is a sense of imperfection (*New Essays*: RB 194; see also to Arnauld, early November 1671: GP I 73, L 150). Happiness, meanwhile, is a 'state of permanent joy' (*On Wisdom*: GP VII 86, L 425). See also *New Essays on human understanding*: RB 90, 194), meaning by this that the happy person is generally disposed to happiness as opposed to enjoying a permanent state of occurrent happiness. Happiness, rather, resides in the movement towards new pleasures (*Principles of Nature and of Grace*: GP VI 606, AG 213). Single pleasures are merely steps on the way to lasting happiness (*New Essays*: RB 187-9, 194). Each pleasure is a

feeling of a perfection or our excellence, whether in ourselves or in something else. For the perfection of other beings is also agreeable, such as understanding, courage, and especially beauty in another human being, or in an animal or even in a lifeless creation, a painting or a work of craftsmanship, as well. For the image of perfection in others, impressed on us, causes some of this perfection to be implanted and aroused within ourselves. (*On Wisdom*: GP VII 86, L 425)⁹

We take pleasure from our perception of the beauty and order of the universe and are pained when we perceive its imperfection, disorder or destruction. Beautiful

⁹ Sometimes, however, jealousy, fear, or shame may prevent us from experiencing fully the pleasure the perception of perfection brings (*ibid.*).

things themselves, Leibniz defines simply as those the 'contemplation of which is pleasurable' (*Elements of Natural Law: A VI i 464, L 137*). However, although we are pleased by beautiful things, Leibniz holds that it is only when beautiful things are themselves capable of happiness that we are able to love them, for '[t]o love is to be disposed to take pleasure in the perfection, well-being and happiness of the object of one's love.' (*New Essays: RB 163*).¹⁰ Love, he goes on to explain,

involves not thinking or asking for any pleasure of one's own except what one can get from the happiness or pleasure of the loved one. On this account, whatever is incapable of pleasure or of happiness is not strictly an object of love; our enjoyment of things of that nature is not love of them, unless by a kind of personifying, as though we fancied that they could themselves enjoy their perfection. When one says that one loves a fine painting because of the pleasure one gets from taking in its perfections, that is not strictly love. (*New Essays: RB 163*)

Defining love in this way entails that feelings of love may be directed only towards rational beings, for only they are capable of happiness and the joyful experiences that arise from the perception of beauty. However, between the two extremes of rational living beings and inanimate objects like paintings and fine wines lie the myriad other living creatures in the Leibnizian world. All have perceptions through which they represent what is happening in the world. All are impelled from one perception to the next by their appetitions, the actions of the forces that characterise their individual essences. However, they do not all perceive the world distinctly. Few have the rational capacity to distinguish self from others and to classify, abstract, and make sense of what is perceived. The vast majority perceive only as if in a deep stupor or faint, with the kind of representation that we might have of the world in a dreamless sleep when we are not conscious but are nevertheless able to be roused when dramatic changes occur in our environment. Others, such as animals, are capable of sensation and memory and a degree of consciousness that falls short of the self-consciousness of which humans and other rational beings are capable. Still, for Leibniz, only the latter can experience feelings of happiness and joy and it is these only that he considers capable of being loved.

However, are we not also capable of loving animals? Leibniz himself acknowledges that some people do seem to love animals for they seek animals' good in itself and do so not, or not only, for human gain. He holds that such people are able to feel love for non-human animals because they consider animals as rational to some extent – their sensations qualify them as having some 'reasonable element' (*Elements of natural law: A VI i 465, L 137*).¹¹ However, *pace* Leibniz, rationality in

¹⁰ See also, to Arnauld, early November 1671: GP I 73, L 150.

¹¹ Leibniz himself appears not to have had such feelings for animals, regarding them as incapable of experiencing happiness or joy and unable to give *reasons* for things, although they are able to reason inductively (*New Essays: RB 143*). Although he believes they can feel affection and anger (*New Essays: RB 93, 167*), he claims their pleasure and pain is less intense than that of rational beings (*Theodicy, §250: H 281*). Accordingly, Leibniz even at times endorses the practice of vivisection (*Directiones ad rem medicam pertinentes, 7, 3-10*, cited in Smith (2007), 144). For fuller discussion see Smith, (2011), chapter 1, section 8.

animals need not be the ground of our love for them. Rather, we desire their well-being simply because we recognise that they have feelings, sensations and are capable of pleasure and pain. Even though they may be incapable of experiencing the kind of happiness that arises from the perception of beauty and order, we still take pleasure in seeing them thrive and in seeing their needs met.

To accommodate this, I propose a modification to Leibniz's definition of love, one that does not require attributing a capacity to reason to animals or to other living things. Instead of defining love as the taking of pleasure in the 'perfection, well-being and happiness' of the other, we can define love as the taking of pleasure in the 'perfection, well-being and specific good of the other.'¹² This revised definition allows for the possibility of feelings of love towards animals, irrespective of whether we believe them to be rational and thereby capable of happiness. Fish, plants and indeed all organisms can also be described in terms of their perfection, well-being and what promotes their good. For Leibniz, and panpsychists generally, there are living beings in even the smallest parts of matter. Bacteria, fungi and other micro-organisms, and presumably also atoms and sub-atomic particles, are conceived as experiencing beings. Their felt experiences are only a dull echo of the pain and pleasure experienced by self-conscious beings, but still one may imagine that some of their feelings tend more towards the pleasant than do others. Indeed, they must do if, as Leibniz held, the experiences had by the micro-constituents of our bodies mirror the component perceptions within our consciously experienced, but complex, pains and pleasures.¹³ While few would admit to feelings of love towards such minute organisms, our modified definition of love as the taking of pleasure in the 'perfection, well-being and specific good' of the other, allows for the possibility of an unselfish love directed towards *all* living creatures, a love that is shown in the desire to promote their well-being in and of itself, a love that is not motivated by anthropocentric and utilitarian concerns, but which is motivated simply by the pleasure we gain from seeing other living creatures thrive.¹⁴

Leibniz conceives justice in terms of love: 'Justice ... demands that we seek the good of others in itself, and since to seek the good of others in itself is to love them, it follows that love is of the nature of justice' (*Elements of natural law*: A VI i 465, L 137).¹⁵ In his *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus (Diplomatic Codex on the Right of Nations)* (GP III 386-9, L 421-4), Leibniz distinguishes various degrees of justice or 'natural right'. First, commutative justice or 'strict right' stipulates that, as far as possible, no one is to be harmed. Its aim is the preservation of peace, but it does not demand that we positively promote the good of others. Second, distributive justice or 'equity' promotes positive moral obligations to treat everyone fairly, not in an abstract sense of equality, but rather in the sense of giving everyone what he or she

¹² Such perfecting is, as Anne Conway recognised, species-specific. See Conway (1996), pp.32-3. See also, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 7 and X,5.

¹³ See Phemister (2005), chapter 10.

¹⁴ Although the definition of love has been extended so as to allow for love of non-rational creatures, this must not be taken to imply that they are capable of loving us in return. Only those who can recognise the perfection, well-being and specific good of others are able to feel love for them.

¹⁵ See also Riley (1996), esp. chapter 4.

deserves: 'it commands us to *give each one his due*' (GP III 388, L 422). These two degrees of justice, are, as it were, secular. The third, and highest, degree of justice - universal justice or 'piety' - operates under God's laws and commands that we live honourably, virtuously or piously, acting always for the good of all. It requires that we aim to 'acquire the custom of acting in conformity with reason which makes virtue a pleasure and second nature to us' (*New Essays*: RB 189).

Leibniz understands distributive justice narrowly as 'charity' (*Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus*: GP III 387, L 422), but universal justice is the 'charity of the wise' or 'universal benevolence' (ibid.: GP III 386, L 421; to Arnauld, 23 March 1690: GP II 136, L 360). '[C]haritable people love their neighbours with some measure of tenderness, they are sensitive to the good or harm of others' (*New Essays*: RB 215). In the wise, this love becomes universal, which for Leibniz means that it is extended to all rational agents. The wise seek universal harmony and the perfection of all individuals and, though no finite being is perfectly wise, the ideal is useful as a model to strive towards (see Hostler (1975), 53). However, the wise person loves God above all,¹⁶ finding the highest pleasure in the contemplation of the perfect being:

Since God is the most perfect and happiest, and consequently, the substance most worthy of love, and since *genuinely pure love* consists in the state that allows one to take pleasure in the perfections and felicity of the beloved, this love must give us the greatest pleasure of which we are capable whenever God is its object (*Principles of Nature and Grace*, §16: GP VI 605, AG 212)¹⁷

Loving God, the wise also seek to bring about God's will - the perfection of the whole - for to love God, 'the seat of universal harmony', is to love universal harmony itself. From this, Leibniz concludes that the love of God and the love of others are one and the same: 'it is the same to love truly or to be wise, and to love God above all things; this is to love all or to be just' (to Arnauld, early November 1671: GP I 73, L 150). Indeed, since those who love take pleasure in promoting the happiness and perfection of others, and since human perfection resides in wisdom and justice, the true good of the wise and just is inseparable from that of those whom the wise love.¹⁸ In accordance with Leibniz's definition of love, at the highest level of justice, love must be extended to all of humanity, or to all rational beings. However, by the revised definition of love proposed above, at the highest level of justice, love must

¹⁶ E.g. *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus*: GP III 387, L 422; *Elements of Natural Law*: A VI i 461, L 134; *Principles of Nature and of Grace*: GP VI 605, AG 212.

¹⁷ See also: 'We love God himself above all things because the pleasure which we experience in contemplating the most beautiful being of all is greater than any conceivable joy' (*Elements of Natural Law*: A VI i 461, L 134).

¹⁸ For discussion, see Rateau (2008), pp. 85-91. Sometimes, the good of others may only be attained at some cost to oneself. Recognising this, Leibniz offers an amended definition of justice as 'the habit of deriving pleasure from an expectation of the good of others, even to the expectation of our own pain', adding nevertheless that 'even though our own pain intervenes, nothing prevents our taking pleasure in an expectation of the good of others' (*Elements of Natural Law*: A VI i 465, L 137).

be extended beyond humanity to every living thing in creation and to the truly universal harmony of all with all. Accordingly, we may also amend Leibniz's remark to Arnauld to read: 'it is the same to love truly or to be wise, and to love God above all things; this is to love all *living things* or to be just'.

Value relational space

We turn now to the application of the relational qualities of perception and appetite, including perceptions of beauty and appetitions towards virtue and justice, to the construction of a relational space of value, modelled upon and co-extensive with the relational space of bodies. Earlier we saw Leibniz claim that actual physical space comes into being when bodies stand in relation to each other. The same may be said in the case of a relational space of value. It too exists only provided there are perceiving, appetitive beings standing in relation to one another. Just as there is no extended empty space before there are physical bodies, so too, in its psychical dimensions, space contains no just, compassionate or loving places until there are actual perceiving beings who act justly and with compassion and love. It contains no places of safety until there are beings relating to each other in ways that are supportive and health-promoting, nor places of terror unless there are belligerent beings hell-bent on each others' destruction. In themselves, love and justice are abstract concepts, ideal and unreal. What are real are the living beings whose relational qualities determine whether the places they inhabit are grounded in relations based in love, kindness and openness or in hatred, envy and secrecy.

The overall character of the space of values is formed from the nature of the perceptual and appetitive relational qualities of the entities that comprise the space. Mechanism governs relations among bodies; teleology rules relations among entelechies, souls and minds. By its appetitions, a creature progresses from one mental state to another: appetitions are actions of monadic primitive forces that impel the individual from one perception to the next (*Monadology* §15: GP VI 609, AG 215). They do so always in accordance with what the individual perceives as being in its own best interests, as likely to further its own good. No creature is ever entirely ambivalent to what it perceives. A creature always prefers to change its perceptions in one way rather than another. For instance, the dog prefers to get a closer look at the cat rather than the stick; the flea prefers to feel itself buried in the hair of the dog rather than on the leaf of the plant. Each perceptual state is a feeling, sensation or, in the higher beings, a self-conscious awareness that the thing perceived is to be pursued or is to be avoided. Each perception thus includes the appetite that moves the mind, soul or entelechy to the next perception.

In so following its appetitions, each living thing seeks its own goals and ends and, in accord with the laws of final causes, pursues those that it thinks are in its best interests. In the vast majority of cases, it is not consciously aware of these goals and ends. The worm has appetitions towards certain things rather than others, but is not conscious of these goals as its own. The worm acts only to continue its life. It feels hungry and tired and thereby strives to move from this state to a better one. It needs food and rest and pursues these as it sees fit. Each particular thing merely

seeks, adopting Spinoza's terminology, to preserve its being through its own conatus.

However, just as in extended space, the resistance or impenetrability of bodies entails that a body already in a particular place must be moved before another can enter the same place, so too, the desires and appetites of living things often conflict with one another, making impossible the simultaneous satisfaction of both. The more powerful wins to the detriment of the other. If the eagle is to be fed, the mouse is sacrificed; but the mouse desires to preserve its life and if it succeeds, the eagle goes hungry. If we were to apply Leibniz's hierarchy of justice to cases like these, we would say that the relation of the eagle and the mouse conforms to the level of 'strict justice' according to which as far as possible, no harm is to be done to others. The eagle needs to eat and would not harm the mouse were it not hungry. Unwittingly, the animal kingdom generally operates in accordance with this rule. As Freya Mathews points out in a slightly different context, '[a]nimals do not follow the so-called law of 'dog eat dog' (Mathews, 1991, p. 157). Humans, however, often take this rule too far, extending our self-interests beyond what is acceptable. We neglect to temper our self-interest through the application of the next level of justice, justice as equity. This level of justice requires us to treat people and other life-forms with fairness and equity, and to recognise that their right to life may overrule our human desires for material wealth, leisure and comfort. At the highest level of justice, the wise follow the principle of universal benevolence. All the same, even the wise cannot always bring good to all. Nonetheless, the wise man who loves all 'necessarily strives to please all, even when he cannot do so, much as a stone strives to fall even when it is suspended (to Arnauld, early November 1671: GP I 73, L 150).¹⁹

Competing and non-competing desires (akin to competing motions and resistances of bodies) together comprise a kind of value-space grounded in the perceptual and appetitive relational qualities belonging to the living things that make up the Leibnizian universe. All the individuals acting, consciously or unconsciously, in accordance with final causation together comprise a universal value space. The appetitive relations among the individual entelechies, souls and minds determine the particular character of this space as they react to each other in line with their perceptions of them as beneficial or harmful, as desirable or undesirable. However, only rational minds can freely choose to conduct their relations to other rational and non-rational beings in a spirit of universal benevolent love, justice and charity or in terms of hatred, fear and competitive self-interest.

Competition frequently occurs within groups of individuals and between nation states and communities, including eco-communities. Modelled upon extended *places* within extended relational space, such groups and communities may be

¹⁹ When conflicting interests do arise, Leibniz recommends that the needs of the 'better man, that is, the one who loves more generally' are given preference on the ground that he in turn will then be better enabled to help others (to Arnauld, early November 1671: GP I 74, L 150).

understood as *places* of value within the universal space of values. It is to these that we now turn.

Value relational places

For Leibniz, every organic body is attached to a dominating mind, soul or entelechy with which it makes up a corporeal substance. Just as the body of a corporeal substance is located in a particular physical place, so too, its soul or entelechy is situated in a particular place of value, identifiable through the perceptual and appetitive relations in which it stands to others. Consequently, every extended physical place may also be regarded as a place of values, a place capable of being described in terms of the desires, interests, attitudes and needs of the related living beings whose organic bodies and their relations comprise that same place when conceived as spatially extended. The beach is not just a place of mere material objects; it is also a place of life -- a place where the birds perceive, the constitutive parts of each grain of sand have some bare feeling, and where the flora and fauna perish or thrive according to the nature of their relations to the other beings. All communities of living individuals constitute places of value, whether this be a rainforest, with its incredible diversity of life forms, including termites, insects, birds, primates, and all manner of trees and plants or a human town or city with its different, but equally diverse, conjunctions of species. The particular goals and desires of the individual living things within each community need not always coincide with those of the others -- each individual pursues its own goals -- but nonetheless, each community has an identifiable structure and order and at some level, the majority of individuals within it desire, albeit for the greater part not consciously, the continuation or survival of the whole. The structure and order is what allows us to talk of such communities as eco-systems or eco-communities,²⁰ that is, as habitats within which individuals cooperate and compete with one another as they each seek to further their own individual goals and outside of which these goals could not be realised.²¹ Indeed, some members may discover that their goals cannot be realised in a particular environment, perhaps because of human pollution, changing environmental factors or simply because they have strayed from their natural habitat. Thus, some birds migrate to winter in warmer climes. Other creatures may be fortunate enough to be able to adapt to new conditions, rather as a square peg may be hewn in order to fit a round hole. Others again, victims of war or famine, do not survive, their perceptions and appetitions no longer a part of any place.²²

²⁰ We may assume a degree of nominalism here: how we choose to carve up space into particular places through language reflects, as Locke recognised, human interests.

²¹ Leibniz distinguishes societies as equal (for instance, those between friends) or unequal (for instance, between monarch and subjects) and as limited (brought together for particular purposes) or unlimited (being concerned with the 'common good'). See *On Natural Law*: L 429.

²² Leibniz himself rejected complete destruction or annihilation, unless by God's hand. Death is likened to a long dreamless sleep, an extended period of confused perception.

Nonetheless, these places themselves, just like their physical counterparts, may be said to remain relatively stable, despite the removal of some and the introduction of other of their constituents. So long as there remains sufficient stability, grounded in the common goals and ends of most of the beings whose relational qualities act as the foundation of the place, we may suppose that the value place remains the same, despite the fluidity of the relations among individuals within it. A particular institution, such as a hospital, would not exist as anything more than an extended place made up of buildings, wards and theatres did not the medical practitioners, administrators and patients work together in pursuit of healing. The goals and aims may remain relatively constant and allow us to construct the notion of the hospital that is more than its mere buildings, despite the fact that its staff and patients come and go over time. Just as the place in the park is considered to be the same place despite the removal of a bench, so too, a place constituted by values and goals, such as the hospital, remains the same on account of the goals and aspirations of its members, despite staff and patient turnover.

However, although every physical place is also a place of value, it would seem that the converse does not hold. Some of the relational qualities that bind minds and souls are not also tied to a specific physical place. Common goals, shared cultural, ethical and spiritual values create communities and institutions that are not confined to particular locations. Although current staff and students at a university are located on the university campus, alumni continue to belong to the university community even though they may live and work far afield. The same is true of the bonds among family members. Similarly, while the congregation of a particular church may meet in the church each Sunday, the spiritual body of the Church, made up of all believers, is physically scattered across the globe.²³

The kingdom of grace is one such place not tied to any specific physical place. All living things act towards final ends or goals, but only some do so with the knowledge that they are so acting and with the ability to rationally weigh alternative courses of action before choosing that which they perceive, rightly or wrongly, to be the best. Taken together, these beings comprise what Kant conceived as the 'kingdom of ends', what Leibniz called the 'moral kingdom of grace' and both Augustine and Leibniz, the 'City of God' – a moral place in which the moral law dictates how these beings ought to regard and act towards each other. In Leibniz's words, they form a kind of society with God at the head. God is 'lord or monarch of minds ... he enters into society with us, as a prince with his subjects; and this consideration is so dear to him that the happy and flourishing state of his empire, which consists in the greatest

²³ Leibniz himself identifies the 'church of God' as the sixth and final 'natural society, the others being constituted by relations of friendship, co-operation, education and obligation between husband and wife, parents and children, master and servant, the whole household and civil society (*On Natural Law*: L 428-9)

possible happiness of its inhabitants, becomes the highest of his laws' (*Discourse on Metaphysics*, §36: GP IV 462, AG 67).²⁴

Members of God's City are expected to promote the greatest possible happiness of all its citizens. For Leibniz, as we've seen, love and justice, the charity or universal benevolence of the wise, provide the means. In loving others, we take pleasure in their happiness. We desire their happiness for their own sakes. Our own pleasure is gained through perceiving the happiness of the other. In this way, as we saw, the good of others and our own good come together.²⁵ The virtuous and wise consider not their own apparent goods, but seek to ascertain the true good and to promote good relations among all rational beings. Acting virtuously, the wise attain a serenity of spirit, an internal harmony (*Reflections on the common concept of justice*: L 569-70) that mirrors the external harmony of a society in which the good and perfection of all citizens is paramount.

However, just as all extended places, taken together, make up extended space, so too, individual places of value, taken together, comprise a relational space of value constructed from the perceived and desired goals and ends (the final causes) that govern the conative behaviour of individual living creatures. The kingdom of grace is a subset of this general value space. The City of God forms only part of the natural kingdom of final causes. Beings whose relational qualities – their distinct perceptions and rational volitions – qualify them as members of the Kingdom of Grace are also members of the wider space made up from the relational qualities of all living souls and entelechies. Their citizenship of the City of God subjects them to moral scrutiny and appropriate praise and condemnation for acts they self-consciously and freely choose, but it does not follow that such praise and blame should be restricted to acts in relation to other members of the City of God. Adopting the modifications to Leibniz's position proposed earlier, the wise person is expected to consider the perfection of God's creation as a whole, not just the part of it that comprises the kingdom of grace. The wise consider the happiness of fellow human beings, but should also take into account the well-being and interests of all living perceiving and conative beings, of all beings making up the space of final causes. In so acting to promote the perfection and goodness of the world in a truly universal sense, the sage undoubtedly gains immense pleasure from the perception of the unfolding beauty of God's creation (*On Wisdom*: GP VII 89, L 428). In practical terms, as a member of the City of God, whenever one finds oneself in any place of value, whether this be the beach, the hospital, the university, the city, the home or the wilderness, it is in our own best interests to cultivate attitudes of love and justice, care and consideration towards and to seek to promote the interests and

²⁴ Here too, Leibniz insisted, the laws of justice, divinely administered, ensure that all good acts are rewarded and evil punished (*Principles of Nature and Grace*, §15: GP VI 605, AG 212).

²⁵ See also, *Remarks on the Three Volumes Entitled Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times ...* (GP III 425, L 630) where Leibniz argues that reason commands us to promote our own happiness; that our own happiness is best promoted in turn by acting virtuously (here understood as 'reasonably'); and that to act thus involves disinterestedly seeking the good of all.

needs of all life forms in that place, not merely the interests of those who will be self-consciously aware that their needs have been met. Leibniz observed that ‘the science of the just and the useful, that is, of the public good and of their own private good, are mutually tied up in each other, and [that] no one can be truly happy in the midst of miserable people (*Elements of Natural Law*: A VI i 460, L 132). We may amend the latter claim to read: ‘no one can be truly happy in the midst of any suffering whatsoever, irrespective of which life forms are affected’.

Conclusion

The relational space and places of value described here allow us to conceive the natural world, not just as a world of physical, moving bodies, but also as a world of living perceiving things – of things with souls whose appetites strive to promote their own well-being – only some of whom also belong to the ‘smaller’ kingdom of grace. The free, self-conscious beings in the latter must assume responsibility both for others in the place of grace, as well as more widely for others in the space of final causes. Space and its component places are formed in part by our perceptions of, and attitudes towards, it. If we regard the natural world of embodied perceiving conative beings, with disdain, this perception will be mirrored in the perceptions had by others as they perceive us. Our perceptions and appetitions change our relations to them and them to us and in turn change the places we co-inhabit for better or worse. As humans, we can decide consciously to change our value environments as easily as we change our physical surroundings. The attitudes we adopt towards other living, perceiving, appetitive beings around us alter the tenor, quality and structure of these places and ultimately affect the quality of the value space as a whole.²⁶

ABBREVIATIONS

A = Leibniz, G.W. (1923–). *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. 7 vols. Ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften. Darmstadt/Leipzig/Berlin: Akademie Verlag;

AG = Leibniz, G.W. (1989). *Philosophical Essays*. Ed. and trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

AT = Descartes, R. (1964–76). *Oeuvres de Descartes*. 12 vols. Ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery. Paris: Vrin.

CSM = Descartes, R. (1985-1991). *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. 3 vols. Ed. and trans. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. Vol 3 with Anthony Kenny. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁶ Grateful thanks are extended to Tim Collins, Michael McGhee, Leemon McHenry, Dory Scaltsas, two anonymous referees and members of the Embodied Values project for helpful comments on earlier drafts.

H = Leibniz, G. W. (1985). *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*. Transl. by E. M. Huggard. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court.

HTA = Leibniz, G. W. (1956). *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*. Trans. by H. T. Alexander. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

L = Leibniz, G.W. (1969). *Philosophical Papers and Letters*. Ed. and trans. Leroy E. Loemker. 2nd edition. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company.

RB = Leibniz, G. W. (1982, repr. 1985). *New Essays on Human Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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