

A living being cannot really die because if it did, the Universe would die.

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Author/Publisher: Luis Alberto Hara / PIJAMASURF

Translated by: JD Arimathea

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A FRAGMENT OF LEIBNIZ'S THOUGHT IN WHICH LIES THE TOTALITY OF THOUGHT

The astronomer Carl Sagan, who is responsible, among others, for creating a spiritual vision within science without resorting to theism, once said that to create a relatively simple thing like an apple pie actually required, as "ingredients", the totality of the Universe. In other words: in order for the apple pie to exist, the totality of all that exists must first exist. This sentence was intended to create a sense of wonder and cosmic belonging, in a skein of interdependence.

Gottfried Leibniz, who was a first-rate thinker of a level far superior to Sagan, once wrote: "A living being cannot die unless the whole Universe dies as well". Leibniz's sentence is more forceful and implies something truly amazing, much more than being "stardust", although it is much more controversial if the common postulates of modern science are taken into account. Later in the same letter, he warns a foolish reader that, had he read him carefully, he would have noticed:

that there are always characters in the imagination that correspond to the most abstract thoughts—as can be seen with arithmetic and algebra—and he would also have seen that these mirrors that he calls magic by convention, these monads, represent the Universe. Only God has the penetration to see everything in them. But that does not prevent everything from being represented there, and one must know that in the smallest portion of matter, he who knows everything reads the totality of the Universe by virtue of the harmony of things.

Leibniz is speaking, of course, of his monadology, one of the most poetic and fantastic philosophical theories ever conceived. Leibniz understands that matter does not really exist, the atomic theory is logically untenable, what exist are monads, mental substances or units of perception and appetite in which the totality of the Universe is represented. These monads are windows through which God takes a perspective, both potential and actual and both knowing the particular—the specific angle of each monad's vision—and the totality, having in itself the perspective of the totality. Monads are described as "a garden full of plants or a swamp full of fish. But every branch of a plant, every organ of an animal, every drop of its bodily fluids is itself a similar garden or a similar swamp." Leibniz seems to anticipate popular notions of contemporary science and spirituality such as fractals and holographic theory.

Leibniz's vision is majestic, of a grandeur difficult to equal. His organic and mathematical idealism would be enormously influential on Alfred North Whitehead, albeit from a vision oriented to the immanent process of reality: God not as the creator, but as the result or the very creation of this intrinsically intelligent nature that expands and knows itself. Notably Leibniz (along with Whitehead) is being, and deserves to be, resurrected by the panpsychism movement in science and philosophy that is currently gaining traction. What we are, Leibniz suggests, is an expression of wholeness, a fulguration of an eternal but ceaselessly creative divinity, desiring, as it were, infinite newness, new perspectives to experience its transcendent perfection.

We are not a solid, substantial thing: we are a window through which the divine intelligence looks, a window that is constantly being pierced by the light of infinity.