Theodicy and Reason
Logic, Metaphysics, and Theology in Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée* (1710)
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«Mes papiers sont assez en désordre» Some Notes on the Philosophical Language and Metaphors of the *Essais de Théodicée*

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Abstract Leibniz's use of language in the *Essais de théodicée* follows the tendency of his time, viewing precise definitions of all terms as a *sine qua non* condition for rigorous scientific and philosophical discourse, thereby considering tropes as ornamental devices. At the same time, however, he employs metaphors, analogies, and similes to express his philosophical views. How to solve this apparent inconsistency? My analysis of the language of the *Théodicée* aims to corroborate the general assumption that metaphorical discourse plays a crucial role in the exposition of Leibniz's most fundamental theses, and that the basic metaphors are never actually cashed out in non-metaphorical language. The motivation for it lies in the fact that different metaphors are certainly connected but at the same time irreducible to literal paraphrases, so that they illuminate together the nature of the relations between different facets of Leibniz's philosophy.

Keywords Metaphor. Analysis of Language. Philosophical Discourse.

1 Introduction

The *Théodicée*, published in 1710, was addressed to a large public. It was written in French in plain language and contained essays, dialogues and fables. Leibniz expressly wished to present difficult concepts in an easy and familiar manner, as he stated, «et je me flatte que le petite Dialogue qui finit les Essais opposés à M. Bayle, donnera quelque contentement à ceux qui sont bien aises de voir des verités difficiles, mais importantes, exposées d'une maniere aisée et familiere» (*Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 48).

The German philosopher published the *Essais de Théodicée* in a difficult time of his life. He had lost his protectors (Sophie Charlotte died in 1705) and had been recalled to his duties several times by Ernst August Braunschweig-Lüneburg until the *Reiseverbot* made in 1704 by Georg

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Ludwig (George I).[1] It was therefore important for him to present a summa of his philosophy to the scientific community, in order to raise his prestige as a member of the *République des lettres*.

Despite the fact that this was one of the few works published by Leibniz in his lifetime, the *Théodicée* is far from being a systematic publication and it underwent a lengthy editorial process. Leibniz was aware of the 'composite' structure of the work, which is completed by the collection of *échantillons* and of articles already published in the principal European scientific journals.[2] All these aspects render the *Théodicée* particularly interesting from the point of view of its structure and text organization. Its multiplicity of themes is reflected in the multiplicity of stylistic scenarios employed by Leibniz as well as in the different linguistic registers. This plurality has been confirmed by Leibniz himself. The *Théodicée* is, in fact, entitled *Essais* (using the plural) *de Théodicée*. The apparent, fragmented articulation of this philosophical discourse has been often considered as an element of weakness and not as a positive complexity. In this paper, I would like to remedy the 'injustice' of the *Théodicée* being considered a 'populaire', superficial text, without scientific dimension. These considerations mostly derive from its style and its 'disordered', non-systematic character, as mentioned above.[3] No doubt, it is difficult to develop a composite view of the various subjects and domains treated in the *Théodicée*. The work is, in fact, a compendium of themes and styles. As Fontenelle observed: «La Théodicée seule suffirait pour répresenter Leibnitz. Une lecture immense, des anecdotes curieuses sur les livres ou les personnes, […] un style où la force domine, et où cependant sont admis les agreements d'une imagination hereuse» (Fontenelle 1825, p. 392).

I therefore propose to approach these difficulties by using the language and style of the *Théodicée*, namely, by focussing on metaphors as a way to access this 'diversity'.[4] A close look at the metaphors used in the *Essais*

1 For a reconstruction of the context in which Leibniz wrote the *Essais de Théodicée* see Tognon 1987. On the *Reiseverbot* cf. A I, 5, p. 60.

2 «Selon la veritable Philosophie, dont je me flatte d'avoir donné des enchantillons dans ma Theodicée» says Leibniz in his *Remarques* on the three volumes of Shaftesbury's *Characteristiks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (GP III, p. 426); see also the letter to Remond of July 1714: «ma Theodicéé ne suffit pas pour donner un corps entier de mon Systeme, mais en y joignant ce que j'ay mis en divers Journaux» (GP III, p. 618). See Stein-Karnbach 1983, pp. 1311-1322; Ravier [1937] 1966.

3 For an interesting discussion of this issue see Rateau 2011, pp. 7-9.

4 I will not deal here with the fable. On this topic see, e.g., Robinet 1982. «La 'fabula', di cui è ammessa tutta la fluidità (*versatilis materia*), viene riabilitata in età moderna per il suo potere di trasmettere significati nascosti, talvolta non immediatamente spiegabili col puro raziocinio, ma non è ridotta a mera occupazione ludica. Semmai, essa è stimata depositaria di una *docendi ratio* speciale, per la sua accessibilità, e viene reputata utile alle scienze, soprattutto nel caso di scoperte nuove» (Varani 1999, p. 80).

will facilitate the creating of a grid for reading the text where different concerns converge without subordinating each other in a strictly hierarchical systematic structure, or in dichotomic alternatives. A grid, or *reseau* of metaphors, based on a preliminary exam of the main metaphors present in the text, is used to view the textual structure and the different argumentative forms used by the philosopher in managing the apparently heterogeneous domains he discusses.[5] To this aim, I first distinguish the different rhetorical and stylistic elements of the *Théodicée*. I thus discuss a 'grid' that plots some of the most recurring metaphors, which I consider to be among the most representative and significant, such as the labyrinth (which I will examine in more detail), the war, and the ocean.[6]

Of course, this paper does not aim to provide a comprehensive account of all the metaphors implicitly and explicitly used in the *Théodicée*, as this is only a first attempt of a more extensive and analytic work. In fact, it is scarcely feasible to list all the metaphors present in the text in a short paper. What I would like to do is to show how metaphors are constitutive of the philosophical discourse in the *Théodicée* and to relate the metaphors and text in a way that clearly highlights how these metaphors, within the organization of the text, play the role of a link between different problems and concepts.

2 The Philosophical Discourse

I will not discuss the different approaches to metaphors, analogies and allegories as proposed by rhetoric, philosophy and linguistics, but I would like to recognize how metaphors act within the philosophical discourse designed by Leibniz in his *Théodicée*.

Looking closely at the different uses of analogy and allegory, we can trace several lines of separation between them as well as between them and metaphors. In some parts, Leibniz, who was a refined writer, uses different linguistic 'resources' in the same paragraph. Whatever the use of these different contexts, the principle of analogy is central to Leibniz's philosophy. It dominates, for example, his entire conception of the uni-

5 «Quoniam vero constat, viros varia doctrina et singulari veritatis amore praestantes, multa habere solere cogitata vel experimenta praeclara, sparsa licet et varia, nec in unius scientiae corpus coeuntia, quae plerumque magna reipublicae jactura interire solent, ea si in chartam conjiciant communicentque, utcunque inelaborata, atque incohaerentia, mirifice totum hoc institutum juvabunt, suaeque simul gloriae velificabuntur, quam cuique ex inventis suis societas summa fide sartam tectamque praestabit» (*Consilium de Encyclopaedia nova conscribenda methodo inventoria*, 1679, A VI, 4, p. 349).

6 I tried to show the metaphorical network of Leibniz's philosophy in one of the first monographies entirely dedicated to Leibniz's metaphors: Marras 2010. The present paper pulls together some of the threads discussed in the book.

verse: the phenomenal order of things represents the metaphysical order of spiritual substances. These spiritual units in turn reflect one another analogically, so that in each and every one of these monads, we can find an echo of the entire universe.[7]

The use and the consideration of analogies in Leibniz is generally a traditional approach, and it is regulated by the principle of *ressemblance*. As Leibniz said, «*Il faut s'accoustumer aux analogies*, sçavoir deux ou plusieurs choses fortes differentes estant données, trouver leur ressemblances» (GP VII, p. 85). Analogy should also be considered as a form of comparison based on *proportionalitas* and 'predictability'. Analogy and metaphors are strictly related in Leibniz.[8] In the *Théodicée* he uses analogy to explore the correspondences between concepts and the correlation among different domains, and metaphor is used to establish new relations.[9] The line between analogy and metaphor is subtle:

> C'est comme dans ces inventions de perspective, où certains beaux dessins ne paraissent que confusion, jusqu'à ce qu'on les rapporte à leur vrai point de vue, ou qu'on les regarde par le moyen d'un certain verre ou miroir. C'est en les plaçant et s'en servant comme il faut qu'on les fait devenir l'ornement d'un cabinet. (*Théodicée*, § 147, GP VI, p. 197)

> Le meilleur système de corps, c'est-à-dire de choses ranges selon les lieux et les temps et d'ames qui representent et apercoivent les corps et suivants lesquelles les corps sont gouvernés en bonne partie. (*Théodicée*, § 200, GP VI, p. 235)

Allegory, defined by Leibniz as *metaphora continuata*, is clearly used in the text and is different from metaphor.[10] We can say that if metaphor is somehow founded in an analogy (according to some statements made by Leibniz), allegory derives from metaphor. Leibniz explicitly mentions the term 'metaphor' in the *Théodicée* only one time, attributing to the term a sort of 'negative' implication: «il leur avoit caché la verité sous le voile des metaphores» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 10, GP VI, p. 56). In comparison,

7 Cf. Orio de Miguel 1988. There is a large literature on analogy in Leibniz, for a bibliography see Marras 1996.

8 «Il sera bon cependant de considérer cette analogie de choses sensibles et insensibles qui a servi de fondement aux tropes» (A VI, 6, p. 277).

9 An example of this use can be retraced in the discussion on body and liberty, see for example Rey 2011.

10 In this paper I will not discuss the use of allegory, but on this regard I would like just to refer to an interesting explicit use made by Leibniz in the *Théodicée*, § 76 (GP VI, p. 95), when referring to Bayle, he said: «pour payer allegorie par allegorie, je diray que».

the term 'analogy' is used two times, the verb 'to compare' is used eight times, and the term 'allegory' is used three times.

Since the *Préface*, which is addressed as a *captatio benevolentiae* to the reader, Leibniz employs some of the recurrent conceptual metaphors of his work: architectonic metaphors (labyrinth), optic metaphors (light), aquatic metaphors (torrent), and movement metaphors (*chemin*). The entire *Theodicée* is disseminated by analogies and by several other metaphors that play different roles in the text: all these together contribute considerably to the construction of the philosophical discourse.

The language and the stylistic choice made by Leibniz in the *Théodicée* establish a direct link between concepts and forms of expression. Leibniz employs different stylistic registers: formal, polemic and ironical, as well as different genres: dialogic, narrative, fable, descriptive, autobiographic and many others. These different stylistic choices are the modality Leibniz uses to fulfil the text organization of the *Théodicée*, which includes: the 'Préface'; the preliminary discourse 'Discours preliminaire sur la conformité de la Foy avec la Raison'; the body of the work, 'Essais sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal', which is divided into three parts; the Index. The work is completed by the *Appendices*: 'Abregé de la Controverse reduite à des Argumens en forme'; Reflexions on Hobbes' work: *Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance*; remarks on a work on the Origin of Evil, (*Causa Dei*) and a more extended abridgment of the work in Latin.[11]

This composite organization required different language resources, and Leibniz could cope with the multiplicity of themes and arguments using different text organization with specific linguistic registers. The language has therefore played the crucial role of guaranteeing the cohesion and coherence of the entire text. Figures of speech, in particular, metaphors, can accomplish this role at best. I am thinking for example of metaphors such as that of the light or that of the labyrinth as connecting elements throughout the text.[12]

The different metaphors used in the *Théodicée* in the different parts of the text show the so-called *double aspect de la constitution discursive*, namely 'institution' and 'instauration'. The first mediates the relation between text and context, and the second, the relation between the speculative schemes and the form of expression. In the following two paragraphs, I will closely examine these two aspects.

11 I refer here to Gerhardt's edition. For the genesis of the *Théodicée* see Tognon 1987.

12 An interesting point of view in which the metaphor of the labyrinth is the thread in the texture of the *Théodicée* is proposed by Diodato 1996.

3 Text and Context

The text contains several 'kinds' of metaphors, and we can start the analysis by selecting those metaphors that are already part of the 'discourse'. These metaphors are difficult to distinguish because they are 'worn-out' or 'frozen' metaphors, as for example in the following two quotations: «Ce qui arrive fort aisement aux personnes les plus spirituelles et les plus penetrantes, lorsqu'on donne carriere à son esprit, sans se donner toute la patience necessaire pour creuser jusqu'aux fondemens de son systeme» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 77, GP VI, p. 95). «Je ne suis pas encor à la moitié des dix neuf maximes» (*Théodicée*, § 124, GP VI, p. 178). The metaphors used in the two sentences metaphors embedded in the language, somehow they are part of the ordinary use of language (in the second sentence for example the metaphor of the way/travel). This use of metaphors is sometimes considered 'level zero' of the conceptualization and, most often, we do not have linguistic markers that help us to recognize them, as for example: «J'ay voulu prendre la peine de faire l'anatomie de ce long passage» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 77, GP VI, p. 95).

In another case, metaphors are announced or marked by Leibniz, mostly when he resorts to comparisons and analogies. There are linguistic markers used in the text, for example '*pour ainsi dire* (used 17 times), *à peu pres comme* (17), *comme si* (46) or *c'est-à-dire*: *la solide pieté*, c'est à dire la lumiere et la vertu, n'a jamais esté le partage du grand nombre. Il ne faut point s'en etonner, rien n'est si conforme à la foiblesse humaine' (*Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 25). Alternatively, in order to establish a comparison, Leibniz uses the more explicit *comme*: «les formulaires sont comme des ombres de la verité, et approchent plus ou moins de la pure lumiere» (*Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 25).

The *Théodicée* can certainly be mapped using these markers to detect and collect metaphors and analogies. This, however, even if it helps us to recognize the metaphors, does not explain their role in the text. We also have metaphors that are clearly positioned in the text: «Mais d'autres […] alloient jusqu'à une ame universelle qui fût l'Ocean de toutes les ames particulieres» (*Théodicée*, Discours § 8, GP VI, p. 54). Or metaphors, articulated and complex, that are clearly delineated within the text:

> l'autorité de la S. Ecriture devant le Tribunal de la Raison, afin que la Raison luy cede dans la suite, comme à une nouvelle lumière, et luy sacrifice toutes ses vraisemblances. C'est à peu près comme un nouveaux Chef envoyé par le Prince doit faire voir ses Lettres Patentes dans l'Assemblée où il doit presider par apres. (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 29, GP VI, p. 67)

All these metaphors create the metaphorical texture of the text and are interesting indicators of its metaphorical 'density'. A clear example of the relation between text and context is offered by the metaphor of the war: «C'est parler comme si le soutenant et l'opposant devoient étre egalement à decouvert: mais le soutenant est comme un Commandant assiegé, couvert par ses ouvrages, et c'est à l'attaquant de les ruiner» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 75, GP VI, p. 94; cf. Varani 1995, pp. 185-195; *Théodicée*, § 95, § 145, § 115 and § 127). This metaphor creates a model for describing Leibniz's conception of dispute or debate and the way he proposes to manage the disagreement. This metaphor is often correlated to the metaphor of balance used by Leibniz as a decision-making process in a solution to controversies: the balance is a tool in which reason is applied (*trutina rationis*), as we can see in the following two quotations: «car il n'y a rien de plus imparfait que nostre Logique, lorsqu'on va au delà des argumens necessaires; et les plus excellens philosophes de nostre temps [...] ont été fort éloignés de nous marquer les vrais moyens propres à aider cette faculté qui nous doit faire peser les apparences du vray et du faux», and «qui doit regler le poids des vraisemblances, et qui seroit si necessaire dans les déliberations d'importance» (*Théodicée*, Discours § 31, GP VI, pp. 57-58).

In the *Théodicée*, this model is applied, in particular, in the *Reflexions sur l'ouvrage que M. Hobbes a publié en Anglois, de la Liberté, de la Necessité et du Hazard*, where Leibniz comments on the controversy between Thomas Hobbes and the Bishop Bramhall (the controversy took place from 1645 to 1657). The argumentation is built under the scheme of the metaphor of the balance and the *mais* (but) is the linguistic marker that helps us view the metaphorical model (cf. Marras 2002; 2010, pp. 129-147).

4 Text and Expression

In the language of the *Théodicée*, metaphor (as well as analogy and allegory) offers a level of signification equivalent to that of philosophical analysis. This operation is not external to the language, nor is it an ornamental function or a use of language with didactic purposes in order to render the discourse more accessible or pleasant. However, it is a way to reconceptualize at a metaphorical level what is difficult to keep unified and organized at the literal level of analysis. This is particularly evident in the use of the metaphor of labyrinth. I will shortly discuss how Leibniz uses this metaphor, and I will provide all the elements I consider significant in order to reflect on the relation between a concept and its metaphorization.

Leibniz makes «un abondant usage de l'image du labyrinthe et de ses protagonistes victorieux Thésée et Ariane» (Robinet 1999, p. 657). In one of his many auto-biographical digressions (1705), Leibniz points out that,

as a young man, he had already noticed that an analogous thread could help lead us through the labyrinths of contingency, predestination, freedom and the geometrical nature of the incommensurables. The two target domains, contingency and freedom and the incommensurables, are analogous in that they each can, as far as their pragmatic aspects are concerned, dissociate themselves from their metaphysical and theological counterparts.[13] Not surprisingly the 'Préface' of the *Essais de Théodicée* opens with the well-known metaphor of the labyrinth. For Leibniz, there are two «famous labyrinths» that have led astray «the human mind»: the one concerning «the composition of the continuum» and the other about «the nature of freedom». Both have the same origin: «eodem infiniti fonte oriuntur» (*De libertate, contingentia et serie causarum, providentia*, 1689, A VI, 4, p. 1654).

> Il y a deux Labyrinthes fameux, où nostre raison s'égare bien souvent: l'un regarde la grande Question *du Libre et du Necessaire*, sur-tout dans la production et dans l'origine du *Mal*; l'autre consiste dans la discussion *de la continuité, et des indivisibles*, qui en paroissent les Elémens, et où doit entrer la considération de *l'infini*. Le premier embarasse presque tout le genre humain, l'autre n'exerce que le Philosophes. J'auray peutestre une fois l'occasion de m'expliquer sur le second, et de faire remarquer, que faute de bien concevoir la nature de la substance et de la matiere, on a fait de fausses positions, qui menent à des difficultés insurmontables, dont les veritable usage devroit estre le renversement de ces positions mêmes. Mais si la connoissance de la continuité est importante pour la speculation, celle de la necessité ne l'est pas moins pour la practique. (*Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 29; cf. Grua I, p. 42, 371; II, p. 457; A VI, 4, p. 1528)

This characterization of the two problems immediately upgrades the conventional reading of the labyrinth metaphor to that of a highly complex, convoluted situation or problem, where a solution is difficult to find. Leibniz makes clear that the two problems targeted by the metaphor are fundamental philosophical problems that lie at the core of his concerns, problems for which he must find – and believes to have found – a solution. The use of 'labyrinth' by Leibniz takes into account the fact that the two problems that it conceptualizes are, on the face of it, radically different. The one belongs to ethics and the philosophy of action; the other, to mathematics – both, however, have their roots in metaphysics.

13 «Materiam de libertate, contingentia, Fato, ac praedestinatione inde ab adolescentia versavi, visusque sum mihi filum aliquod reperisse in hoc labyrintho, detecta contingentiae radice, cuius notio in metaphysicis aliquam cum incommensurabilium natura Geometrica Analogiam habet» (*Brouillon de Preface to G. Burnet*, 1705, Grua II, p. 457).

> Il [sc. Bayle] croit que la doctrine de la Predestination est de cette nature dans la Theologie, et celle de la composition du Continuum dans la Philosophie. Ce sont en effect les deux Labyrinthes qui ont exercé de tout temps les Theologiens et les Philosophes. Libertus Fromondus, Théologien de Louvain [...] qui a fort travaillé sur la Grace, et qui a aussi fait un livre exprès intitulé Labyrithus de compositione continui, a bien expérimenté les difficultés de l'un et de l'autre: et le fameux Ochin a fort bien representé ce qu'il appelle les labyrinthes de la predestination. (*Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 29)

I will present here how the two problems are conceptualized by means of a metaphor.[14]

Human freedom seems to be, on all accounts, incompatible with any conception that constrains human action through necessary laws, be they physical, theological, or other – a conception that implies determinism. The problem for Leibniz is how to preserve both, i.e. how to overcome an incompatibility that is, for him, only apparent. To achieve this requires a thorough re-conceptualization of the dichotomy in question, involving a re-definition of human and divine freedom, so that both are no longer viewed as opposing each other. It also involves the re-definition of contingent and necessary truth, in such a way that the realms of contingency (the created world) and necessity (the set of possible worlds) are neither denied their separate jurisdictions nor seen as being in insurmountable conflict with each other. These requirements, within the parameters of Leibniz's time (and also today) are extremely difficult to fulfil. Hence their character of a 'labyrinth', according to Leibniz, led his predecessors, who accepted without questioning the parameters of the problem, to an endless wandering in its meanders without finding a way out: «On a cherché d'autres moyens de sortir de ce labyrinthe, et les Cartesiens mêmes ont eté embarrassés au sujet du libre arbitre» (Théodicée, § 292, GP VI, p. 290). Leibniz defines the free will problem as 'une des plus anciennes et des plus agitées dans le monde', embarassing his predecessors and contemporary scholars (A VI, 4, p. 1406).

14 The question is whether Leibniz refers, regarding both problems, to the same kind of labyrinth or whether one should rather correlate with each of the problems a different type of labyrinth. If the latter is the case, a further question arises, what relations – if any – exist between the two problems as conceptualized in terms of the two metaphorical labyrinths. I already discussed different models of labyrinth applied to the way Leibniz uses this metaphor, providing a typology of labyrinths (most of which familiar to Leibniz). The result of the analysis showed that the target 'freedom' is correlated with the manneristic (many entrances and many exits) type of labyrinth, whereas the target 'continuum' is correlated with the *unicursale* (one way out) type of labyrinth (Marras 2010, pp. 101-128).

> Par cette fausse idée d'une indifference d'equilibre, les Molinistes ont été fort embarrassés. On leur demandoit non seulement comment il étoit possible de connoitre à quoy se determineroit une cause absolument indeterminée, mais aussi comment il étoit possible qu'il en resultât enfin une determination, dont il n'y a aucune source: car de dire avec Molina, que c'est le privilege de la cause libre, ce n'est rien dire, c'est luy donner le privilege d'être chimerique. C'est un plaisir de voir comment ils se tourmentent pour sortir d'un labyrinthe, où il n'y a absolument aucune issue. Quelques uns enseignent qu'avant que la volonté se determine formellement, il faut qu'elle se determine virtuellement pour sortir de son état d'equilibre. […] Ils ne sortiront donc jamais d'affaire, sans avouer qu'il y a une predetermination dans l'état precedent de la creature libre, qui l'incline à se determiner. (*Théodicée*, § 48, GP VI, p. 129)

As a 'rational believer' intent on reconciling faith with reason, Leibniz seeks to preserve, as much as possible, the principles of both Catholic and Lutheran theology and the new scientific vision of the world as ruled by non-arbitrary laws, i.e. laws that neither require nor admit miracles or other forms of supernatural intervention, whose admission would imply some sort of imperfection of the divine creator of those very laws. Leibniz believes that it is possible to avoid determinism if one makes the appropriate distinction between necessity and certainty, the former based on the logical principle of contradiction, the latter, on the principle of perfection or of sufficient reason. The latter comprises the idea that humans will always choose a course of action by virtue of the reasons that, from their perspective, favour such a choice. Although they are created as rational beings that will strive to make their choices in this way, in so doing they exercise their freedom, for, unlike what happens with necessary truths, it is beyond their capacity to know a priori through demonstration what these reasons turn out to be:

> on sache bien distinguer entre la necessité et entre la determination ou certitude, entre la necessité metaphysique, qui ne laisse lieu à aucun choix, ne presentant qu'un seul object possible, et entre la necessité morale, qui oblige le plus sage à choisir le meilleur: enfin pourveu qu'on se defasse de la chimere de la pleine indifference, qui ne se sauroit trouver que dans les livres des Philosophes, et sur le papier […] on sortira aisement du labyrinthe, dont l'esprit humain a été le Dedale malhereux, et qui a causé une infinité de desordres, tant chés les anciens que chés les modernes. (*Théodicée*, § 367, GP VI, p. 333)

According to Leibniz, the articulation of the problem of freedom in a rational universe fits a number of properties of a kind of labyrinth in which it is important to create a trajectory for walking, rather than find 'the' exit,

for they have many exits as well as many entrance points. The structure of the labyrinth is extremely complex, comprising a multiplicity of possible trajectories. Each trajectory provides, to be sure, an 'orientation' within the labyrinth, but it involves a series of free choices in the crossings and bifurcations, none of which is obligatory for 'successfully' threading the labyrinth.

The exercise of freedom, conceptualized in terms of the labyrinth, consists of facing this complexity and the multiple choices in a reasoned way, without assuming that there is only one 'correct' solution, i.e. without assuming that one has to 'discover' or 'match' an ideal course of action preestablished by God, the labyrinth's designer. In such a labyrinth, one passes from one crossing or bifurcation to another, and can become confused as the way one finds or creates is not absolutely certain, for it is reasonable to follow one path as well as other possible ones, since there is no single formula leading to a single solution.

At the meta-level, the labyrinth may also be seen as the implicit model for the method Leibniz employs for handling the problem it conceptualizes. For, in fact, he is suggesting a 'trajectory', which amounts to an alternative to those available in the traditional debate on this problem. This concept takes for granted an irreducible polarity between necessity and indifference, and between full determination and mere chance. Leibniz rejects both, the 'freedom of indifference' of voluntaryism and the predetermination of necessitarianism. To be sure, freedom comprises an element of spontaneity, which is for him, however, very distant from 'impulsive action', i.e. action not guided by reason. Yet, to be 'guided by reason' is equally far away, in his view, from reducing one's actions to necessity, i.e. to the result of logical deduction or to a perfect planning of one's actions. What the Leibnizian definition strives to convey is the idea that an action is properly called free insofar as its spontaneity is guided or 'oriented' by intelligence (or rationality), *spontaneitas intelligentis*, i.e. as it is combined with, albeit not determined by, a reflective process of deliberation – much in the same way as, in the labyrinth, one's spontaneous tendency to choose one path is always coupled with some deliberation about the adequacy of such a choice.

The other labyrinth addressed by Leibniz is that of the infinite and the continuum. Leibniz's first, best-known, and perhaps most important achievement as a mathematician was the creation of the infinitesimal calculus, and one can say that Leibniz discovered a solution for a long-standing mathematical problem, a way out of a labyrinth that had bogged the minds of his predecessors and contemporaries.

The labyrinth in question turns out to be a rather simple one, and one wonders why it was so difficult for other bright mathematicians to find the way out. According to Leibniz, the difficulty stemmed from the fact that his colleagues worked within the framework of metaphysical dichotomies that

were taken for granted, which prevented them from 'seeing' the solution. In particular, they were entangled in an endless debate, framed in terms of traditional Aristotelian concepts, about whether the infinite was 'actual' or 'virtual', 'real' or 'ideal'. The natural solution for such a confusion should be to establish more clearly for one pole or the other, rather than mixing them up. Leibniz's way out, however, consists rather of providing a 'mix up' alternative, a sort of *tertium* that treats the infinitessimal as both actual and virtual. In the calculus, this is done through a 'dynamization' of this notion, in terms of such concepts as 'as small as one wishes', and through the 'endless continuation' of operations performed for a finite series, assuming that such a continuation permits the extrapolation of finite results to infinite ones. Infinitessimal, thus, acquire an 'ideal' character. Yet, as far as considerations other than mathematical are taken into account, Leibniz does not hesitate to declare the infinite 'real' or 'actual' where theological and metaphysical considerations are involved or are matched by earlier statements also involving physical considerations, in which it is clear that the mathematical achievement does not completely 'solve' the problems of the infinite and the continuum. The problem is that, if analysed in this way, motion is not in fact explained: how the body, so to speak, 'jumps' from one spatial position to another? We are clearly facing another level of the (mathematical) labyrinth, and the solution proposed by Leibniz is quite different from the solution to the 'confusion' above, which was at least mathematically plausible and pragmatically functional.

Such appeals to metaphysics or theology, however, do not always prove to be satisfactory for Leibniz. At one point, he seems to have reached the conclusion that he was unable to provide a metaphysical foundation for the calculus. «There is no need to make mathematical analysis depend upon metaphysical controversies», he writes in 1701 to Varignon, one of his faithful mathematical followers. This is, in fact, Leibniz's reply to Varignon's request for an unequivocal pronouncement about the foundations of the calculus in order to quell the criticism of 'the enemies of the calculus'. Instead of providing the requested «precise definitions of the infinitely big and small magnitudes», Leibniz even withdraws from his earlier emphatic commitment to the 'actual' character of the infinite. The truth is, thus, that Leibniz oscillates between seeing the mathematical solution as 'the' solution for the labyrinth, seeing it as insufficient and therefore in need of a metaphysical complementation and seeing the metaphysical-theological and the mathematical issues as completely independent of each other.

> Les difficultés sur la composition du Continuum entrent aussi dans cette matiere. Car ce dogme paroit resoudre le temps en momens: au lieu que d'autres regardent les momens et les points comme des simples modalité du continu, c'est à dire comme d'extremités des parties qu'on

> y peut assigner, et non pas comme des parties constitutives. C'est ne pas le lieu icy d'entrer dans ce Labyrinthe. (*Théodicée*, § 384, GP VI, p. 343)

What is worth emphasizing here is that, at the meta-level, the issues of the infinite, the continuum, and continuity turn out to be, for Leibniz, a network of related but not identical issues of sufficient complexity to be mappable only by an equally complex network, such as that of a labyrinth, and the possibility to go until the limits: «Mais ces auteurs n'ont point nié qu'il soit possible de trouver un fil dans le labyrinthe, et ils auront reconnu la difficulté, mais ils ne seront point allés du difficile jusqu'à l'impossible» (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 25, GP VI, p. 65).

5 Conclusion

There are different criteria to be used to establish the role and function of metaphor in a philosophical text, and, in our case, in the *Essais de Théodicée*.[15] One is the quantitative criterion: we can in fact analyse how many metaphors Leibniz uses in the text. For this purpose, I made a preliminary search in the *Théodicée* of some terms, of different domains, usually employed by Leibniz metaphorically: the term *lumiere* occurs 52 times, *miroir*, 2, *obscure*, 7, *obscurité*, 4, *océan*, 7, *vaisseaux*, 1, *ruisseaux*, 1, *riviere,* 7, *eau*, 13, *mer*, 6, *poisson*, 1, *balance*, 11, *poid*, 7, *chaîne/enchaînement,* 21, *machine*, 8, *labyrinthe*, 10, *palais*, 6, *bâtiment*, 4, *chambre*, 3, *ville,* 17, *cité*, 8, *pays*, 17, *chemin*, 29, *rue*, 2, *oiseaux*, 7 and *chien*, 3. It should be stressed that the 'quantity' of metaphors in a text is not representative of their role. As we saw, metaphors can be of different kind, such as 'frozen' or conceptual, and we can consequently say that the number of metaphors, considered in isolation and not in relation to a large portion of text, is insufficient to explain their correlations with philosophical concepts: at this point, qualitative criteria are needed. This second criterion (qualitative) is crucial in distinguishing the different role of metaphors *vis-à-vis* their position in the text. If we apply a qualitative criterion, we can usefully recognize the different roles that metaphor assume in a text, i.e. didactic or rhetorical, and then we can analyse them in a more efficient way. Although qualitative criteria bring the risk that everything is (or could be) metaphorized, which is, in part, true, in the sense that an 'image' can substitute every 'literal' expression. However, I hope that I have shown that the conceptual analysis of the text, focussing on the labyrinth metaphor, demonstrates that not everything is metaphorized, and that there is a clear correlation between some concepts and some recurrent key metaphors in Leibniz's philosophy and, in particular, in the *Théodicée*.

15 I borrow these criteria from Cossutta 1989.

Another criterion to determine the role and function of a metaphor in a text is that of 'integration'. The *Théodicée* is a text full of metaphors (quantitative criteria), most of which are key and recurrent metaphors in Leibniz's philosophy (such as ocean, war, balance, etc.). The third criterion shows how some of these metaphors are 'dominant' in the text, or how they support the text and assume an 'integrative' role. This is the case, for example, of the metaphor of the ocean, which structures the relationship between God and soul, as we can see for example from the following quotations:

> Les perfections de Dieu sont celles de nos ames, mais il les possede sans bornes: il est un Ocean, dont nous n'avons receu que des gouttes: il y a en nous quelque puissance, quelque connoissance, quelque bonté, mais elles sont tout entieres en Dieu. (*Théodicée*, Préface, GP VI, p. 27)

> Mais d'autres [...] alloient jusqu'à une ame universelle, qui fût l'Ocean de toutes les ames particulieres [...] Suivant ce sentiment les ames des animaux naissent en se détachant comme des gouttes de leur Ocean, lors qu'elles trouvent un corps qu'elles peuvent animer: et elles périssent en se rejoignant a l'Ocean des Ames quand le corps est defait, comme les ruisseaux se perdent dans la mer. (*Théodicée*, Discours, § 8, GP VI, p. 54)

The fourth criterion, more problematic, is the 'philosophical status'. To look at the *Théodicée* from the point of view of the language of the text implies a description strictly related to some considerations on Leibniz's use of language. Leibniz follows the predominant tendency of his time, which viewed precise definitions of all terms as a *sine qua non* for rigorous scientific and philosophical discourse, thereby minimizing the use of tropes therein as mere ornamental or 'eloquence' devices. At the same time, however, he employs a wealth of metaphors, analogies, similes, and, in the specific case of the *Theodicée*, also allegories and fables, to express his philosophical views.

This use of tropes and rhetorical devices is only apparently in contrast with his repeated statements in his writings to the effect that metaphors and other figures of speech should be avoided as much as possible in serious philosophical discourse, or at most, tolerated for their rhetorical purposes.[16] Since the *Discours préliminaire*, Leibniz mentioned linguistic analysis as a tool against fallacies and lies. At the same time, it is also evident that the metaphorical character of the philosophical discourse in the

16 My discussion on Leibniz's use of language is far from considering the language and style of the *Théodicée* as a way to participate in the *enchantement* of God's perfection or as an 'estasi appagante e meravigliata', as has been claimed for example by Zingari 1988.

Théodicée (as well as in Leibniz's writings) is not mere chance and that it plays a crucial role in the exposition of Leibniz's most fundamental theses. Different metaphors are connected (for instance, the ocean) and are irreducible to literal paraphrases (for instance, the labyrinth). These basic conceptual metaphors are never actually 'cashed out' in non-metaphorical language, and they illuminate the nature of the relations between the different facets of Leibniz's philosophy.

In the *Théodicée*, more than in Leibniz's other writings, we can observe the necessity to free the thought from the binding dichotomies embedded in language: freedom vs. necessity, unity vs. multiplicity, identity vs. difference and theory vs. practice. Consequently, this required a flexible organization of the text and a flexibility, openness and innovativeness in the use of language, complementary to the use of a 'demonstrative language', technical terminology and homogeneous text organization.

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