"Reflections on the Souls of Beasts"[1]

Translated by Donald Rutherford

1. Matter considered in itself, i.e. bare matter, is constituted from antitypy and extension. I call 'antitypy' that attribute through which matter is in space. Extension is continuation through space or continuous diffusion through place. And so, as long as antitypy is continuously diffused or extended through place and nothing else is assumed, there arises matter in itself, or bare matter.

2. The modification or variation of antitypy consists in variation of place. The modification of extension consists in variation of magnitude and shape. From this it is obvious that matter is something merely passive, since its attributes and the variation of these involve no action. And insofar as we consider in motion only variation of place, magnitude and shape we consider nothing there that is not merely passive.

3. But if we add in addition an actual variation, or the very principle of motion, we arrive at something besides bare matter. In the same way, it is obvious that perception cannot be deduced from bare matter since it consists in some action. The same can be understood of any type of perception. If nothing were present in an organism except a machine, i.e. bare matter having variations of place, magnitude and shape, nothing could be deduced and explained from this except a mechanism, i.e. variations of the sort just mentioned. For from any one thing considered by itself nothing can be deduced and explained except variations of its attributes and of those of its constituents.

4. Hence we also may easily judge that in any mill or clock considered by itself no perceiving principle is found that is produced in the thing itself; and it makes no difference whether solids, fluids or mixtures of the two are considered in the machine. Furthermore, we know that between coarse and fine bodies there is no essential difference, but only one of magnitude. From this it follows that if it cannot be conceived how perception arises in a coarse machine, whether composed of fluids or solids, it also cannot be conceived how it arises in a more subtle machine, for if our senses also were more subtle it would be the same as if we were perceiving a coarse machine, as we do now. And so it must be regarded as certain that from mechanism alone, or bare matter and its modifications, perception cannot be explained any more than can the principle of action and motion.

5. Consequently, it must be admitted that something besides matter is both the principle of perception or internal action, and of motion or external action. And such a principle we call substantial, and also primitive force, primary entelechy, and in a word, soul, since the

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[1] The Latin text of this piece was first published in *G.G. Leibnitii Epistolae ad diversos*, ed. S. Kortholt (Leipzig, 1734). Later publications include Dutens, vol. II.1, 230-34 and Erdmann, 463-65. The title and conjectured date are due to Kortholt, who associates it with Leibniz's letter to Rudolf Christian Wagner of 4 June 1710 (G VII 528-32).

active conjoined with the passive constitutes a complete substance. But it is evident that this principle is not extended, otherwise it would involve matter, contrary to our hypothesis. For we showed that something else has been added to bare matter. Therefore, a soul will be a certain substantial simple lacking parts outside of parts. Moreover, it is a consequence of this that a primitive entelechy cannot be destroyed naturally, since every natural destruction consists in a dissolution of parts.

6. From this it follows that beasts are either mere machines lacking perception, as the Cartesians maintain, or they have an indestructible soul. But since it has been shown in another way, namely from the nature of motion, that primitive entelechies are distributed in matter and these are indestructible, why shouldn't we attribute to them not only motive action but also perception, so that they might indeed be regarded as souls when joined to organic bodies? And this is confirmed by the very analogy of things. For given that in beasts everything pertaining to perception and sensation may be considered to be just as in humans, and nature is uniform in its variety—uniform in its principles, varied in its modes—it is probable that perception too is in beasts. And so beasts are presumed to be endowed with perception until it is proved otherwise.

7. The Cartesians offer this reason for denying perception to beasts, that enduring souls must therefore be attributed to them. But this, which many among them consider to be absurd, is not in the least absurd, as we will soon show, once a distinction has been introduced between the indestructibility of the souls of beasts and the immortality of the human soul.

8. But the point can also be proved by a positive and necessary argument from this, that every primitive entelechy must have perception. For every primary entelechy has an internal variation, according to which external actions also are varied. But perception is nothing but the representation of external variation in internal variation. Therefore, since primitive entelechies are distributed everywhere in matter, it follows that souls also are distributed everywhere in matter in relation to functioning organs; and consequently the organic bodies of beasts also have been endowed with souls.

9. From this, moreover, it can be understood that isolated souls are not produced in nature, for as primitive or merely active entelechies they have need of some passive principle, through which they are completed.

10. But, you will ask, can an organic body be destroyed? I reply that though a body may be destroyed according to the senses, still the soul would not thereby be destroyed, for there would remain an animated mass and the soul would continue to act inside and outside, though less perfectly or without sensation. We retain this kind of perception in deep sleep, apoplexy and other cases, though sensation may cease. For sensation is perception that involves something distinct and is joined with attention and memory. By contrast, a confused aggregate of many little perceptions, containing nothing elevated that excites attention, induces a stupor. Nevertheless, the soul, or the power of sensing in it, would not for that reason be useless, though it would now be kept from operating, since in time the mass can again develop and be made fit for sensation, with the result that the

stupor comes to an end, just as more distinct perceptions arise when the body also becomes more perfect and more ordered.

11. And since many distinguished observers today maintain that animals are already concealed in seeds before conception in the form of insensible little animals, so that the generation of an animal is nothing but its development and growth, and an animal never begins naturally but is only transformed: it is therefore reasonable that since it does not begin naturally, it also will not end naturally; thus death in turn will be nothing but an involution and diminution of the animal, when it returns from the condition of a large animal to the state of a little animal.

12. Furthermore, just as in us the will corresponds to the intellect, so in every primitive entelechy appetite, or the endeavor of acting tending toward new perception, corresponds to perception. For not only is the variety of the object represented in the perceiver, but there also occurs a variation of the representation itself, since what is to be represented is also varied.

13. However, lest we seem to equate human and beast too closely, it should be known that there is an enormous difference between the perception of humans and beasts. For besides the lowest degree of perception that is found even in insensible creatures, and (as has been explained) a middle degree which we call sensation and acknowledge in beasts, there is a certain higher degree which we call thought. But thought is perception joined with reason, which beasts so far as we can observe do not have.

14. Since this point has not until now been very well explained—while some remove even sensation from beasts, others ascribe even reason to them and report many cases in which beasts seem to connect certain consequences—it should be known that there are two completely different sorts of inferences, empirical and rational. Empirical inferences are common to us and beasts, and consist in the fact that on sensing those things that have on several occasions been experienced to be connected we expect them to be connected again. Thus dogs having several times been beaten when they have done something displeasing, again expect a whipping if they should do the same thing and so they refrain from acting; this they have in common with children. A certain American believed a letter had been the betrayer of his crime in the manner of an on-looker, since the ways of making something public that were known to him disclosed it in this manner. But as it often happens that such things are only connected accidentally, empirics are often deceived by this, just like beasts, with the result that what they expect does not happen. Thus, if I give food to a dog doing something, this indeed happens accidentally as a result of my free will; but as soon as the dog has become habituated to the action I wished to teach it, I no longer give it food when it acts correctly, although until then it may expect this to happen. Likewise, if some Dutchman boarding a ship is carried off to Asia, and taken to a Turkish city looks for beer in an inn just as he would at home, he will in this way be deceived, for he will expect something from the inn which is connected to it only accidentally, and is not found in the same way in Turkish inns as in Dutch ones. However, a human being, insofar as he does not act empirically but rationally, does not rely solely on experience, or a posteriori inductions from particular cases, but proceeds a

priori on the basis of reasons. And this is the difference between a geometer, or one skilled in analysis, and an ordinary user of arithmetic teaching children, who learn arithmetical rules by rote but do not know the reason for them and consequently cannot decide questions that depart from what they are used to; such is the difference between the empirical and the rational, between the inferences of beasts and the reasoning of human beings. For even if we experience many successive examples, we still are never confident of lasting success, unless we discover necessary reasons, from which we may conclude that the matter cannot be regarded differently. Thus brutes (as far as we can observe) do not acquire knowledge of the universality of propositions, because they do not understand the ground of necessity. And even if empirics are sometimes led by inductions to universally true propositions, this nonetheless happens only accidentally, not by the force of entailment.

15. Finally, human beings are destined by God for a much higher end, namely, for society with Him; and so (by virtue of the harmony of the kingdoms of nature and grace) it has been established that human souls, together with some organic body, are preserved not only in the manner of beasts, which perhaps slumber for a time after death, but in a more elevated way, such that they retain sensation and consciousness, and are capable of punishments and rewards.