Workshop ERC EarlyModernCosmology

*Et Spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas.*
**Mosaic Physics and Life in the Young Leibniz**

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This paper shows how Leibniz transforms in his *Hypothesis physica nova* the teachings of ‘Mosaic physics’, particularly with regard to the concept of life. It focuses on the vivifying force of the spirit of God evoked in Gen. 1.2 and discusses its relation both to alchemist doctrines of a ‘fifth essence’ (*quintessentia*) and manifestations of life in plants and animals. While all thinkers agree that the form of life produced by the ‘Spirit of God’ is a purely natural phenomenon, the integration of human life into a ‘Mosaic’ account is controversial: Comenius defends a unitary conception of life that applies indiscriminately to humans and other living bodies, while Alsted distinguishes natural and supernatural life - as does, at least in the speaker’s reading, the young Leibniz.