

## Reply to Philip Beeley

Glenn A. Hartz, Ohio State University

I thank Philip Beeley for a review which expresses the main points of my book with charity, clarity, and insight. There isn't time here to comment on the entirety of what he's written. I'll just mention a few issues which seem crucial, reserving further comment for another occasion.

First, there is the matter of theory-pluralism v. pragmatism in Leibniz. A pragmatic aim for metaphysics can, I've no doubt, be defended with Leibnizian texts. But the force of much of what's proclaimed in them – such statements as that the preestablished harmony is “something more than an hypothesis” (*New System* paragraph 17) – cuts against this and has encouraged interpreters to take him to be declaring truths rather than suggesting the best ways to accommodate theoretical desiderata. Pragmatism would also subordinate logic to practical concerns, which has a decidedly non-Leibnizian ring to it. Perhaps it'd be best to say that theory-pluralism gives a way out of incoherence for those who take Leibniz's metaphysics to be about truth rather than plausibility-in-a-context. I certainly have no dispute with those who see Leibniz as aiming at something shy of “verifiable truth” (Beeley, 187). But one of the principal arguments for Idealism has been the claim that if we don't clean up the program and make it purely idealist, Leibniz's thought will end up inconsistent.

Second, there is the more serious matter of aggregates. Indeed, taking the plunge and advancing a complete mind-independent account of real – but only apparently extended – aggregates is probably the book's most daring move. I wanted to answer the question: What needs to be true to make Leibniz's “aggregate thesis” claims and those concerning animals intelligible? If aggregates aren't mind-independent, they can hardly be composed of or contain or draw their force and reality from mind-independent substances – or play the role they are accorded as bodies of mind-independent animals. Since Leibniz says they do all these things in a nontrivial number of places (approximately the same number as those in which he declares aggregates phenomena), a metaphysics designed to render the claims understandable should be devised. In doing so I have preserved the critique of extension by saying that in the Realist metaphysic there are bodies in the world, but they are “wholes” composed (in some nonspatial sense) of non-extended substances.

Extension is attributed to wholes mistakenly by the human mind, given the way it must perceive these wholes. The analysis thus escapes the most common objection to a Realist construal of aggregates – which would be fatal – namely, that it must attribute extension to mind-independent bodies and animals. I surmise that that objection was also likely on Leibniz’s mind, and that primarily because of it, he was only able to lay the groundwork for a Realist theory.

Looking at the larger system, only the Realist construal of aggregates provides the connecting tissue needed to sew together the theory of monads with the theory of animals. Monads here provide the unifying link. While in Idealism monads merely perceive and strive, in Realism they *constitute* (aggregates, organic bodies, animals).

I can well understand the resistance we all feel instinctively to this view of aggregates. It flies in the face of much of what Leibniz himself says (while he’s advancing the Idealist Canonical Metaphysics), and sounds like an alien voice raised against the thought we all know and love.

Yes, I too love it – that part of it. But there’s more there for the seeing. And while it’s true that, as Beeley says, I’ve “thrown down the gauntlet” to Idealists (Beeley, 196), my plea is not for an exclusively Realist Leibniz. We can share him. Idealism, if I’m right, has been accorded its proper place in the kingdom.

I’d like to end by pointing out the most crucial assumption driving my approach: namely, that most passages are either Idealist or Realist. Some surely try to straddle the borders, but most must set up shop in one or the other. Hence I classify texts according to how many “occurrences” of Realist or Idealist doctrines they contain.

Some of the prevailing trends in the field are going the other way. Thus, Daniel Garber – who put Realism on the map in English-language commentary with his famous 1985 “Middle Years” paper – began by claiming that Leibniz was a realist in the relevant time period. But over the intervening years, as chronicled nicely by Paul Lodge in this journal last year (this *Review* 2005: 1-26), Garber has conceded that passages he had been taking to support realism can be given an idealist reading. In particular, attention has been centered on the Fardella memo (A Vi iv, 1670/AG 105), of which Garber says (in 2004) that it is an error to force it into either a realist or an idealist mold (“Leibniz and Fardella: Body, Substance, and Idealism”, in *Leibniz and His Correspondents*, ed. P. Lodge, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 137).

I say no. The passage in question is Realist. An Idealist reading does it utmost violence – so much so that it renders the passage unintelligible. Here’s a typical

gauntlet: How will Idealism handle “body is constituted . . . by an aggregate of substances” (A Vi iv, 1670/AG 105)? If the point is one about concepts leading us to an understanding of body (as someone might contend), Leibniz knows how to say that. It is the same with most Idealist “readings” of problematic passages. (I can’t comment here on the various Idealist readings Robert M. Adams has given to this passage – see Garber 2004, 135 f). The Realist claims are made amenable to Idealism by changing their meaning: Realism is forced to “compromise” (Beeley, p. 196).

In relation to the current review, Beeley and I remain in disagreement when he says that compositional language does not commit Leibniz to realism, and that the “atoms of substance” of the *New System* can be understood as “metaphysical first principles or ontological requirements for the understanding of composites” (Beeley, 193). If the text were an isolated case, one could see bending it to mean that. But it is one of a host of others which use terms (e.g. “constituents”) which cannot be understood outside literal composition-contexts. Consider also: if the *New System* claim were about understanding composites it would seem quite strange. It’s concerned with objects, not concepts – “real unities absolutely destitute of parts” which compose “things.” If concepts are on tap, why, one wonders, are “atoms” selected as the model? Atoms are a bad model for concepts or principles, but a good one for constituent simples in a composite object or whole. At the same time I recognize that the continuum-doctrines Beeley cites seem to proscribe this and thus to justify the bending – which is yet more evidence that Leibniz typically had many theories going at once. He always finds a way to fly beneath his own radar. Thus his pronouncements often need to be relativized to the theory they’re designed to fit. The Realist theory gives such claims a home at last.

At the end of the day my chief consolation lies in having given Realism a fair chance to show where it leads. The result is richer and deeper than I ever imagined when I started out.

Glenn Hartz  
Philosophy Department  
Ohio State University  
1680 University Drive  
Mansfield, OH 44907  
hartz.1@osu.edu