

Enrico Pasini (Ed.), *La Monadologie de Leibniz: Genèse et contexte*. Paris: Mimesis, 2005. Pp. xiii + 170.

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This book is one of the outcomes of a conference on “Monads and Monadologies” held in Salerno in June 2004. The proceedings have been published since (cf. B. M. d’Ippolito, A. Montano & F. Piro (Eds.), *Monadi e monadologie. Il mondo degli individui tra Bruno, Leibniz e Husserl*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005, Pp. 444) and would deserve by themselves a more complete account. But a subset of the papers presented provided a good match for some of the main issues that confront contemporary Leibnizian scholarship concerning the interpretation of Leibniz’s *Monadologie*. It was felt that they deserved to be published separately from the conference proceedings, and they were edited in a French version for that purpose: the only text originally written in French was Michel Fichant’s. It is probably no insult to the other four authors to mention that their contributions, in the present translation, would have benefited at various points from a more accurate linguistic revision. I suggest that this should be made a *sine qua non* condition for any future re-edition.

Francesco Piro addresses Leibniz’s theory of individuation. Contrary to the classical view that it had been acquired very early on and was kept relatively constant onto the late expressions when the notion of monad shaped up, he shows that that theory involved successive versions and various levels of justification, and presented major inherent difficulties which the late metaphysics would attempt to dilute. Piro starts from the apparently paradoxical statement in the *Confessio philosophi* (1673) that we could suppose two exactly similar eggs to be distinguished *solo numero*, which is only possible due to their distinct connection to the external spatial and temporal framework. The same example recurs differently in later texts, wherein intrinsic qualitative differences are supposed to underpin the distinctness of individuals and to be reflected in the true concepts of these respective entities for God’s understanding. One of the interesting points raised by Piro is that Leibniz tended at that stage in his evolution to define individuals as “*species infimae*” based on the inner logical entailment of the corresponding concepts, but at the same time he would keep to a phenomenal notion of individuality construed from sense-perceived spatial and temporal differences. Thus a certain clash would appear in Leibniz’s own formulations between on one hand the logical and metaphysical doctrine of complete concepts and on the other hand the necessary admission of a physical presence of individual substances in the experienced order of things. A kind of dialectical connection seemed to be required to adjust these divergent

views, as, in the later period, he would have to conceptualize the relationship between monads and organic bodies in order to determine the nature of complex substances. Piro's interpretation of the logical and metaphysical thesis implied by the principle of the identity of indiscernibles is based on the presumed necessary entailment of distinct causes and their respective effects. All the accidents of a Leibnizian individual must derive from the serial law that the finite substance unfolds spontaneously from its preset essence. This is a rigid way of accounting for the re-identification of individuals at various moments in time. In fact, Leibniz had to ground the apparent versatility of individuals, phenomenally identified through their accidents and the changes they reciprocally undergo, in a system of substantive and discretely determined individualities. The reference to God's omnipotence as a possible reason for admitting the hypothetical creation of two individuals that would be discernible *solo numero* is in a way counterbalanced by the architectonic conditions for the Leibnizian concept of world and, we should add, for the system of complex phenomenal individualities in the created world. Significantly, along the same line, Leibniz does away with the strict assimilation of the essences of individuals with purely logical notions of *species infimae*, which ideally apply to such discernible entities as geometrical figures. But accounting for the complete concept of individual substances remains ultimately an unresolved issue that keeps influencing Leibniz's later theoretical endeavors.

Michel Fichant's contribution addresses the most central topic: that of the way the concept of monad framed up both in terms of its inner consistency within the doctrine and of its genetic constitution. Fichant insists that the two treatises of 1714 focus on the relationship between composed and simple entities so as to elicit a close ontological connection between monads and the corresponding bodies, which must themselves possess strong ontological import even though they are only presumed to result from simple substances. Genetically, the monadological thesis based on the twofold relation between multiple and one, body and monad, which was not yet present in the *Discours de métaphysique* (1686) develops from some of the outcomes of the correspondence with Arnauld (cf. letter of April 30, 1687), as the requirement of a unifying capacity in substances becomes a substitute for the complete notion model. This is precisely the dimension that the *Système nouveau de la nature et de la communication des substances* (1695) exploits when equating substantial forms with those true units that cannot be found in matter alone. Hence the notion of simple substances that cannot begin nor end naturally, which account for the organic integration of the corporeal manifolds. Thus the lexical configuration is in place for spelling out the connotations of a concept of monad as "a simple substance that possesses true unity and is likened to a metaphysical atom or point". Indeed, if Leibniz borrows the term "monad" from a variety of sources,

it is this lexical configuration that generates the original meaning of the Leibnizian concept. The second part of Fichant's paper is concerned with the monadological grounding of corporeal substances and develops arguments similar to those one finds in the same author's recent article on "Leibniz et les machines de la nature" (*Studia Leibnitiana*, 35/1, 2003, 1-28). Fichant aims at dispelling the interpretation that Leibniz in the years 1680 and 1690 would have adhered to an Aristotelian notion of corporeal substances and then, after 1700, would have shifted to idealism in developing his metaphysics of monads. The conceptual node that is analyzed in this instance is the connection of organic bodies with monadic souls which provide the true ground for the intrinsic unity of machines of natures and thus make for the true reality of living beings. Fichant is keen on displaying through textual evidence Leibniz's multiple attempts at conceptualizing the complex make-up of animals qua "*substances composées*" beyond their phenomenal manifestations.

In a well-argued essay, Gianfranco Mormino ponders the justifications Leibniz might provide for the essentially limited and imperfect nature of finite monads, which accounts for the existence of evil and the contingent make-up of the created world. Notwithstanding some early explanations that invoked God's willful decree as the reason for the finitude and imperfection of creatures, the close analysis Mormino provides focuses on the very limitation and negativity involved in the notions of finite entities for God's mind previous to his ordering them according to the compatibility relations that constitute the framework of possible worlds. God's absence of responsibility in the occurrence of evil is thus ascertained through a metaphysical scheme the *Monadologie* alludes to in a way Mormino skillfully summarizes. On one hand, the imperfection of creatures is essential and primordial: it is not the outcome of the decree by which God grants existence to monads as parts of the created world; it precedes in terms of sufficient reason the divine fiat, and is, so to speak, independent from it, since the imperfections involved in this instance antecede logically the notions that they help compose for God's intellect. On the other hand, these imperfections are presented as receptivity, mere passivity, a negative ingredient of reality that is not to be equated with the positive ingredients of form which are deemed dependent on God's action. The historical account we are presented with aims at revealing the manifold thinking Leibniz had previously invested in tracing back these negative epistemic elements to the inner structure of the rational possibilities "materially" grounding the concomitant series of possible things that make up the world systems which the actual world emerges from as the best possible option. Mormini's most original contribution is to have shown that any finite, as well as infinite, "*ratiocinatio*" needs to deal with complex terms, which involve limitations through finite, and therefore intrinsically negative, determinations. Such complexities and limitations, says he (p. 71), are absent from God's

essence, but are required for his understanding, since they form the root of such incompatibility relations as make for the structure of worlds. Mormini adds: each world entails in itself a limitation that is not established by God, but is already contained in him as an intrinsic rational condition for the possibility of finite entities, apart from his will and previous to any decree of creation.

Enrico Pasini wishes to provide the most accurate and faithful historical account of the genesis of the *Monadologie* and *Principes de la nature et de la grâce* (1714), based on a combination of internal and external considerations. First of all, he resumes the various explanations that have been proposed since the early 20th century about the circumstances of the twin publications. The most significant of these is André Robinet's in his 1954 edition of the two treatises. Robinet took Leibniz to have written the *Principes* for Prince Eugene of Savoy and the *Monadologie* for a group of interest under the patronage of the Duke of Orleans, soon to become Regent of France, and formed principally of Rémond, Hugony and Fraguier. Pasini traces back very carefully Leibniz's attitudes and dispositions towards the main actors in both surroundings and he analyzes with admirable accuracy the evolution of Leibniz's expectations and dealings with them. He claims that the *Entretien de Philarète et d'Ariste* (1713) affords a good starting-point for understanding the genesis of the *Monadologie* since it reveals Leibniz's intent to counterbalance the influence of Malebranche's philosophy through some systematic public presentation of his doctrine of monads. This intention became manifest at the very time that Rémond suggested a plan for the publication of the scattered Leibnizian essays. But Rémond insisted that Leibniz should transcribe in almost axiomatic fashion the principal elements of his philosophy in order for Fraguier to transform these into a didactical presentation in Latin verses. In that spirit, Leibniz sent to Rémond a model of his own for such a presentation (cf. *Responsio mea V. J. Nicolao Ræmundo ut pro Homero Platonem curet et novo Maroni Fragario ut maiora canat*, GP III, 613-615). Pressed at once by Rémond and Hugony to write down detailed clarifications of his system so that Fraguier might compose his poem, Leibniz started on the task, as evidenced by the *Éclaircissement* (GP III, 622), but he decided in the end not to send to Rémond anything other than the *Principes* he had written for Prince Eugene. What Pasini suggests is that from a common antecedent, namely the *Éclaircissement*, the two texts sprouted out at almost the same time. They fulfilled very different intentions: if the *Principes* still involved significant efforts to undo the Cartesian-Malebranchian framework, thus meeting some of Rémond and his friends' expectations, the *Monadologie* would have been more directly addressed to a virtual reader willing to penetrate Leibniz's metaphysics for its own sake. But, at the same time, the twin treatises impacted each other through the several writing phases they underwent. Quite evidently, the *Monadologie* mirrored the complex

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elaborations that characterized Leibniz's later philosophy, and, probably due to its tentative systematic style, was left unpublished, though it might have been available for some private communications. Pasini closes his historical presentation by alluding to a very special feature of the *Monadologie*: the fact that the concept of monad is progressively analyzed into its manifold incarnations and leads to the representation of a contingent world of monads wherein features of ontological complexity connect with the embodied condition that is required to enable, so to speak, the "interaction" of monads.

Vittorio Morfino deals with the incompatibility of Leibniz's doctrine of monads with the metaphysical pattern of modal reality that Spinoza had set up. At the same time, Morfino wishes to do away with the limited dialectic of the 'one-multiple' relation Hegel relied on to account for the abstract metaphysical phase that he thought both philosophers represented. But some 20th century reinterpretations have set in new light the antagonistic character of the philosophical visions involved as well as their amplitude that surpasses a mere abstract dialectical scheme. Husserl's analysis of intersubjectivity in the 5th of the *Cartesianische Meditationen* and Gilbert Simondon's analysis of transindividuality in *L'Individuation psychique et collective* (posthumous, 1989) are evoked for the purpose of displaying the virtualities respectively involved in the doctrine of monads and that of the finite modes. These conceptual frameworks afforded quite irreducible grounding for the *ego-alter* connection through either a transcendent harmony or an immanent relationship. How appealing these trans-historical analogies may ever look, they face serious difficulties, and, in the case of Leibniz's monadology, they quite evidently tend to support an idealist interpretation of the connection between monads and complex substances that some of the other contributions had not recommended.

In sum, we are presented with a nice set of pieces written by talented historians of philosophy that throw significant light on some aspects of Leibniz's so-called late philosophy. But we are very far from being able to conclude that the whole ground, or even a good part of it, has been covered in this small book. Indeed, to this end, we still lack the enlarged exposure to Leibniz's versatile endeavors that the up-coming volumes of the *Akademie-Ausgabe* will provide; but, even in the present research environment, following in the footsteps of Enrico Pasini and his colleagues, it would be worthwhile undertaking in more systematic fashion a concerted analytic effort to unravel the manifold interpretative queries that plague our understanding of Leibniz's extraordinarily inventive late attempts at recasting his philosophical principles.

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