

**Continuity and Development of Leibniz's Metaphysics of Body: A Response to Daniel Garber's *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*.**

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The interpretation of Leibniz's metaphysics of body is one of the most vigorously debated topics in contemporary Leibniz scholarship. Particularly controversial is the question whether Leibniz's views on this subject changed very significantly during the last thirty years or so of his life, from the mid-1680s to 1716. According to one historically influential type of interpretation, which I have defended, Leibniz adhered throughout that period, in essentials if not in every detail or without changes in terminology, to the metaphysical scheme summarized in his "Monadologie" of 1714. In that broadly idealist scheme, as Leibniz wrote in 1704 to the Dutch natural philosopher Burcher DeVolder,

there is nothing in things except simple substances, and in them perception and appetite. Matter and motion, on the other hand, are not so much substances or things as the phenomena of perceivers, whose reality is located in the harmony of perceivers with themselves (at different times) and with the other perceivers (G II,270/L 537).<sup>1</sup>

The leading alternative type of interpretation, which Daniel Garber has championed for about a quarter of a century, reads the writings of what Garber calls Leibniz's "middle years" as favoring a much more realist metaphysics of body, centered in a broadly Aristotelian conception of corporeal substance, and deeply inconsistent with the monadological metaphysics which dominated his later years.

In his book, *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad* (2009) Garber steps back some ways from this debate to trace in chronological order, and in rich detail, Leibniz's treatment of several main themes in the physics and metaphysics of bodies, from his earliest surviving writings of the later 1660s to his death in 1716. The diachronic narration is highly illuminating, and amply vindicates Garber's insistence on attention to development and change in the substance and expression of Leibniz's thought throughout his career. Whether it shows that in his middle years Leibniz's views on the nature of bodies were deeply inconsistent with the "Monadologie," is a main question for discussion in this review.

Garber's narrative presents a new and more subtle periodization of Leibniz's thought about body. It begins with Leibniz's "first thoughts" on the subject, from his youth to 1678 or 1679, when he was in his early thirties. In his new book and

elsewhere, Garber has contributed greatly to our understanding of this early period, or series of periods, in Leibniz's thought about body; but I will not be more than tangentially concerned here with such early materials. As scholars now generally agree, one of the major developments in Leibniz's thought occurred in 1678 or 1679: he decided to rehabilitate, for use in the philosophy of body, the scholastic Aristotelian idea of *substantial form*. Garber's book presents a notably full and illuminating account of this development. In his former periodization what he called "the middle years" stretch from that decision in the late 1670s to some time in the first five years of the 18th century, when the monadological metaphysics emerges and dominates Leibniz's thought about body in the last years of his life.

In his new periodization the last years (now labeled "the endgame") are viewed much as Garber saw them before, though they get a much finer-grained accounting; but the middle years are effectively divided in two main periods. His earlier view of the middle years, as a period in which "one sees corporeal substances and nothing more"—no monads—in Leibniz's philosophy of body (Garber [2009], xix), is now applied to a somewhat shorter period, from the espousal of substantial forms in 1678 or 1679 to the mid-1690s. From 1695 at the latest to about 1700, Garber now sees a transitional period, in which central ideas of the monadology begin to emerge and displace or modify the middle period's conceptions of corporeal substance. The treatment of the transitional period is particularly interesting, and perhaps the most innovative feature of the new book; but I think I'll have my best shot at doing justice to the book if I begin with the "endgame."

### 1. The Endgame

I will suggest interpretations of some aspects of Leibniz's writings in his last years that differ from Garber's, but I think any disagreements we have regarding this period are not very large. It is a period in which the monadological metaphysics was explicit in much that Leibniz wrote, and dominated what he wrote in contexts that shaped his reputation. I have called it an "idealist" metaphysics. Noting a variety of ways in which the terms 'idealist' and 'idealism' have been used (sometimes affirmed and sometimes rejected) in recent discussions of Leibniz's thought, Garber expresses a preference for avoiding the terms, and has largely avoided them in his book (though he has not entirely avoided, in his own interpretations, the term 'realist' or 'realistic', which is attended, I think, with similar issues).<sup>2</sup> This may seem a merely terminological issue; but it has a serious historiographical aspect,

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and some attention to it may help us in identifying the context in which we should view Garber's book.

Etymologically, the word 'idealism' is far from ideal as a label for modern metaphysical idealism. But 'idealism' is in fact the name in general use for a "tradition" or "school," or more simply and accurately an important type, of metaphysical views that can be traced through much of the history of Western philosophy. The archetypal idealist, in the view of many, is Plato; and he is the one philosopher mentioned by Leibniz in connection with his only use of the word 'idealist' that Garber could find.<sup>3</sup> It is easy to see how the label 'idealist' might be applied to Plato. For he can be read as a metaphysician who held that the most real and metaphysically most fundamental things of all are Ideas, which are objects of understanding, but whose existence is metaphysically prior to that of any mind or thought by which they are understood, or of any material object of which they might be ideas. But many subsequent idealists—and indeed many subsequent Platonists, including many Platonists in some periods of antiquity—have thought of ideas as internal objects of thought, and thus as metaphysically posterior, rather than prior, to the existence of thinkers and thoughts. Most modern metaphysical idealism (including the idealisms of Leibniz and Berkeley) is of this sort. A fair comprehensive characterization of idealism, then, might say that it includes any view according to which reality in general, and facts about bodies in particular, are constituted metaphysically by facts about ideas or about thinkers and thoughts of which the ideas are internal objects. Many such views can seem to be more about mentality than about ideas, and in that way the label 'idealism' might seem less apt for them.

The famous myth of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, in which denizens of a cave mistake shadows for real things and copies for the things themselves, highlights another way in which he is archetypal for idealism. Metaphysical idealisms are views in which a distinction between appearance and reality is metaphysically important. The seventeenth century was ripe for that distinction, and Francis Bacon's well-known allusion to Plato in speaking of "idols of the cave" reverberated with the concerns of many.<sup>4</sup> The point I have in mind (though not Bacon's specific reference point in alluding to the cave) is that the rebellion against scholastic Aristotelianism which largely defined early modernism in natural philosophy was an abandonment of one of the most common-sensical of great philosophical systems. In its subjectivization of the "secondary" sensible qualities, and in its various corpuscularian hypotheses, early modern natural philosophy confronted the

17th century with contrasts between appearance and reality that Aristotelianism had avoided (though they were familiar to ancient atomism). In the 17th century you could not be modern philosophically without facing such a contrast; you couldn't really avoid it just by not being any sort of idealist. That point is important, I think, for understanding the great 17th and 18th century idealists. It is obviously central to the critical philosophy of Kant. And Berkeley had an exquisite awareness of it; the strategy of argument with which the first of his *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* begins is shrewdly based on the point. Leibniz may have been less articulate about it, but was surely aware of it. A central part of our task in interpreting his philosophy of body is to understand how he was trying to work through the relation between appearances of corporeal things and whatever reality underlies those appearances.

That is a point on which I think Garber and I are fundamentally in agreement. The framework of his interpretation of Leibniz's endgame involves two "constants." "One constant," Garber says, "in Leibniz's thought from his early years to the end of his life is ... the world of bodies. But from 1700 or so to the end of his life another constant is the theory of monads." Leibniz understood the monads as "the ultimate elements of things, the bottom layer in our account of the way the world is." As such, Garber declares, the monads are not for Leibniz a "replacement" for "the world of bodies," but rather add "another layer of depth and complexity to the level of body ..., grounding it in something metaphysically more basic." Garber compares this relation between monads and bodies in Leibniz's thought to "the problem, familiar from philosophy of science, of the relation between the scientific and [the] manifest image, the world as it appears to the scientist, and the world as it appears to our everyday experience" (Garber [2009], 382-84). A similar project of metaphysical grounding of appearances in forces, though not yet in monads, is already at work, Garber thinks, in Leibniz's thought in the "middle years" (Garber [2009], 159).

Thus far Garber's explanation seems to me deeply right.<sup>5</sup> The most widely recognized, I suppose, of the problems of appearance and reality that confronted 17th century philosophers were those of the status of the so-called "secondary" sensible qualities, such as colors, odors, and sounds. Inspired to some extent, perhaps, by his skeptical friend Simon Foucher (cf. Garber [2009], 268-79), Leibniz, in his middle as well as later years, saw such problems on a much wider scale, expanding the territory of appearance to include aspects of all or almost all the generally recognized properties of bodies (cf. Garber [2009], 155-66, 296-99).

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As Garber says, however, Leibniz “did not want simply to dismiss the world of bodies that we experience” (Garber [2009], 384). That has typically been true of modern metaphysical idealists. I think Leibniz’s motives for persisting in affirming a sort of reality of bodies were at least in part epistemological. Contrary to a popular image of him as fantastically optimistic about the powers of human reason, Leibniz did not have a particularly high opinion of our capacity to know the metaphysically most fundamental things as they are in themselves. As I will explain further on, he denied that we have a distinct idea of our own thinking. So far as I can see, he can hardly have thought that we have any but the most generic knowledge of substances other than ourselves and God, except by empirical observation of their bodies. Indeed, corporeal appearances have a central role in his conception of God’s own plan for the universe. Epistemologically and practically, we need the knowledge of bodies that we have in our manifest and scientific images, and God wants us to have it, even if it does not take us to the bottom of things metaphysically.

It is against such a background that Garber views familiar issues about alternative characterizations of body that are present even in monadological writings of Leibniz’s last years. He writes,

Certain metaphysical arguments convinced Leibniz that, at root, simple substances, monads, had to be at the bottom of everything. What he hadn’t fully figured out, though is how exactly bodies are to be grounded in the world of monads. ... [T]here is no single doctrine that one can say is *the* Leibnizian solution to the problem. ... I don’t think he ever arrived at an answer that fully satisfied him. (Garber [2009], 384)

I don’t think that’s quite right. With regard to some of the alternatives, I am not convinced that there was in fact anything more to be figured out—any objectively, metaphysically *right answer* to the question—or that Leibniz would or should have assumed that there is. For instance, there are alternatives having to do with phenomenalism. Leibniz characterizes bodies as “phenomena” that appear to monads. He also characterizes bodies as aggregates of monads—that is, of (ultimately real) simple substances. Interpreters have sometimes regarded these claims as flatly inconsistent. That can hardly have been Leibniz’s view, however, since he more than once included both characterizations in the same document.<sup>6</sup> And there is a clear way in which they fit together for him. He holds that apart from “simple things,” bodies are “only Beings by aggregation, and *therefore* phenomena” (G II,270/L 531, emphasis added). So understood, the two characterizations express not two inconsistent views, but one single view.

The duality will not go away so easily, however.<sup>7</sup> For two different explanations of the phenomenality of bodies are present in the texts, as Garber notes. In what he calls “aggregate phenomenalism,” monads are substances but aggregates of monads are regarded as phenomena because both the fact and the manner of their aggregation is grounded in, and depends on, the way the monads are perceived by each other and by themselves. Thus part, but only part, of the ontological grounding of the reality of the moon, for example, is in the monads that make up the moon, and part of the ontological grounding of the moon is in the way those monads are perceived by you and me, and indeed by all the monads. Also present in the texts, however, (and sometimes in the same text) is what we may call “intentional object phenomenalism,”<sup>8</sup> in which bodies are characterized, for example, as “the phenomena of perceivers, whose reality is located in the harmony of perceivers with themselves (at different times) and with the other perceivers” (G II,270/L 537). In this view the bodies are merely intentional objects whose ontological grounding is located entirely in their being perceived.

These are not two expressions of a single view, but two mutually inconsistent views of what bodies are. They differ in where they place the ontological grounding of bodies; and in one of them the existence of a body requires the existence of all the substances aggregated in it, whereas in the other view the existence of a body requires only the existence of perceivers whose perceptions harmoniously represent or express it (Garber [2009], ch. 7).<sup>9</sup> But that doesn’t necessarily imply any disagreement at the metaphysical ground level about the existence of monads and relations among them. The facts about perceptions of monads that ground their aggregation into a body according to aggregate phenomenalism include, I take it, the facts that directly ground the existence of the body as a phenomenon according to intentional object phenomenalism. For those who accept Leibniz’s view of the facts about monads, the disagreement is only about which of all those facts it takes to *count* as constituting the existence of a body. At that point why couldn’t or shouldn’t Leibniz have thought that the accounts are in disagreement, not about a metaphysical fact, but about a practical decision? And if he makes different decisions in different contexts, is that more than an intellectual untidiness for which he might have adequate practical motives?

However, there is an even more prominent disagreement among texts from the later period on another question about bodies—a question about which I now think Garber is probably right in saying that Leibniz never “arrived at an answer that fully satisfied him.” This is the question whether, in addition to the simple, partless

monads, there are corporeal or composite substances. That there are is implied in many texts from Leibniz's last years, and denied in some others.<sup>10</sup> I think it is clear that in both his later and his middle years, the central issue here for Leibniz, and his principal requirement for the existence of a corporeal substance, is that of an adequate basis for the unity of what would otherwise be a mere plurality or aggregate. In his middle years he had looked to the pre-established harmony between soul (or form) and body for such a basis, and that was still the only basis offered by the monadological metaphysics. And there is a good deal of textual evidence that by the last decade of his life he had concluded that such a basis would ground at best a very thin and unsatisfying sort of unity.<sup>11</sup>

We do, of course, have a choice as to what we will count as constituting a corporeal substance, how high a standard of unity we will require. That too can be seen as a practical decision; different standards can be applied to what are understood to be the same underlying metaphysical facts. Leibniz says as much to De Volder in 1702 (G II.232, cited in Garber [2009], 309). Much of the variation in what Leibniz says and does not say about corporeal substance is best explained, I believe, as due to variation in the standard of unity applied.

Even in making a pragmatic decision, however, it is possible to be less than fully satisfied with one's available options, as we all know from experience. And there is a good deal of textual evidence that Leibniz was uneasy—sometimes quite uneasy—about both of the options that his monadological metaphysics made available to him in this case. He was at least sometimes averse to accepting a lower standard of substantial unity and a weaker sense of 'substance' to allow for corporeal substances. And for a variety of reasons, about which I won't speculate here, he was certainly reluctant to give up thinking and speaking, in some contexts, in terms of corporal substances. So he may still have been hoping to find to find a basis for thinking of humans and other animals, for instance, as corporeal substances in a metaphysically richer sense.

The strongest evidence of that is the serious interest with which he pursued, in the last six years of his life, in correspondence with Bartholomaeus Des Bosses, a way of grounding substantial unity for bodies in something other than monads. That was the hypothesis of "substantial bonds," much discussed by interpreters. I don't believe it was ever Leibniz's own view. I don't believe he was actually ready in his last years to give up the project of grounding everything, metaphysically, in monads. Similarly, Garber holds that "it is implausible that [Leibniz] could at [the end of his correspondence with Des Bosses] have given up on monads" (Garber

[2009], 381). Indeed, we know that in one of his latest surviving writings on the subject, a letter written less than two months before his death and several months after his last letter to Des Bosses, Leibniz vigorously affirms a monadological view that seems to leave no room for composite or corporeal substances, stating that “True substances are only simple substances or what I call ‘monads.’ And I believe that there are only monads in nature, the rest being only phenomena that result from them” (D III.499-500/LDB 401n105).<sup>12</sup> But, as I agree, that doesn’t show that Leibniz was content with his resources for dealing with the question of corporeal substance.

## 2. The Transitional Period

It’s time to turn our attention from the endgame to the transitional period, the mid- to late 1690s, during which Garber now sees Leibniz as beginning to articulate key ideas of the monadological metaphysics. Garber sketches two “paths,” two trains of thought, that he argues led Leibniz from corporeal substances to monadology: one through the notion of *unity*, and the other through the notion of *matter*.

The main point of the path through unity is, as Garber puts it, that “pressing the unity criterion of substancehood does lead us directly to the monadology.” We have already noted that in his later years Leibniz was concerned with the thought that composite substances might not be able to satisfy a strong enough unity criterion for substancehood, and that perhaps one should say that *simple* substances are the only substances there are. Garber thinks that “Leibniz certainly didn’t see this [line of argument] in 1686 and 1687,” but that by 1700 it had convinced him of the need for simple, absolutely partless substances (Garber [2009], 345). Garber presents rich documentation of the greatly increased use, and enriched articulation, of concepts of simple substance in Leibniz’s writings of the mid- to late 1690s. In fact this documentation occupies about half (pp. 321-44) of Garber’s chapter on the transitional period.

This is valuable scholarship, and I think Garber makes a compelling case that in texts from the 1690s the idea of a simple substance, eventually called a monad, receives an articulation, and a central role in the metaphysics of body, that it did not have in what Leibniz wrote before. This is important. From the fact that Leibniz did not earlier *say* that there is, ultimately, nothing in bodies over and above simple substances, it does not, of course, follow that he did not already *believe* that. Nevertheless, it is significant that such an important point in the



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monadological metaphysics is not affirmed, or even fully formulated, explicitly in Leibniz's earlier work, so far as we know. It is a sound generalization that one is not in full possession of a philosophical thesis or idea that one has never explicitly formulated. In this way Garber gives us, I agree, good reason to suppose that the monadological metaphysics is not completely present in Leibniz's thought before the mid-1690s.

It does not follow, however, that Leibniz's "middle years" metaphysics of body was *deeply inconsistent* with his later monadological metaphysics. In particular it does not follow that we have reason to suppose that in the 1680s and earlier 1690s, it was positively part of Leibniz's view of bodies that there is, at the most fundamental metaphysical level, something other and more in bodies than soul-like perceiving substances or substantial forms. So far as I can see, in fact, the existence of such a something more is no more clearly or articulately affirmed than denied by Leibniz in his "middle years." So far as I can see, what he wrote in those years identifies no clear role for such a thing and no good candidate for such a role.

That point is connected with the other path to monadology that Garber mentions. The path through the notion of matter is less richly documented from the period of transition, and Garber admits that his "story" about it is "something of a conjecture" (Garber [2009], 345); but I actually find it more compelling than the path through unity. The "matter" of this second path is *primary* matter, understood as constituted by primitive passive force or power. The concept of force plays a central role in both Leibniz's physics and his metaphysics, as Garber documents at length. From the mid-1680s on, Leibniz held that forces are the most real of the properties studied in physics. Metaphysically speaking, they constitute "the substance of body." In a text written probably during the years 1683-86, Leibniz says,

Concerning bodies I can demonstrate that not merely light, heat, color, and similar qualities are apparent but also motion and shape and extension. And that if anything is real, it is solely the force of acting and of being acted on, and hence that the substance of body consists in this (as in matter and form).  
(A VI.iv.1504/L 365)

How are we to understand this statement? Garber supposes that in such a text from the "middle years" Leibniz is talking about a *corporeal* substance, composed of a material body united by and with a substantial form. Garber notes that when Leibniz decided on rehabilitating substantial forms, in 1678-1679, he assigned them the role of bearing not only the active forces, but some of the passive forces. By the mid-1680s, however, Leibniz had assigned all the passive forces to matter,

leaving the substantial form as bearer of, or even identical with, only the active forces (Garber [2009], 123).

The question that Garber envisages as driving Leibniz along the path of the notion of matter in his transitional period has to do with matter as bearer of, and even identical with, the ultimately real passive forces—primary matter, as Leibniz will call it in the 1690s. “[W]here is there for Leibniz to put such primary matter?” Garber asks. The problem is that in the view that Garber thinks Leibniz held in the middle years, each corporeal substance is composed of a substantial form united to a body which is an aggregate of corporeal substances, each of them composed of a substantial form united to a body which is an aggregate of other corporeal substances, each of them, in turn, composed of a substantial form united to an aggregate of other substances ... and so on to infinity. “In this world of bugs in bugs,” Garber says, “there seems to be no room for primary matter, no place to put it” (Garber [2009], 347).

What is the problem? Why is there no place for primary matter? I don’t think Garber has fully explained that, but I think there’s a natural way to fill out the explanation. Garber thinks of the corporeal substance as composed of the substantial form and the body. The active forces find their place in the substantial form, and that’s fine. The substantial form is... well, substantial: something fully real, and a foundation of the substantiality and reality of the corporeal substance. But if it isn’t the place of the passive forces, that leaves the body for them; and Garber does say that in the middle years conception, the body, not the form or soul, “was supposed to be the seat of passive force” (Garber [2009], 371). But the body, considered apart from the substantial form, is merely an aggregate of substances. This aggregate of substances is what Leibniz will eventually call *secondary* matter. As an aggregate it is in Leibniz’s opinion not fully real, but a phenomenon, something apparent, dependent on being perceived. And surely the forces which are the most real properties of bodies should have a place in something fully real! Physics does ascribe forces to mere aggregates not united to or by any substantial form—it ascribes them, for instance, to the moon. But those will only be *derivative* forces, as Leibniz will eventually call them, not the *primitive* forces that ground the reality of corporeal substances.

Well, if the primitive passive forces are to find a place in the body as distinct from the soul, could it find one in the substances of which the body is an aggregate? They are real enough, as substances, but *where* in one of them will the passive forces find a home? Not in its substantial form, since it’s not a place of passive

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powers; and not in its body, since it is not real enough, being only an aggregate. The same problems will recur at every stage in the descending regress.

Leibniz's eventual solution, Garber argues, was found in the monadological metaphysics. It has a place, a real enough place, for the primary matter and its fully real primitive passive force. This place is indicated in a monadological sketch of the structure of a corporeal substance, contained in a letter sent to De Volder on 20 June 1703, where Leibniz says:

I distinguish therefore (1) the primitive Entelechy or Soul, (2) Matter, i.e. primary matter, or primitive passive power, (3) the Monad completed by these two, (4) the Mass or secondary matter, or organic machine, for which countless subordinate Monads come together, (5) the Animal or corporeal substance, which is made One by the Monad dominating the Machine (G II,252/L 530f.).

Here, Garber says, Leibniz "finally has found a place to put primary matter, primitive passive force ... The primary matter, united with the entelechy, now constitutes the non-extended metaphysical atom that Leibniz wants to call a monad" (Garber [2009], 347-48).

### 3. The Middle Years

My main reason for discussing Garber's interpretation of Leibniz in reverse chronological order is that a sound understanding of Garber's view of the middle years must take into account his conclusions about the motives of the transitional period. As Garber says,

With the benefit of hindsight, we may be able to see these later developments prefigured in Leibniz's earlier thought. ... In this sense one might say that Leibniz was implicitly already a monadological metaphysician in those earlier years, insofar as he already held doctrines that would lead him to the [monadological] position ... But that is to put the matter in a misleading way. If Leibniz was a monadologist in those earlier years, I suspect that he himself didn't really know it. (Garber [2009], 348-49)

In these conclusions Garber grants an important part of what has been argued by interpreters who see the monadological metaphysics as present already in Leibniz's thought. How deep can the remaining disagreements about the middle years be? Let's grant that some central monadological doctrines were not fully articulated by Leibniz in the middle years. But if monadological conclusions were already

implied or demanded by doctrines that Leibniz already held, the principle of charity in interpretation suggests that in interpreting his middle years we should not without very strong evidence ascribe to him doctrines that are *positively inconsistent* with those monadological conclusions.

### 3.1 Corporeal Substances and Souls

As I read Garber's book, it does ascribe to Leibniz in the middle years metaphysical views that are positively inconsistent with those monadological conclusions on at least two major points. The first point may be more central to Garber's interpretation. "[O]n Leibniz's earlier position," he says, "the basic entities in the world are corporeal substances" (Garber [2009], 316); nothing in the created world is more basic, or even as basic, metaphysically. Did Leibniz hold this view?

The most decisive question for interpretation on this point may be that of the metaphysical status of substantial forms or souls. Are they too seen as substances? If so, aren't they as basic metaphysically as the composite corporeal substances—or even *more* basic? After all, Leibniz regularly says that the composite corporeal substances depend on the substantial forms for their unity, and hence for their status as substances, and even in a way for their existence. And if Leibniz starts looking in corporeal substances for something that could ground their reality and substantiality, the infinite descending regress to which I have already referred suggests that he will never find there anything that could do it except substantial forms.

The interpreter's problem regarding substantial form or soul in Leibniz's middle years is not that there is no textual evidence, but that the textual evidence is mixed. Some texts seem to imply that the forms are substances; others, that the forms are something more incomplete. Both implications may be found in a single text. A good example is Leibniz's memorandum of a discussion he had had in Venice in March 1690 with the Franciscan friar Michel Angelo Fardella. It contains a flat statement that "the soul, properly and accurately speaking, is not a substance but is a substantial form or primitive form existing in a substance: the first actualization [*actus*], the first active faculty." Taken by itself, that seems to fit the corporeal-substances-only view. Later in the passage, however, as I read it, Leibniz assigns "substances" and "souls" the same role in the constitution of bodies. He also suggests that if a human being is to be understood as something substantial and indestructible, it should be identified with the self [*ipsum Ego*], and

ends the passage with a statement that “that which is indestructible will be called, Soul, Mind, I [*Ego*], which will not be a part of matter” (A VI.iv.1670-71/AG 105). I should note that in his book Garber gives a rather different interpretation of Leibniz’s Fardella memo, but also states (and I agree) that “in most other texts of the period [Leibniz] treats the soul as a substance” (Garber [2009], 95 n139).

The apparent inconsistency of the Fardella memo about the status of the soul is found, on a larger scale, in Leibniz’s middle years work in metaphysics as a whole. I believe it is largely due to terminological variation. This variation is perhaps best understood in comparison with the five-point outline of the structure of a corporeal substance that Leibniz gave de Volder, in a monadological framework, in 1703. There the words ‘soul’ and ‘entelechy’ do not name the complete monad, but only its active aspect, which must be completed by the primitive passive power or primary matter in order to constitute a substance. Similarly, when Leibniz, in the middle years, says or implies that the soul or substantial form is not a substance, he is presumably conceiving of it as the active aspect of a substance, and thus as something incomplete and in that sense abstract. On the other hand, when Leibniz says or implies that the soul or substantial form is a substance, he is conceiving of it as something more like the monad of the five-point outline—perhaps not with the implication that it is simple, but certainly supposing that it unites with and in some way unites its organic body. To the extent that the apparent inconsistencies in middle years writings about the status of the soul or substantial form are plausibly seen as due to such terminological variation, they do not show that nothing corresponding to the monad of the later years figures in Leibniz’s metaphysics in the middle years. And if the substantial form can be seen in such a way as a substance, can it not compete with the “Animal or corporeal substance” for the status of metaphysically most fundamental created thing?

### 3.2 *Primary Matter*

The other point I want to discuss about the middle years has to do with *primary matter*. Garber still maintains that there is a “moment” in the middle years at which

there is every reason to believe that [Leibniz] thought of primary matter and the passive forces of resistance and impenetrability in a thoroughly realistic way, as existing outside of the internal states of non-extended perceiving substances, and grounding a world of genuinely extended things. (Garber [2009], 172)

As I think Garber's use of the word 'moment' is meant to suggest, the period to which the claim I have quoted applies may be quite brief, a few months or years in the early 1690s, because he sees a clear distinction between primary and secondary matter as emerging in Leibniz's work only at about the same time as the period of transition to the monadology begins (Garber [2009], 141-42). In discussing Garber's claim, with which I still disagree, I will focus on texts from the early 1690s, though I will also mention some from the 1680s.

In January 1692, discussion of Eucharistic theology in a letter to his French Catholic correspondent Paul Pellisson-Fontanier was an occasion for Leibniz to say some things about substance and force. He says that "The word 'substance' can be taken in two ways, for the subject itself and for the essence of the subject," and that it is taken "for the essence of the subject, when one says, 'the substance of the body', ... and then it is something abstract." He applies this to the idea of primitive force, stating that "when it is said that primitive force constitutes the substance of bodies, their nature or essence is understood" (A II.ii.486-87). The implication clearly is that primitive force is something *abstract*. That is to say, it is not a complete substance in itself, but can be thought of as a thing only by mentally abstracting it from the complete subject (or substance) of which it is a feature or property.

We can infer that primitive active and passive forces will both be abstract in this way of thinking, and I think Leibniz does imply that, when he goes on to say that "the primitive force is nothing but that principle in each body from which all its actions and affections [*passions*] are born," and adds, "I consider matter as the first internal principle of passivity and resistance ... And the substantial form is nothing but the first internal principle of action, the first entelechy" (A II.ii.487). Leibniz's final terminology is not all in place here, but I believe it is fair to say that we have in this passage what he will soon describe as substantial form or primitive active force and primary matter or primitive passive force. As primitive forces, so conceived, both substantial form and primary matter will be abstractions from the complete subject whose primitive forces they are. In particular, primary matter will not be a kind of stuff or an Aristotelian subject of substantial change.

This agrees with things Leibniz says elsewhere about primary matter. For instance, in one of his many fragmentary essays in conceptual analysis, written sometime between 1687 and 1696, he says, "Perhaps, however, primary matter is more correctly conceived as resistance, like something abstract; whereas otherwise it would seem always to be a subject or a principle of something concrete" (A

VI.iv.867). Similarly, in a letter of 1698 to Johann Bernoulli he says, “Matter in itself [*per se*], or bulk [*moles*], which you call primary matter, is not a substance; indeed [unlike secondary matter] it is not an aggregate of substances, but something incomplete.” And in response to Bernoulli’s question what he meant by “incomplete” there, Leibniz replies in his next letter that he means “the passive without the active and the active without the passive” (GM III.537, 541-42/AG 167).

That forces or powers are not complete substances themselves, but only properties of substances, less complete than the substances, and thus abstractions from the substances, is not a surprising idea. There is no need to see it as inconsistent with the metaphysical fundamentality of force, on which Garber rightly insists as a central feature of Leibniz’s philosophy. A substance’s primitive force constitutes the substance; but it is not the substance itself, not the subject of all the substance’s predicates or properties. Rather it is an essential property—indeed, the essence itself—of the substance. As such an essence, it is a constant property and “exists as a whole (*tout entier*) at every moment, and must be something true and real,” as Leibniz said in an earlier letter to Pelisson (A II.ii.434). It is a power that “inheres (*inesse*) in every substance” (G IV.469-70/L 433).<sup>13</sup>

More controversial, perhaps, are the conclusions I draw from a further abstractness and incompleteness of matter as primitive passive force that seems to me clearly indicated in Leibniz’s January 1692 letter to Pellisson. The primitive passive force there is an abstraction not merely from the complete substance, but also from the essence of the substance, or from the whole “primitive force” that constitutes the “nature or essence.” “The primitive force,” Leibniz says there, “is nothing but that principle in each body from which all its actions and all its being acted on are born.” The essence as a whole appears thus as a single principle of activity *and* passivity, as we should expect. The primitive passive force in any substance is not complete as an essence without the primitive active force—nor is the active force complete without the passive in any substance except God. Similarly, Leibniz goes on in the same letter to speak of “a higher principle of action and resistance, from which extension and impenetrability emanate when God does not prevent it by a superior order” (A II.ii,487). Here functions of both primitive active force and primitive passive force are vested in a single “principle of action *and* resistance.” On this reading the substantial form and the “matter” are both aspects of that single principle or essence.

As such, their roles seem to be similar to the roles that the soul and the primary

matter have in the five-point outline Leibniz sent to De Volder, where together they “complete” the monad—and similar also to the roles they have in an earlier letter to De Volder, of 1702, where Leibniz says,

Without doubt entelechy or force or activity differs from resistance or passivity. You could take the former for form and the latter for primary matter; however they do not differ in such a way that they should be considered two distinct substances, but as constituting one. (GII.206)<sup>14</sup>

Of course Leibniz does not say to Pellisson that the single “principle of action and resistance” is a simple substance; he seems rather to indicate that it is the nature or essence of a substance. But in the letter to Pellisson, as in those to De Volder, primary matter seems to have found a place, a home, in joining with substantial form to constitute something importantly complete.

If that is true about the “matter” of which Leibniz writes to Pellisson—the matter that is identified with primitive passive force—then can it be something “outside of the internal states of non-extended perceiving substances”? It will certainly be something *internal* rather than external to the single principle or essence that it forms with the substantial form, and to the substance of which that is the essence. More discussion is in order as to whether Leibniz conceived of that substance as *non-extended* and as *perceiving*.

It was certainly conceived by Leibniz as indivisible, as he held that all substances are (A II.ii234-35, from 1687). Did he nonetheless conceive of it as *extended*? This is not, I think, a metaphysically fundamental question, as Leibniz did not, even in the middle years, regard extension as a metaphysically fundamental property of anything, as Garber agrees ([2009], 155-58). The question, nonetheless, is historically interesting.

The letter to Pellisson provides an obvious reason for expecting Leibniz to say that the subject of primitive passive power in a finite substance is non-extended. For if substantial form and primary matter, as primitive active and primitive passive power, cannot be separated ontologically from each other in any creature, what shall we say of the substances with which, as Garber agrees, Leibniz also often identified souls? Did he not think of them as the seat of primitive active power or substantial form? And if he did, the letter seems to indicate he must say that they are also the seat of primitive passive power or primary matter. But I see no reason to think that Leibniz, in the middle years, regarded souls as extended.

No doubt he thought of the soul as present in its extended body. But it does not follow that he thought of the soul itself as being extended, in the sense of having



parts that are outside of each other.<sup>15</sup> It would have been quite in keeping with Aristotelian scholastic precedent for Leibniz to say that the soul, understood as substance, is present in the body, whole in the whole and whole in each part. That was the view of St Thomas Aquinas, the Aristotelian scholastic with whom Leibniz liked best to be found in agreement.<sup>16</sup> It was also explicitly Leibniz's view in his later years,<sup>17</sup> and I see no reason to think that he would have rejected the view in his middle years.

There is another sense of 'extension' [*'étendue*], not relevant to the philosophy of body, in which in the "Discourse on Metaphysics" Leibniz refers to "a substance that is of an infinite extension inasmuch as it expresses everything," and to "the whole extension and independence of our soul, by virtue of which it contains everything that happens to it, and expresses God and all actual and possible beings" (A VI.iv.1572, 1574 [DM 15, 29]). I believe that in the "Discourse," and in his correspondence with Antoine Arnauld in 1686 and 1687, that is the only sense in which Leibniz says unequivocally of *any* substance, as such, that it is extended.

It is certainly true that Leibniz regarded primitive passive force, or primary matter, as the source or foundation of extension in bodies. In an argument of which he began in the early 1690s to make much use, he explains extension as consisting in the spreading out or repetition of primitive passive force. But that need not imply that any individual substance that is a *subject* of primitive passive force is spread out or extended.<sup>18</sup> The spreading out or repetition can be constituted by a multiplicity of individual subjects of primitive passive force, no one of which is individually spread out or extended, or individually repeated. Leibniz seems to express such a view of extension as a property, not of substances, but of aggregates of substances, when he writes in December 1693, for a discussion with Jacques l'Enfant, that "Extension signifies a mass or aggregate of several substances," and contrasts that with "a subject that is just one single substance" (A II.ii,752).

There remains the question whether the substance to which the primitive passive force, and the matter that is identified with it, are internal is a *perceiving* substance. It is hard to believe that Leibniz supposed it to be a non-perceiving substance. Indeed there is reason to suppose that in his "middle" as well as his later years, he regarded all substances as having perception. In September 1687, for example, in a draft for a letter to Antoine Arnauld, Leibniz says that according to his hypothesis, "there are substances everywhere that represent the perfections of God and the beauty of the universe in their [own] way, and nothing has remained empty, uncultivated, sterile, and without perception" (A II.ii.237-38). This does not exactly say that all

substances have perception; read literally, it leaves open the possibility that, for example, some substance might be full rather than empty, yet still uncultivated, sterile, and without perception. But I think the passage is most naturally read as conveying the thought that all substances perceive.<sup>19</sup>

More illuminatingly, the corresponding letter that Leibniz actually sent to Arnauld on 9 October 1687 explains the idea that every substance “expresses” the whole universe in its own way (DM §9). His notion of expression is quite formal: “One thing *expresses* another ... when there is a constant and rule-governed [*regle\**] relation between what can be said about the one and about the other,” as a perspectival projection expresses what is projected. He adds that “expression is common to all forms, and it is a genus of which natural perception, animal sensation, and intellectual cognition are species” (A II.ii.240). One form of the letter, which may indeed have been the form sent to Arnauld, said that those types of perception are “the” species of expression;<sup>20</sup> but the copy that Leibniz kept of the letter, which does not say that, better expresses his meaning. For he goes on to give a sufficient condition for perception, which is satisfied only by indivisible things, and he certainly thought that there are divisible things (for example, our organic bodies) which express other things, and indeed, express the whole universe.

Leibniz’s sufficient condition for perception is this: “In natural perception, and in sensation, it suffices that that which is divisible ... be expressed in a single indivisible being, or in a substance that is endowed with a true unity” (as Leibniz insists that all substances are). In what we call thought, he adds, such representation occurs in a rational soul and is “accompanied by consciousness” (A II.ii.240-41). That is a very formal, and intuitively rather thin, account of what perception is; but Leibniz liked such accounts. I don’t think that anything richer is implied when Leibniz, in section 14 of the “Monadologie,” ascribes perception to every monad, characterizing the perception as “the passing state which enfolds and represents a multitude in unity, or in the simple substance.”

Leibniz does try to enrich his account of perception, not by elaborating a definition or criterion of it, but by linking it to our experience of our own perceiving. It is clear, in any event, that perception in intelligent minds, particularly in our own minds, provides Leibniz’s standard model of a substance expressing things. Another passage in his letter of 9 October 1687 to Arnauld is illuminating on this point. In the course of defending his belief “that every substance is indivisible, and that consequently every corporeal substance must have a soul, or at least a form that has some analogy with the soul,” Leibniz argues that we cannot know that there are

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no such substances and forms where there is nothing that we would call thought, “because we do not have a distinct idea of thought.” Leibniz grants that

the idea that we have of thought is clear, but not everything that is clear is distinct. It is only by internal feeling that we have knowledge of [*connoissons*] thinking (as Father Malebranche has already remarked), but one cannot have knowledge by feeling of things one has not experienced. And as we have not experienced the functions of the other forms, we should not be surprised that we have no clear idea of them.

The implication that the “functions of the other [substantial] forms” have some analogy with the introspectible perceiving functions of our own minds is very clear in this remarkable passage.

### 4. Conclusion

Summing up, I should say that Garber has made a good case for his thesis that some of the central tenets of the monadology were not part of Leibniz’s developed metaphysics before 1695 or 1700. But I remain unconvinced that in the years from 1686 to 1695 Leibniz had a developed metaphysics that was positively inconsistent, on central points, with his later monadology.

A review article can hardly do justice to such a treasure trove of philosophical scholarship, but this must be enough for now.

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*Notes*

<sup>1</sup>The works of Leibniz are cited by abbreviations indicated in the reference list at the end of this paper. They are cited by page number unless otherwise noted in that list. Entries separated by a slash refer to the original and an English translation of the same passage. In most cases I quote Leibniz in my own English translation.

<sup>2</sup>Garber (2009), 385-87. For central uses of 'realistic' see *ibid.*, 172, 381.

<sup>3</sup>G IV.560/WFN 114, quoted in Garber (2009), p. 386, n. 95.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, Book I, section 42.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Adams (2002).

<sup>6</sup>For instance in his letter of 30 June 1704 to DeVolder (G II,267,270), and in a document written in the summer of 1714 for Nicolas Remond, but never sent to him (G III,622).

<sup>7</sup>As Hoffman (1996) rightly argues against Adams (1994).

<sup>8</sup>Garber has other labels for the view, all of which direct attention to the epistemological function that it undoubtedly had for Leibniz, especially in the middle period, as a possible fall-back position in response to external world skepticism. But that epistemological motivation is not evident in many of the later texts in which the view is adopted, such as G II.270.

<sup>9</sup>Here I discuss this duality as it occurs in Leibniz's later years. The aggregate phenomenalism can be traced in Leibniz's writings back to the mid-1680s, and something very similar, at least, to the intentional object phenomenalism can be traced back to the 1670s (Garber [2009], ch. 7). I would suggest the same resolution of the apparent inconsistency for the middle years as for the later years.

<sup>10</sup>Garber (2009), 368-71, 309-10.

<sup>11</sup>See e.g., Adams (1994), pp. 291-303.

<sup>12</sup>Cited by Garber, (2009), 369.

<sup>13</sup>The two texts cited in this paragraph date from 1691 and 1694, respectively.

<sup>14</sup>The translation is due to Paul Lodge, quoted in Garber (2009), 205.

<sup>15</sup>In a draft of a letter to Arnauld in April 1687, Leibniz seems to accept the scholastic

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formula, having *partes extra partes*, as a criterion of being extended, though not as explaining “what there is in” anything that is extended (A II.ii.171).

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.76, a. 8; cf. *ibid.*, III, q. 76, a.3. I am indebted to Marilyn McCord Adams for calling these passages to my attention.

<sup>17</sup> See Adams (1994), p. 252 and texts cited there.

<sup>18</sup> See Adams (1994), pp. 326-27, and texts cited there.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also A VI.iv.2009/L 289, from 1678-79, quoted in Garber (2009), 266.

<sup>20</sup> See A II.ii.238-40.