

**LEIBNIZ TEXTS**

**Leibniz Texts Referee: Massimo Mugnai, University of Florence**

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**On an Unpublished Manuscript of Leibniz (LH IV.I.1aBl.7)\*: New Light  
on the *Vinculum Substantiale* and the Correspondence with Des Bosses**

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\*A picture of the manuscript is included as a pullout sheet at the back of this issue of the *Leibniz Society Review*, courtesy of Brandon Look and the Leibniz-Archiv.

Explaining the nature of composite substance always posed a challenge for Leibniz. In this paper, I shall provide a transcription, translation and interpretation of an unpublished text in which Leibniz considers the issue of composite substance and the real unity of monads.<sup>1</sup> While the manuscript has not yet been dated by those working in the Leibniz-Archiv, given that Leibniz discusses the issues in the way he does, the text must have been written between the years of 1712 and 1716. Indeed, this text is, to my mind, particularly fascinating precisely because it echoes certain themes in Leibniz's correspondence with Des Bosses, themes that have traditionally piqued the interest of Leibniz scholars and that have generally been thought to be confined to the Leibniz-Des Bosses correspondence.

I should like to offer two possible readings of this manuscript. The "weak" reading is simply that this manuscript is some kind of working draft for a 1712 letter to Des Bosses; the "strong" reading is that this manuscript shows an independent explanation of the real unity of composite substance that is so much like the explanation of the *vinculum substantiale* that we ought to recognize that Leibniz's doctrine of the *vinculum substantiale* was a serious attempt on Leibniz's part to explain the nature of composite substance.<sup>2</sup>

*Text of LH IV.I.1a Bl.7<sup>3</sup> :*

Notiones sunt Entium aut Respectuum. Entia sunt Res aut Modi. Res sunt substantiae aut phaenomena. Substantiae sunt vel simplices vel compositae. Substantia simplex est Monas; Monas autem est vel primitiva Deus, a quo omnia; vel derivativa; et haec vel perceptiva tantum, vel etiam sensitiva; et haec vel sensitiva tantum vel etiam intellectiva quae et spiritus appellatur. Rursus Monas vel est Anima corporis vel est separata; haec vel creata (ut plerique volunt etsi ego an creatae sint monades corporis complures dubito) vel increata Deus. Substantia composita est, quae < — > Anima scilicet propria et substantiis simplicibus constat < — > Unum reale. Huc enim ponere necesse est aut statuere solas Monades esse res; composita autem esse mera phaenomena { seu Entia rationis }. *Phaenomena* sunt aggregata ex substantiis, quae se certo modo exhibent percipienti atque ita inter substantiarum [aggregata] a nobis considerantur.<sup>[4]</sup> Uti per nostram cogitationem phenomena ex substantiis oriuntur, ita per Divinam Cogitationem oriuntur ex substantiis simplicibus compositae, posito in Deo praeter intellectum accedere voluntatem, ut fiat ex multis unum; nam si tantum multa simul consideraret, phaenomena ex iis seu aggregata faceret, uti cum Deus novit iridem aut eius proprietates. At cum inde debet oriri novum Ens, oportet ut accedat divina voluntas. Porro hujus novi Entis partes non sunt Monades, sed sunt ejus fundamenta, uti puncta non sunt partes lineae. Hoc novum Ens constat ex materia et forma. Materia est ortum totale ex viribus passivis omnium Monadum; et Forma est ortum totale ex entelechiis primitivis omnium Monadum. Et hoc ortum cum non sit Modus sed aliquid absolutum[,] posset conservari a Deo destructis monadibus, et vicissim ipso destructo possent conservari Monades. Atque haec est substantia corporea, quae est in perpetuo fluxu, quam sufficit poni in corporibus facientibus unum per se seu organicis et sem[p]er comitatur monadem dominantem. Porro modificationes sunt accidentia quae ex accidentibus Monadum oriuntur. Porro per hanc unionem efficitur ut ex anima et corpore una fiat persona, seu unum suppositum, et ut plura corporis membra in idem suppositum ingredientur. Aggregata non constituunt suppositum, v.g. strues lignorum. Equidem in Aggregatis non sola est Unio mathematica seu contactus,

*Translation:*

Notions are of entities or of respects. Entities are things or modes. Things are substances or phenomena. Substances are either simple or composite. Simple substance is a monad; a monad, however, is either primitive, God, from which everything comes, or derivative; and this is either just perceptive or also sensitive; and this is either just sensitive or also intellectual, which is also called spirit. Again a monad is either the soul of a body or is separate; this is either created (as many want although I doubt whether the many monads of a body are created) or not created, God. Composite substance is what results from simple substances (i.e. what is composed from a soul which belongs to it and from simple substances < — > [ ] a real unity. It is therefore necessary to posit or establish only monads as things, with composites, on the other hand, as mere phenomena {or beings of reason}. *Phenomena* are aggregates of substances, which show themselves to the perceiver in a certain way, and so are considered by us among the aggregates of substances. And as through our thought phenomena arise from substances, so through divine thought composite substances arise from the simple substances, it being established that in God there is will in addition to intellect, so that a unity is made from a multitude; for if He just considered a multitude at the same time, He would make phenomena or aggregates of them, as when God knows a rainbow or its properties. And since there ought to arise a new being, it is proper that the divine will should be added. Furthermore, the parts of this new being are not monads, but they are its ground, as points are not parts of a line. This new being consists in matter and form. Matter is the complete result of the passive forces of all the monads; and form is the complete result of the primitive entelechies of all the monads. And since this result is not a mode but something absolute, it can be conserved by God when the monads have been destroyed, and, on the other hand, with this same thing destroyed the monads can be conserved. And this is corporeal substance, which is in perpetual flux, which is sufficient to be posited in bodies making a per se unity or an organism and [it] always accompanies a dominant monad. Further, modifications are accidents which arise from the accidents of monads. And further through this union it is brought about that there comes to be from a soul and a body one person, or one *suppositum*, and that many members of a body are combined in the same *suppositum*. Aggregates do not constitute a *suppositum*, e.g. a pile of wood. Indeed, in aggregates the union is not only mathematical or a union of contact,

*(Text)*

sed etiam physica seu impulsus; sed deest tamen Metaphysica seu suppositi, quae unam substantiam singularem facit, quae si Completa sit, suppositalitas appellatur. Ut oriatur linea, superficies, corpus mathematicum, praeter puncta, concipimus unionem quandam punctorum, per quam fiat continuum. Ut oriatur corpus physicum, praeter extensionem concipimus motum seu loci continui vel spatii mutationem; et ita corporum impulsus. Sed ut oriatur substantia corporea, concipimus Unionem illam Metaphysicam cujus complementum facit suppositalitatem. Sed omnia haec disparerent, si nihil essent nisi Monades et phaenomena. Itaque si Monadibus addimus realitatem compositorum, oritur spatium, massa, motus, substantia corporea. Duo systemata: unum monadum, alterum compositorum realium. Composita Realia sunt duo, immobile seu immutabile, spatium; Mutabilia sunt corpora, et haec sunt vel aggregata ex substantiis corporeis vel substantiae. Substantiae corporeae debent ergo habere aliquid reale praeter ingredientia; aut nihil supererit nisi Monades. Hoc reale superadditum est quod facit substantialitatem corporis. Si massis non aliam quam phaenomenorum realitatem concedamus, non habebimus opus spatio reali.

(Translation)

but also physical or a union of impulse; but nevertheless there is lacking a metaphysical union or a union of the *suppositum* which makes one singular substance, which if complete is called '*suppositalitas*.' For there to be a line, a surface, a mathematical body, we conceive, beyond points, a certain union of points from which a continuum comes to be. For there to be a physical body, we conceive, beyond extension, motion that is a change of continuous place or space; and so is the impulse of bodies. But for there to be a corporeal substance, we conceive that metaphysical union whose complement makes what is a subject. But all these things disappear if there are nothing but monads and phenomena. And thus if we add to the monads the reality of the composites, there arises space, mass, motion, corporeal substance. There are two systems: one, of monads; the other, of real composites. Real composites are two: immovable or immutable, space; mutable are bodies, and these are either aggregates of corporeal substances or substances. Corporeal substances ought therefore to have something real beyond the ingredients; or else there will be nothing but monads. This real superadded thing is what makes the subjecthood of body. If we concede to masses no other reality than that of phenomena, we shall not have need for real space.

In this text, Leibniz is clearly concerned with the same metaphysical issues that dominated his thought in the last years of his life. What is a body? What is the nature of a composite? And how can the phenomena of the physical world be real? But if this text only represents yet another attempt on Leibniz's behalf to explain his metaphysical views, is it really very special at all? Do we not already have enough textual material from which we can piece together Leibniz's view of the world?

This text is special, I think, because it shows Leibniz's appeal to something very much like the *vinculum substantiale* outside of the correspondence with Des Bosses. Although Leibniz does not use the phrase "*vinculum substantiale*" in this manuscript, the "*reale superadditum...quod facit substantialitatem corporis*" must certainly be the *vinculum substantiale*. For example, consider the following passages from Leibniz's correspondence with Des Bosses, in which Leibniz explicitly mentions the *vinculum*:

- (1) If you deny that what is superadded to the monads to make a union is of the nature of a substance, you cannot say that a body is a substance, for

it will then be a mere aggregate of monads; and I fear that you will fall back upon the mere phenomenality of body ... Monads do not constitute a complete composite substance, since they do not make up a unity per se but merely an aggregate, unless some substantial bond [*vinculum substantiale*] is added.<sup>5</sup>

(2) A substantial bond [*vinculum substantiale*] superadded to the monads is in my opinion something absolute, such that although it corresponds accurately, in the course of nature, to the affections of the monads, that is, to their perceptions and appetites, and can therefore be taken to be within the monad whose body its body is, it can nevertheless be independent of the monads in a supernatural sense and can be removed and adapted to other monads while its former monads remain.<sup>6</sup>

According to Leibniz, there has to be something substantial added to the monads in order for a body, or a composite of monads, to be real or to be something more than a mere phenomenon, and this substantial thing superadded to the monads is the *vinculum substantiale*. In both the correspondence with Des Bosses and in this manuscript, Leibniz attempts to solve the difficult problems of the nature of composite substance—how, that is, a being composed of innumerable simple substances can be a unity per se and how a composite or body can be more than a mere phenomenon—by appealing to some real thing over and above the monads that brings a new substantiality to the composite of monads and “bonds” them together, making of them a genuine individual.

The “strong” reading of this manuscript is therefore that, because Leibniz clearly appeals to something like the *vinculum substantiale* outside of his correspondence with Des Bosses, we should be more willing to admit that Leibniz seriously invoked the *vinculum substantiale* in order to account for the nature or possibility of composite substances. We can no longer say, as Russell does, that the *vinculum substantiale* is “rather the concession of a diplomatist than the creed of a philosopher,”<sup>7</sup> for we have evidence of his having used the notion of the *vinculum substantiale* in philosophical writings in which he is not under the direct pressure of his curious friend and critic, Des Bosses.

The “weak” reading of this manuscript is simply that it is a preliminary draft of Leibniz’s February 1712 letter to Des Bosses or that it is on the same footing as the piece that Gerhardt claims to be a “vorbereitende Studie” to this letter.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, if one considers the manuscript and letter (along with the “Beilage”) carefully, one notices a remarkable resemblance in terms of the issues and ideas presented by

Leibniz. The beginning of the manuscript shows Leibniz making various distinctions and concluding with his characterizations of simple and composite substances. While such dichotomies are common in Leibniz's writings, Leibniz proceeds in virtually the same order in the third paragraph of the "Beilage" to the February 1712 letter.<sup>9</sup> After the lengthy, and partially illegible passage in which Leibniz comments on the nature of composite substance, he claims that we ought to posit only monads as things and consider the composites of the monads as mere phenomenal unities, that is, beings whose unity is simply perceived by some mind but that lack genuine unity. This claim is roughly equivalent to the first option that Leibniz presents to Des Bosses in his letter: "either bodies are mere phenomena...and the monads alone will be real, [with] the union ...provided by the operation of the perceiving mind..."<sup>10</sup> Leibniz then moves on to flirt with the idea of *scientia visionis*; that is, Leibniz suggests that composites will have "reality" insofar as (a) they are composed of real unities (monads) and (b) they are perceived *as* unities by God, or are *as* unities the objects of God's *scientia visionis*.<sup>11</sup> After this brief discussion of the reality of the phenomena of bodies afforded by God's *scientia visionis*, Leibniz returns to the nature of substance and in the manuscript gives a characterization of the nature of form and matter that is both unusual for Leibniz and clearly similar to that found in his letter to Des Bosses. From much of the rest of Leibniz's writings, one might be tempted to conclude that the form of the composite is somehow the dominant monad and the matter of the composite the aggregated subordinate monads, but in both the manuscript and the letter Leibniz describes form as the union of entelechies and matter as the union of passive powers of the monads, unions which are made possible by the *vinculum substantiale*. But more than this, in both manuscript and letter, Leibniz goes on to make curious mention of the possibility that the monads could be conserved by God while the union of passive powers and the union of entelechies are destroyed (and *vice versa*), something that certainly should call to mind Leibniz's general doctrine of the *vinculum substantiale*.<sup>12</sup> In the second half of the manuscript we find the ideas relating to the *vinculum substantiale* that I commented upon in my "strong" reading above. And here, too, there are unmistakable echoes of Leibniz's February 1712 letter to Des Bosses. Simply compare the claim in the manuscript that, lacking a certain kind of union, the monads of a composite cannot constitute a *suppositum* or a subject and that, therefore, bodies are mere phenomena with the following claim from the letter:

[I]f faith compels us to accept corporeal substances, we must say that the substance consists in the unifying [*unionalis*] reality that adds *something complete* [*absolutus*] (and therefore substantial), though in flux, to those things that are to be united ... If that substantial bond [*vinculum substantiale*] for monads did not exist, all bodies, together with all of their qualities, would be nothing but well-founded phenomena, like a rainbow or an image, in a word, continual dreams perfectly in agreement with one another, and in this alone would consist the reality of those phenomena. ... Therefore, if a body is a substance, it is the making real of the phenomena over and above their agreement.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, it seems that *every* issue that Leibniz brings up in this manuscript reappears in his letter to Des Bosses and its “Beilage.”<sup>14</sup> We might therefore conclude with a fair degree of confidence that the manuscript printed above was written in February 1712 and is a draft of the letter that eventually found its way to Des Bosses.

If one accepts this “weak” reading of the manuscript, then the “strong” reading suggested above might seem to be considerably undermined. If this manuscript is simply a draft of sorts for a letter to Des Bosses, then we are back in a position that allows us to dismiss the *vinculum substantiale* as being solely limited to Leibniz’s debate with Des Bosses. But I am not convinced, as Russell is, that the mere fact that the *vinculum substantiale* is limited to the Des Bosses correspondence means that we can so easily ignore Leibniz’s view of the *vinculum substantiale*. Indeed, I believe that there is something essentially right about the “strong” reading, and I should like to suggest that the “strong” and “weak” readings ought to be synthesized in the following, rather charitable, way: when Leibniz attempts to explain the nature of composite substance, one of the possibilities that he *genuinely* considers is that the monads of a composite are unified by something substantial superadded by God, that is, that the monads of a composite are unified by a *vinculum substantiale*.<sup>15</sup>

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Notes

[When I deviate from a standard translation, I give the reference to that translation with an asterisk (\*).]

<sup>1</sup>It is *not* my intention to provide an Akademie-quality transcription; I shall leave that job to the editors in Hanover.

<sup>2</sup>I label the one reading “strong” because it leads to a reinterpretation of Leibniz’s doctrine of the *vinculum substantiale*; the other reading, “weak,” because it merely points to another document relating to the Leibniz-Des Bosses correspondence.

<sup>3</sup>In the following transcription and translation “< — >“ denotes a passage that I was not able to transcribe (or translate), and passages within curly brackets are those that are clearly in the text but that were deleted by Leibniz.

<sup>4</sup>The original reads as follows: “...atque ita ad inter substantiarum a nobis considerantur.”

<sup>5</sup>GP II 444/L 602\*. “Si id quod Monadibus superadditur ad faciendam Unionem substantiale esse negas, jam corpus substantia dici non potest; ita enim merum erit Monadum aggregatum, et vereor ne in mera corporum phaenomena recidas ... Et monades non constituunt substantiam completam compositam, cum non faciant unum per se, sed merum aggregatum, nisi aliquod substantiale vinculum accedat.”

<sup>6</sup>GP II 474/L 608\*. “Vinculum substantiale superadditum Monadibus, mea sententia, est absolutum quoddam, quod etsi in naturae cursu accurate respondeat monadum affectionibus, nempe perceptionibus et appetitionibus, ita ut in Monade legi possit, cui corpori corpus ejus insit; supernaturaliter tamen vinculum substantiale potest esse a Monadibus independens, et manentibus prioribus monadibus mutari, et aliis Monadibus accommodari.”

<sup>7</sup>Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (Second edition, London, 1937), p. 152.

<sup>8</sup>GP II 438 ff.

<sup>9</sup>GP II 439/AG 200. Leibniz also makes these kinds of distinctions in the opening sections of the “Monadology” (GP VI 607ff./AG 213ff.) and “Principles of Nature and Grace” (GP VI 598ff./AG 206ff.) as well as latter in the correspondence with Des Bosses, especially his ontological table from 1715 (GP II 506/L 617).

<sup>10</sup>GP II 435/AG 198. “...alterutrum dicendum est: vel corpora mera esse phaenomena..., solaeque erunt monades reales, unio autem animae percipientis operatione in phaenomeno supplebitur...”

<sup>11</sup>Compare Leibniz’s claim in the manuscript with the following from the “Beilage” to his letter: “If bodies are phenomena and judged in accordance with how they

appear to us, they will not be real since they will appear differently to different people. And so the reality of bodies, of space, of motion, and of time seem to consist in the fact that they are phenomena of God, that is, the object of his knowledge by intuition [*scientia visionis*]. ... Furthermore, God not only sees individual monads and the modifications of every monad whatsoever, but he also sees their relations, and in this consists the reality of relations and of truth.” (“Si corpora sunt phaenomena et ex nostris apparentiis aestimantur, non erunt realia, quia aliter aliis appareant. Itaque realitas corporum, spatii, motus, temporis videtur consistere in eo ut sint phaenomena Dei, seu objectum scientiae visionis... Porro Deus non tantum singulas monades et cujuscunque Monadis modificationes spectat, sed etiam earum relationes, et in hoc consistit relationum ac veritatum realitas.” (GP II 438/AG 199))

<sup>12</sup>The passage from the letter to Des Bosses reads, “If a corporeal substance is something real, over and above monads, just as a line is held to be something over and above points, then we will have to say that corporeal substance consists in a certain union, or better, in a real unifying thing that God superadds to the monads. Primary matter, namely, that which is required for extension and antitypy, that is, for diffusion and resistance, arises from the union of the passive power of the monads, and from the union of the monadic entelechies arises substantial form. But what can arise in this way can also be destroyed, and it will be destroyed when that union ceases to exist, unless it is miraculously preserved by God. Furthermore, such a form will not be a soul, which is a simple and indivisible substance. This form (and thus this matter as well) is in perpetual flux, since one can’t really designate any point in matter that stays in the same place for more than a moment and that doesn’t recede from neighboring things as much as you like.” (“Si substantia corporea aliquid reale est praeter monades, uti linea aliquid esse statuitur praeter puncta, dicendum erit, substantiam corpoream consistere in unione quadam, aut potius uniente reali a Deo superaddito monadibus, et ex unione quidem potentiae passivae monadum oriri materiam primam, nempe extensionis et antitypiae, seu diffusionis et resistentiae exigentiam; ex unione autem Entelechiarum monadicarum oriri formam substantialem, sed quae ita nasci et extingui possit, et cessante illa unione extinguetur, nisi a Deo miraculose conservetur.” (GP II 435/AG 198))

<sup>13</sup>GP II 435-36/AG 198-99\*. “[S]i fides nos ad corporeas substantias adigit, substantiam illam consistere in illa realitate unionali, quae *absolutum aliquid* (adeoque substantiale) etsi fluxum uniendis addat. ... Si abesset illud monadum substantiale vinculum, corpora omnia cum omnibus suis qualitativis nihil aliud

forent quam phaenomena bene fundata, ut iris aut imago in speculo, verbo, somnia continuata perfecte congruentia sibi ipsis; et in hoc uno consisteret horum phaenomenorum realitas. ... Corpus ergo si substantia, est realisatio phaenomenorum ultra congruentiam procedens.”

<sup>14</sup>There does appear to be one exception to my claim: what Leibniz says in the manuscript about the nature of space does not seem to reemerge in the letter to Des Bosses. And perhaps this is all for the better. What, after all, could Leibniz mean by saying that space, mass, motion, and corporeal substance are the results of adding the reality of composites to the monads? In particular, why should there be the relation between real (absolute) space and the reality of bodies that Leibniz suggests? I take it that one of the things Leibniz wants to say here is that when there are *real* corporeal substances, the notion of a *real* or *absolute* space is necessary. But when there are only monads—spiritual atoms, as it were—that perceive the world from their own points of view and that are causally and physically independent of one another and from which the *phenomena* of bodies arise, we can more easily say that space itself is merely a construct of the perceiving mind; in other words, we can say that it is relative because it is determined merely by the perceived relations among the phenomena of bodies. Yet if this is Leibniz’s argument, it is not a good one. One can, of course, hold a relationist or relativist view of space while at the same time accepting the *real* existence of corporeal substances.

<sup>15</sup> I should like to thank Massimo Mugnai for all his help with this transcription and translation.