

Martine de Gaudemar and Philippe Hamou (eds.), *Locke et Leibniz. Deux styles de rationalité*, Hildesheim/Zürich/New York: Georg Olms Verlag 2011, 233 p.

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This volume on Leibniz and Locke is a collection of revised contributions to a conference held at the University of Paris-Ouest Nanterre in 2004 on the occasion of the tri-centenary anniversary of the *New Essays*. It is devoted to what the editor's preface calls the "failed dialogue between Leibniz and Locke," by this implicitly referring to the fact that Locke chose to ignore Leibniz's attempts to engage an epistolary exchange and that Leibniz in turn chose to leave the *New essays* to gather dust in a drawer when notified of Locke's death. It includes ten original articles in French or French translation written by scholars from France, Israel, Canada and the United States. The themes of the contributions vary, but there is clear emphasis on topics in metaphysics and epistemology, with the exception of a contribution by Martha Brandt Bolton on issues in moral philosophy.

As suggested by the subtitle of the volume, with its implicit reference to Gilles Gaston Granger's notion of "philosophical style," the objective of the volume is not simply to confront two philosophies, but to confront two ways in which the philosophical tradition is inherited in Leibniz and Locke, in whose texts one can "identify mainly Aristotelian and Cartesian concepts, but also Platonic and Stoic ones, etc., but redistributed according to a new problematic" (p. 9). In this way, Martine de Gaudemar explains in her preface, by rereading the *Essays* and *New Essays* together, it is possible to see how the philosophical tradition was appropriated by each of the two philosophers and how it served them for the purposes of philosophical invention. The stated aim of the volume is thus to go beyond the narrow juxtaposition of the positions of Leibniz and Locke and say something more general about the intersection between their two "philosophical styles," understood as singular ways of making use of the philosophical tradition, in the *Essays* and the *New Essays*.

This is a noble objective and certainly a worthwhile enterprise. However, when one engages in reading the volume, it is far from clear that it lives up to the ambition. In fact, the vast majority of articles are more narrowly devoted to the comparison between specific doctrinal points in the *Essays* and the *New Essays* and do not discuss the philosophical or intellectual context or heritage in any way (while allowing for some exceptions: Mark Kulstad writes on Leibniz and Hume;

Philippe Hamou places his analysis of “thinking matter” within the discussions concerning latitudinarianism; Bolton includes considerations about Pufendorf....). When approaching the volume expecting to find the deeper contextualization announced by the preface, one then cannot help leaving it at the end with a slight feeling of disappointment. If, however, one approaches the individual contributions to the volume with less strong expectations about the unity of the ensemble, there is much to be gained from reading them.

In her article dedicated to the “Problem of the Distinction between Ideas,” Martine Pécharman proposes a detailed analysis of the fundamental epistemological issue in the debate Leibniz-Locke concerning the criterion of clarity and distinction. She shows in particular that Locke’s non-Cartesian conception of the “determination” of ideas by means of *signs* plays a crucial role in Locke’s epistemology, while stressing that Leibniz did not pick up on that. In this case, the reconstruction of the encounter between the philosophers dissolves into a deep miscomprehension on Leibniz’s side. Ohad Nachtomy develops an engaging discussion about the composition of concepts in Leibniz and Locke taking his point of departure in Borges’ extraordinary tale of Ireneo Funes who, after falling off his horse, was no longer able to forget or form abstract notions, but ended up accumulating enormous amounts of particular perceptions in the storehouse of his memory. François Duchesneau returns to the classic problem of “nominal essences” in relation to the question of the chain of beings, in order to point to the “bipolarity of contrastive conceptions” in Leibniz and Locke with regard to what at first glance seems to be a “more or less similar representation of the relation between natural species” (p. 61). Mark Kulstad’s study of Leibniz as an “anti-Hume,” with specific emphasis on the questions of predictions and anticipations, is a stimulating interpretive tour de force constructed around a distinction between a “strong” and a “weak” kind of reasoning in Leibniz, ending with the intriguing conclusion that “the true difference between Hume and the Leibniz of the *New essays* [depends on] the question whether there is not [in Leibniz] a category of reasoning which is intermediary between strong or demonstrative reasoning and the Humean reasoning regarding factual states” (p. 92). Beginning from Leibniz and Locke’s shared background in the conviction that a legal system is the basis for morality and that mathematics is the basis of rational science, Emily Grosholz confronts Locke’s anti-formalism, grounded in the rejection of scholastic syllogism, with Leibniz’s “profounder and richer understanding of formalism” (p. 98). Moving towards moral philosophy, she also shows how Locke’s moral reasoning “resembles very much an

empirical reasoning by analogy which is characteristic for English jurisprudence” (p. 105). Leibniz’s moral philosophy, to the contrary, turns on the jurisprudential conception of a “balance of reason” and develops a formalized probability calculus useful in moral deliberation. Dominique Berlioz’s paper on “John Locke and Metaphysics,” exclusively dedicated to Locke, takes issue with the current image in contemporary metaphysics of Locke as an empiricist anti-Metaphysician, stressing in particular how, alongside Locke’s standard rejection of metaphysics, there is also in his writings a positive conception of “metaphysical truth” opposed to purely “verbal truth.” Philippe Hamou proposes a delicate reevaluation of the classic controversy concerning “thinking matter” in Locke and Leibniz. Hamou is very sensitive not only to the conceptual issues governing the debate, but also the strategic considerations that often motivate Leibniz’s argumentation against Locke. Bolton’s article on “rational virtue” primarily focuses on Locke, and on how Locke goes beyond Pufendorf’s legal conception of the origins of moral knowledge by means of a theory of epistemic obligation with roots in the doctrine of uneasiness. The second part of the paper considers Leibniz’s conception of love of God as the natural root of moral motivation as a theory where, contrary to Locke, moral obligation governs cognitive obligation. Geneviève Brykman’s account of Leibniz and Locke’s respective conceptions of “uneasiness” takes its point of departure in Leibniz’s detailed discussion the *New Essays* of how exactly to translate the English term “uneasiness” into French. On the basis of this discussion, she develops an analysis of the tensions between Leibniz’s conception of sub-conscious appetites and moral conscience. Martine de Gaudemar’s concluding contribution contains an original analysis of Locke’s conception of personal identity developed in dialogue with reflections on the same issue in Paul Ricoeur. The article concludes with a curious section, where she argues that one can “confirm the presence of a Lockian heritage in contemporary speculations by evoking the transsexual experience of bodily transformation” (p. 208).

Locke et Leibniz. Deux styles de rationalité is a stimulating collection and will be of considerable help for scholars and students alike. Along with other edited volumes occasioned by the tri-centenary of the *New Essays*, De Gaudemar and Hamou’s volume testifies to the richness of the encounter between Leibniz and Locke. It confirms the fact that the discussion of their relations, even though it has now been three hundred years in the making, is far from being over.