

Chapter 3

Substance, Unity and Identity in Early Leibniz's Work

Adrian Nita

The rehabilitation of substantial forms in 1679 is a very important part in the evolution of Leibniz's thought.¹ It can be seen as a case of break or continuity, depending upon one's arguments and points of view. The theory of substantial forms is, of course, of great metaphysical significance and is connected with important topics of Leibniz's philosophy such as existence, being, identity, consciousness, freedom, and the existence of God. Even if I do not intend to give a direct answer to the question of continuity or discontinuity, I shall offer an indirect one by discussing the unity and identity of substance from the point of view of the notions of *anima* and *mens* in Leibniz's works.

1 Unity and Mind

In his letter to Duke Johann Friedrich from 1679, Leibniz maintains that he revives substantial forms, using the present tense and not the past tense as he does in many other places when he talks about the periods of his thought. Leibniz describes to the duke his planned work called *Catholic Demonstration* where he intends to give a demonstration for the existence of God, a demonstration of immortality, a proof of the Christian mysteries, and a demonstration of the authority of the church and the Scriptures. This theological setting is present in the same sentence in which Leibniz

A. Nita (✉)

Department of Philosophy, University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania

e-mail: adriannita2010@yahoo.com

¹For comments and useful suggestions on earlier version of the paper, I am indebted to Simo Knuuttila, Pauline Phemister, Roger Ariew, Richard Arthur and to the participants of the *Oltenia Colloquium in Early Modern Philosophy* (first edition, May 2013). My research was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2011-3-0739.

announces the revival of substantial forms: “There is another important thing in my philosophy which will give it access to the Jesuits and other theologians. This is my restoration of substantial forms, which the atomists and Cartesians claim to have exterminated”.² The subordination of philosophy to theology seems even clearer in the variant L2 of this letter.³

This is by no means the only traditional idea in Leibniz’s philosophy; one can say that there is no part in his philosophy without ideas from the scholastics.⁴ This influence co-existed with an indisputably modern aspect of Leibniz’s thought. He adopted the mechanical philosophy without reserve, even though he accommodated it to his ideas on theology and philosophy. The young Leibniz⁵ stressed the possibility and even necessity of a symbiosis between scholastic and modern thought in his correspondence with his teacher Jakob Thomasius (from 2 October 1668 and 30 April 1669) or with Conring (19 mars 1678):

Whenever I discuss matters with the Cartesians, certainly, I extol Aristotle where he deserves it and undertake a defense of the ancient philosophy, because I see that many Cartesians read their one master only, ignoring what is held in high esteem by others, and thus unwisely impose limits on their own ability. I do not at all approve of throwing words around too freely against the old philosophy, nor do I approve of the argument which a certain friend in this neighborhood has divulged; I have told him so in a letter, I think that the two philosophies should be combined and that where the old leaves off, the new should begin.⁶

The aim of the new science in Leibniz’s view is to explicate the possibility to know the world through size, shape and motion, but mechanics can neither offer the principle of its basis nor elevate itself to the universality of philosophical thinking. In the plan for a work on the elements of natural science, *Conspectus libelli*, from 1678 to 1679, Leibniz argues that natural philosophy should treat not only observations and experiments, but also, or especially, the first principles of things: “There follows now a discussion of incorporeal matters (*de incorporeis*). Certain things take place in a body which cannot be explained from the necessity of matter alone. Such are the laws of motion, which depend upon the metaphysical principle of the equality of cause and effect.”⁷

Leibniz thinks that mechanical philosophy does not give a good answer to the problem of the nature of the body, and he associates this with its banishing from philosophy the knowledge of the soul, mind, God, and in general all that is about the spiritual side of our lives. He holds that the body is not a simple extended substance and that the union between soul and body is unsatisfactorily treated by modern theories. Neither the dualist Cartesian theory nor the occasionalist theory of causal interaction between mind and body satisfies Leibniz’s search. He explains that in order

² Leibniz, To Duke Johann Friedrich von Hannover, autumn 1679; A2.1.754; L 261.

³ Leibniz, To Duke Johann Friedrich von Hannover, var. L2; A2.1.757.

⁴ See McCullough (1996). See also Ariew (2009, pp. 95–115).

⁵ See Kabitz (1909), Brown (1999), Kulstad et al. (2009).

⁶ Leibniz to Conring, 19 March 1678; GP I, 198–199; L 190.

⁷ *Conspectus libelli* (summer 1678–winter 1678/1679 (?)), A VI, 4, 1988; L 278–279.

to discern the body and the physical objects, we need a principle that can explain being, unity and identity.⁸

Leibniz's early thinking included other constructive elements as well, particularly the invention of dynamics. It is significant that he reformed dynamics, to use Michel Fichant's expression,⁹ simultaneously with the revival of substantial forms. For Descartes, the assumptions about the facts of nature were demonstrable through an appeal to size, shape and motion. The quantity of motion, Descartes's famous expression (mv), together with the principle of the conservation of the total quantity of motion in the universe, explained mechanically all changes in nature on the basis of extension, which was the constitutive attribute of the bodies, and motion, through which the extensional parts were distinguished. Leibniz sought a new definition of force through the measure of its effect by substituting the square of the velocity (mv^2) for the simple velocity in the Cartesian formulation. This revision in *De corpore concursu* from 1678 was an important contribution to the revival of substantial forms, given that the principle of bodies is something of the nature of a force.¹⁰ The conception of body in terms of active and passive forces, developed in the late 1670s, persisted in Leibniz's thought to the end of his career.¹¹

Leibniz's interest in the conciliation between the scholastics and the moderns and the conciliation between the Churches and confessions¹² influenced his reformation of dynamics as well as his new conception of substance in 1678–1679, which was innovative from Leibniz's point of view and also in relation to the other theories of substances, either old or new. Some Leibniz scholars maintain that substance is defined through unity (*unum per se*; i.e. an entity that has the principle of unity in itself; unlike multiple things or aggregates), concreteness (an entity that inheres in no other thing as in a subject; unlike abstract objects), and completeness (an entity that falls under a complete concept, unlike a mode).¹³ In my opinion, the new theory of substance has in its core the concepts of unity (in order to be a being), identity (according to Quine's famous criterion: no entity without identity) and activity (given that the substance is defined in the terms of active and passive force).¹⁴

In order to reject Cartesian dualism, Leibniz revives substantial forms and in this way sustains the unity of beings,¹⁵ a central theme in his mature metaphysics.¹⁶ In the middle period (1680–1695), Leibniz advances, in the *First truths*, the hypothesis

⁸ *Ibidem*, L 279–280.

⁹ Fichant (1994, pp. 9–68).

¹⁰ Fichant, (1994, pp. 15–17); see also Fichant (1998, pp. 163–204).

¹¹ Garber (2011, pp. 409–421).

¹² This is the reason that Christia Mercer speaks about Leibniz's "conciliatory eclecticism" (Mercer 2001, p. 47; Mercer 2004, Chap. 1). Andreas Blank remarks that while Leibniz's philosophy is conciliatory, is not eclectic; see Blank (2005, p. 63).

¹³ Palkoska (2010, p. 94).

¹⁴ For a close view on these matters, Woolhouse (2010, pp. 17–21).

¹⁵ For a different view that emphasizes some sort of dualism, see Blank (2005, Chap. 5).

¹⁶ Ishiguro (1998, pp. 538–541).

of concomitance¹⁷ in order to keep the unity of substance. God has planned both the soul (*anima*) and the body in such a way that what happens in one corresponds perfectly to whatever happens in the other; this is true of all substances in the whole universe.¹⁸

In his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz argues that the nature of body does not consist merely in extension as in the mechanical philosophy, but “there must necessarily be recognized in it something related to souls (*aux ames*), which is commonly called a substantial form, although this form makes no changes in the phenomena, any more than does the soul of beasts if they have one”.¹⁹ The new notion of substance is grounded in the complete concept of an individual substance: everything that happens to the soul (*l’ame*) and to each substance follows from its concept, so that the soul (*l’ame*) expresses what happens in the world and more particularly in the body to which it is united.²⁰ In this way, what makes a compound being a unity is the substantial form which is taken to be something of the nature of soul:

Assuming that the bodies which make up an *unum per se*, for example man, are substances and that they have substantial forms, and assuming that beasts have souls (*des ames*), we must admit that these souls (*ames*) and substantial forms cannot entirely perish any more than can atoms or the ultimate parts of the matter in the opinion of other philosophers. For no substance perishes, although it may become entirely different.²¹

In the later years (1696–1716), Leibniz explains the unity of substance through an appeal to the true unities, “real unities”,²² and “formal atoms”,²³ that is, substantial forms explained analogously to the concept of soul.²⁴ In the first variant of his

¹⁷ Later this was labeled as the hypothesis of pre-established harmony; see the letter to Basnage de Bouval, 3/13 January 1696, A II, 3, 7897.

¹⁸ *Primae veritates* (1680–1684); Couturat, 521; L 269.

¹⁹ *Discours de metaphysique* (1686) 12; GP IV, 436; L 309.

²⁰ *Discours de metaphysique* (1686) 33; GP IV, 458; L 324–325.

²¹ *Discours de metaphysique* (1686) 34; GP IV, 459; L 325.

²² See the letters to Foucher, 5/15 July 1695, A II, 3, 7828 and 12 September 1696, A II, 3, 7856–8.

²³ “Augustinum puto Pythagoreae et Platonicae scholae placita secutum. Nam per Pythagoram inprimis de Mentis immaterialitate et immortalitate dogma ex oriente allatum in Graecia inclaruit. Plato autem longius progressus vidit, non alias vere substantias esse quam Animas, corpora autem in perpetuo fluxu versari. Cogitata horum emendavit atque etiam auxit Augustinus ad normam christiana sapientiae, hunc Scholastici, sed longo intervallo, sunt secuti. Mihi summa rei videtur consistere in vera Notione substantiae, quae eadem est cum notione Monadis, sive realis Unitatis et ut ita dicam Atomis Formalis; vel puncti essentialis, nam materialis Atomus dari non potest, unde frustra in materia quaeritur Unitas, et punctum Mathematicum non est essentialis sed modale, unde continuum ex punctis non constat, et tamen quicquid substantiale est ex unitatibus conflatur” (Leibniz to Fardella, 3/13 September 1696, A II, 3, 7964).

²⁴ *Systeme nouveau* (1695) 3; GP IV, 479; L 454. See also the letter to Foucher, 12 September 1695: “Mais dans les réalités où il n’entre que des divisions faites actuellement, le tout n’est qu’un resultat ou assemblage, comme un troupeau de moutons; il est vray que le nombre des substances simples qui entrent dans une masse quelque petite qu’elle soit est infini puisqu’outre l’ame qui fait l’unité réelle de l’animal, le corps du mouton (par exemple) est soubdivisé actuellement c’est à dire qu’il est encor un assemblage d’animaux ou de plantes invisibles, composés de même outre ce qui fait aussi leur unité réelle, et quoique cela aille à l’infini, il est manifeste, qu’au bout du compte

New System for explaining the nature and communication of substances, as well as the union between the soul and the body (1695), the unity of substance is very clearly maintained. Leibniz shows that in order to distinguish a unity from a multiple entity, we need a principle. Without such a principle, a portion of matter would be without unity and could not be called a substance. In corporeal nature, there must be true unities, and for this it is necessary that what makes the corporeal substance be something corresponds to what we call "I" in us, that is, something indivisible and however acting. According to Leibniz, in all organic species there must be something like the soul, which is called "substantial form" by philosophers and "primitive entelechy" by Aristotle and which Leibniz calls "force primitive".²⁵

In the *Monadology* Leibniz formulates the most abstract variant of the theory of substantial unity, in which the soul represents an intermediate level of the existence between simple entelechies and spirits:

All simple substances or created monads might be given the name of *entelechies* ... If we wish to designate by soul (*l'ame*) everything which has perceptions and appetites in the general sense which I have just explained, all simple substances or created monads could be called souls (*les ames*). But since sentiment is something more than a simple perception, I agree that the general name of monads or entelechies is enough for simple substances which have only perception and that only those should be called souls (*les ames*) in which perception is more distinct and accompanied by memory... But it is the knowledge on necessary and eternal truths which distinguishes us from the simple animals and gives us *reason* and the sciences, lifting us to the knowledge of ourselves and of God. It is this within us which we call the rational soul (*l'ame*) or *spirit*.²⁶

This view of the unity of substance in the soul (*anima, l'ame*), found in Leibniz's mature and later works, can be contrasted with the view of the young Leibniz (1663–1679). While the conception of the unity of substance is close to that of Suarez in Leibniz's *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui*,²⁷ in other writings from the 60s the unity is given by the mind (*mens*) in the sense that the mind is the principle of order: if bodies as such are compound, without organization and order, only an active attitude of the mind can offer the unity of things.²⁸

tout revient à ces unités; le reste ou les resultats, n'estant que des phenomenes bien fondés" (A II, 3, 7857).

²⁵"Cependant puisqu'il faut necessairement qu'il se trouve dans la nature corporelle des veritables unités, sans lesquelles il n'y auroit point de multitude ny de collection, il faut que ce qui fait la substance corporelle, soit quelque chose qui reponde a ce qui s'appelle *moy*, en nous, qui est indivisible et pourtant agissant, car estant indivisible et sans parties, ce ne sera plus un estre par aggregation, mais estant agissant, ce sera quelque chose de substantiel. ... Il paroist meme que dans toutes les especes organiques, il y doit avoir quelque chose qui reponde a l'ame, et que les philosophes ont appellée forme substantielle, qu'Aristote appelle entelechie premiere, et que j'appelle putestre plus intelligiblement la force primitive pour la distinguer de la secondaire qu'on appelle force mouvante qui est une limitation ou variation accidentelle de la force primitive" (*Systeme nouveau pour expliquer la nature des substances et leur communication entre elles, aussi bien que l'union de l'ame avec le corps* (1695), GP IV, 473).

²⁶*Monadologie* (1714) 18, 19, 29; GP VI, 609–611; L 644–645.

²⁷*Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* (1663) § 5, A VI, 1, 12.

²⁸*Dissertatio de arte combinatoria* (1666), GP IV, 32; L 73.

In *The confession of nature against atheists* (1669), Leibniz presents reasons obtained from natural science in order to see whether knowledge on the basis of sensation and experiment can offer a satisfactory view of the world without the hypothesis of an incorporeal cause. He maintains that “bodies left to themselves” lack unity, size, shape and motion, being unable to constitute a unity. The principle of unity is God as the supreme mind ruling the world:

But since we have demonstrated that bodies cannot have a determinate figure, quantity, or motion, without assuming an incorporeal being, it readily becomes apparent that this incorporeal being is one for all because of the harmony of things among themselves, especially since bodies are moved not individually by this incorporeal being but by each other. But no reason can be given why this incorporeal being chooses one magnitude, figure and motion rather than other, unless he is intelligent and wise with regard to the beauty of things and powerful with regard to their obedience to his command. Therefore such an incorporeal being will be a mind ruling the whole world (*mens totius Mundi Rectrix*), that is God.²⁹

The second part of Leibniz’s treatise contains a demonstration for the immortality of human mind (*mentis humanae immortalitas*) on the basis of an argument derived from other arguments: the human mind (*mens humana*) is a being, one of whose actions is thinking; thought is a thing that is immediately perceptible since the mind (*mens*) is immediate to itself when it perceives itself thinking; if something has for one of its constituents a thing without parts, one of its actions must be other than motion; a being whose action is not motion is not a body; the essence of a body is being in space; whatever is not a body is not in space; whatever is not in space is not movable; whatever is immovable is indissoluble; everything indissoluble is incorruptible; everything incorruptible is immortal; therefore, the human mind (*mens humana*) is immortal.³⁰

The demonstration of transubstantiation (1668) of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ has in its core a notion of the body which, even if it shows terminological similarities to that of scholastics, is embedded in a new theory. The miracle is conceptualized as a change of the substantial form of the bread and wine into the substantial form of the body and blood of Christ: the forms of bread and wine coming from the concurrent divine mind are replaced by the substantial form of the body of Christ. If a body is considered without a substantial form, it is a simple accident, not a substance; it is an appearance, not a being, and it is an aggregate, not a unity:

Something is a substance when taken together with a concurrent mind (*mente concurrente*); something taken apart is accident. Substance is union with mind (*cum mente*). Thus the substance of the human body is union with the human mind (*cum mente*), and the substance of bodies which lack reason is union with the universal mind (*mente universalis*), or God. The idea is the union of God with creature.³¹

²⁹ *Confessio naturae contra atheistas* (1669), GP IV, 109; L 112.

³⁰ *Confessio naturae contra atheistas* (1669), GP IV, 109–110; L 113. Note that in translating *mens* by *l’esprit*, Lucy Prenant loses the point in which I am interested. See *Témoignage de la nature contre les athées*, in *Oeuvres* de GW Leibniz, translated by Lucy Prenant, vol. 1, Aubier Montaigne, Paris, 1972, pp. 69–74.

³¹ *De transsubstantione* (1668), A VI, 1, 509; L 116.

It is good to remember that according to Thomas Aquinas, substantial form is united with designated matter, so that every individual is a compound of form and matter. When a man dies, the form leaves the body which ceases to be a designated human body and becomes a simple cadaver, without its former unity, being or identity. Leibniz does not agree with this last point in *On transubstantiation* since the matter of bread and wine does not individuate them as in Aquinas; in his mature metaphysics he maintains that the body retains its unity even when the individual dies, because the substantial form continues to ensure the unity. This problem had a long career and led to Leibniz's appeal to *vinculum substantiale* in the correspondence with des Bosses.³²

In the beginning of the 1670s, before Leibniz's arrival at Paris, he replaced the model of divine ideas by what is called "the mentalization of body".³³ Elements of this trend can be found in *The new physical hypothesis* (1671), a treatise of two parts: *The theory of abstract motion*, dedicated to the French Academy, and *The theory of concrete motion*, dedicated to the British Royal Society. In the study of abstract motion Leibniz presents a purely geometrical theory of the laws of motion with discussions of central theoretical concepts such as conatus, impact, cohesion, the angles of collision etc. In order to explain the presence of two contrary conatus in a single body, he states that every body is a momentary mind (*mens momentanea*). The mind as a non-extensive substance of simple bodies is the principle of motion without consciousness, sense, and memory. He argues that on this basis we can obtain a new picture of the distinction between mind and body.³⁴ The mind as the principle of unity is something like an unextended point and as such imperishable, whether in simple bodies, animals or humans, as we can see in the abstract from a letter to Arnauld (with a strong influence of Hobbes)³⁵:

I demonstrated that the true locus of our mind [mentis] is a certain point or center, and from this I deduced some remarkable conclusions about the imperishable nature of the mind [mentis], the impossibility of ceasing from thinking, the impossibility of forgetting, and the true internal difference between motion and thought. Thought consists in conatus, as body consists in motion. Every body can be understood as a momentaneous mind (*mentem momentaneam*), or mind without recollection. Every conatus in bodies is indestructible with respect to direction; in mind (*mente*) it is also indestructible with respect to the degree of velocity. As the body consists in a sequence of motions, so mind (*mentem*) consists in a harmony of conatuses. The present motion of a body arises from the composition of preceding conatuses; the present conatus of a mind (*mentis*), that is, will, arises from the composition of preceding harmonies into a new one or through pleasure. If this harmony is disturbed by another conatus impressed upon it, the result is pain.³⁶

During his stay in Paris in 1672–1676, Leibniz learns French and begins to use it in his writings and correspondence. Since *anima* is rendered by *l'ame* in French and *mens* by *pensée* or *l'esprit*, this may have influenced Leibniz's thought about the

³²Look (1999), Blondel (1893), Boehm (1938), Robinet (1969, pp. 83–103).

³³Garber (1982, pp. 168).

³⁴*Theoria motus abstracti* (1671), G IV, 230.

³⁵Letter to Hobbes, 13/22 July 1670, GP I, 82–85; L 105–107.

³⁶Letter to Arnauld, November 1671; GP I, 72–73; L 149.

unity of substance. In his notes from this period, Leibniz continues to differentiate himself from Descartes,³⁷ stressing that the essence of body is not extension and the essence of mind is not thinking. The mind is implanted in matter, so that there are minds everywhere, even in the human egg before conception.³⁸ The mind ensures the unity and identity of substance, remaining unchanged even if the accidents change. Through the hypothesis that the nature of mind is perception of itself, Leibniz offers a view very close to that in his mature thought where the soul is a kind of mirror of the universe and of the body to which it is united. The idea that the mind is the unity of substance is also present in his notes from the Parisian period:

My opinion is that all true being or minds, which alone are unities, increase always in perfection and that every impression which is made on the body has an effect into infinity. Minds will be for a while reduced into themselves; then they will return, perhaps to the sense on external things, perhaps to some far different nature. Sometime there will be an intercourse of all the spheres of the world with each other. Once brought into this theater minds will advance to more and more perfection. It is impossible to believe that the effect of all perceptions will ever disappear, since the effect of all other actions lasts always. This would happen only if the mind were obliterated.³⁹

The confession of the Philosopher (1672/1673) is the most important of the writings from this period which pertain to the question under discussion. It is a dialogue between two personages: a theologian, probably Arnauld (after Belaval and Jagodinsky), Foucher or Steno (after Saame and Sleigh Jr.), and a philosopher, probably Leibniz's spokesman.

The first relevant passage is that where Leibniz raises the question: what is the explanation that there being a separation of the souls (*divortium animarum*) between those who love God and those who hate him, that is, between those who will be saved and those who will be condemned. The philosopher suggests that one should see the world as a republic governed by a monarch where some people are content with their present state and others are hostile. Leibniz wants to emphasize, more or less explicitly, that the freedom of men is compatible with the divine concurrence, as God is not the author of the sin. Moreover, in his letter to Wedderkopf, Leibniz maintains that God chooses the best variant among infinite possibilities.⁴⁰ The hypothesis of the harmony of the world is based on the idea that mind (*mens*) and body are in harmony (*armonikotaton*⁴¹) in the sense that "what a *conatus* is in a body, an affect (*affectus*) is in a mind (*in mente*)".⁴² This mechanical explanation of the states of mind is very close to that of Hobbes.⁴³

³⁷About *element communes*, see Dyck (2005, pp. 21–40). See also Garber (1982, pp. 160–184).

³⁸Paris Notes, L 160. The same idea, but with "soul", not with "mind", is sustained in *Monadology*: "It is clear from this that there is a world of creatures, living beings, animals, entelechies, souls, in the smallest particle of matter" (*Monadology* 66, GP VI, 618; L 650).

³⁹Paris Notes, L 162.

⁴⁰Letter to Wedderkopf (May 1671), A II, 1, 117–118; L 146–147.

⁴¹*Confessio philosophi* (1672/1673), A VI, 3, 146; Sleigh Jr., pp. 100–101 (*armonikoteros*).

⁴²*Confessio philosophi* (1672/1673), A VI, 3, 141; Sleigh Jr., pp. 88–89.

⁴³For more details on the relationship Leibniz-Hobbes, see Wilson (1999, pp. 223–243).

The second relevant part is the fragment in which the Theologian asks why the order of the world was not established without damnation of anyone and why the circumstances of things brought it about that one soul rather than another rendered itself unhappy.⁴⁴ Like in the previous passage, the Theologian raises a question of the soul (*anima*), and the Philosopher answers using the word “mind” (*mens*). We learn that the easy part of the answer is that the first and unique efficient cause of things is the mind (*mens*) and the cause of its action is harmony:

I assert that it was best that way and conforms to the universal harmony, which is shown by its creation, and a posteriori, as they say in the schools, by the very fact that it exists. For what exists is the best, or harmonious. This is established by an invincible demonstration, because the first and unique *efficient* cause of things is mind; the cause of mind, that is, the cause of its action, or the *end* of things, is harmony; and in the case of the most perfect mind (*mens perfectissima*), the cause is the greatest harmony.⁴⁵

It is interesting to note that while the Philosopher states that he prefers the term “mind” (*mens*) to the term “soul” (*anima*),⁴⁶ the French editor, Yvon Belaval, translated the two terms into French indiscriminately by “l’ame” (in very few places he renders “mens” by “l’esprit”). In this way, the French translation conceals the possible tension between *anima* and *mens*.⁴⁷

Leibniz's considerations may be compared with Gassendi's distinction between *anima* and *animus*.⁴⁸ The author of *Syntagma philosophicum* introduced a distinction between *anima* as a sensory soul, completely material and present in all parts of the body, and *animus* as an incorporeal rational soul. The class of animate things contains animals and humans, the former ones being endowed with sensory souls (*anima*) and the latter ones with sensory and rational souls (*animus*).⁴⁹ In Gassendi's thought, based on Epicurus's philosophy except for the rational soul, only beings endowed with *animus* can have complete being, real unity, and immortality. While Leibniz distinguished between higher and lower minds (or souls), they are all incorporeal and sufficient to form substances. Leibniz allows that when he was young, he admitted the atoms and the void⁵⁰ because this theory satisfied the imagination better than Aristotle's theory. Later, he understood that the simple matter cannot have unity and only recourse to a formal atom can ground an adequate metaphysical theory. Leibniz's rehabilitation of substantial forms took place at the same

⁴⁴ *Confessio philosophi* (1672/1673), A VI, 3, 145; Sleigh Jr., p. 101.

⁴⁵ *Confessio philosophi* (1672/1673), A VI, 3, 146; Sleigh Jr., p. 101.

⁴⁶ A VI 3, 148; Sleigh Jr., p. 105.

⁴⁷ Leibniz (1961, p. 25, 29, 35, 37, 39, 71, 77, 83, 87, 89, 93, 101). Moreover, in a footnote, Belaval maintains that Leibniz draws a distinction (under Descartes's influence, of course) between souls as principles of life (*animae*) and souls as principles of reflexive thinking (*mentes*). It is true that Leibniz makes this distinction, but it would be good to make it visible in translation, as Sleigh Jr. does.

⁴⁸ On Leibniz's atomism, as a continuator of tradition from the seventeenth century, as articulated by Sennert and Gassendi, see Richard Arthur (2003, pp. 183–227), Blank (2010, 189–210), Beeley (1996, chaps. 4–14), Moll (1978).

⁴⁹ Gassendi (1658, vol. II, pp. 193–658), Gassendi (1684, vol. 5, pp. 409–626 and vol. 6).

⁵⁰ Leibniz, *New System* 3. Also, in the letter to Burnett from 18 May 1697 (GP III, 205), he declares that even in 1661 he was an atomist.

time when he understood that their nature consists in force and should be treated by analogy with the notion that we have about the mind.

2 Identity and Mind

We saw that Leibniz's new concept of substance came to contain, step by step, the fundamental elements of his mature metaphysics: substance is a unity (and consequently a being because Leibniz adopts the ancient principle: *unum et ens convertuntur*), and it is also characterized by certain identity and activity.

In his early metaphysics, Leibniz understood the identity of substance in a way that differed both from the views of Aristotelians and the moderns. Typically, two sides of identity are closely united in Leibniz's thought: he is interested in how a being is identical with itself or with other beings, as well as of the reason why a being is exactly the being it is. The last question is related with traditional discussions of individuation and the former ones with the theories of identity as sameness. These two sides of identity represent the major impulses of his philosophical meditation.

An important thesis about identity is the correction of the scholastic view that there could exist two things that are perfectly the same, that is, having the same properties, except numerical identity. Leibniz admits that at the logical-linguistic level of existence or in the ideal domain of intelligibility there can be entities that are the same. The Paris notes show that Leibniz associates identity with the remarkable capacity of the mind to remain the same even if its ideas, sentiments, and memories are changing. He also mentions the view that sentences are identical when their terms (the subject and the predicate) have the same extension.⁵¹

About the domain of physical objects, Leibniz came to think, probably before 1678, that there is no such thing as two individuals indiscernible from each other. This is the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. A specific variant of this in his metaphysics maintains that the difference between things is due to the internal, intrinsic, non-relational properties. In my opinion,⁵² in speaking about possible Sextuses, Leibniz employs a sort of identity labeled as "relative identity": x may be the same F as y though x is different G than y .⁵³ For example, Sextus of the actual world who does not go to Thrace is the same as Sextus who goes to Thrace in some aspects. These two persons are not simply identical, but they are "similar", having a relative identity in the sense that they have similar elements in their histories.⁵⁴

The relative identity can be defended also from a predicative point of view: Sextus who goes to Rome and Sextus who goes to Thrace have a relative identity in the sense that they have some common predicates. The strongest argument is that

⁵¹ See the Letter to Conring, March 19, 1678, GP I, 193–199; L 186–191.

⁵² See Nita (2013, pp. 149–160).

⁵³ For relative identity, see Geach (1962).

⁵⁴ See Nita (2012).

they have in common some general predicates: they are men, they have the same parents, they had the same childhood etc.⁵⁵ Moreover, this kind of identity is maintained in the case of the homological relationship: Sextus who goes to Thrace is a homologue of Sextus who goes to Rome. In this case, Sextus from a possible world is relatively identical with Sextus from our world given that Sextus from real world is the same son of Sextus Tarquinius as Sextus that goes in Thrace and he is a different resident from Sextus who goes to Thrace. A homolog can have the same predicates in different degrees, but he is relatively identical with the real Sextus. In this way, there will be a huge number of predicates, and so a huge number of Sextus.⁵⁶

The second side of the question about identity deals with differentiation, that is with individuation.⁵⁷ To answer the question what is the explanation that an individual is exactly that individual, Leibniz advances the complete concept or the law of series in his maturity.⁵⁸ In his early works, Leibniz adopted four theoretical positions: the whole entity, substantial form, the perception of space-temporal circumstances, the mind.

In *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* (1663), Leibniz maintains that every individual is individuated by its total entity and rejects the theses of individuation through existence, haecceity, or negation. His position is close to that of Suarez.⁵⁹ The notion of "total entity" refers to something compounded of matter and form,⁶⁰ and even though this may look a particular case of individuation, Leibniz probably wanted to have the principle of individuation as mind-independent and internal in the individuated thing.⁶¹

In *De transsubstantione*, Leibniz refers to some scholastic philosophers in support of his view that what differentiates an individual from other individuals is the substantial form: "I demonstrate the numerical identity of substance from the numerical identity of substantial form, in conformity with the principles of the noblest Scholastic and Aristotelian philosophers, those for whom substantial form is the principle of individuation."⁶² His idea is that the substantial form cannot be used universally for all the bodies:

For the divine mind consists of the ideas of all things. Therefore, since the idea of thing A is one thing, the idea of B another, the result is that one idea of the divine mind concurs with

⁵⁵ See Nita (2012).

⁵⁶ Nita (2013, p. 159).

⁵⁷ On the individuation in Leibniz, see McCullough (1996, Chaps. 1–40), Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1999), Mugnai (2001, pp. 36–54), Ariew (2009, pp. 95–115), Mare and Ariew, *supra*, Chap. 2.

⁵⁸ For a different point of view, see Ariew (2009, pp. 95–115).

⁵⁹ "a singular substance does not need as individuating principle anything but its entity, i.e. the intrinsic principles which constitute its entity" (Suarez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, sectio VI, 1; reprint Hildesheim, 1965, vol. 1, p. 180).

⁶⁰ Ariew (2009, p. 101), Garber (2009, p. 58).

⁶¹ Mugnai (2001, p. 37). See also Cover and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1999, pp. 28–29).

⁶² *De transsubstantione* (1668 (?)), A VI, 1, 508–512; L 117.

A, another with B. That the composition of ideas does not constitute parts of the divine mind is elsewhere demonstrated with the example of a point. The idea of Plato is therefore the same as the substantial form of Aristotle. From this it is apparent that there is not one substantial form for all bodies but a different one for different bodies, for as the disposition of nature is varied, the form and idea are also varied; the motion and rest of a body derive from this fact.⁶³

In *The Confession of a Philosopher* the character called the Philosopher maintains that individuation is made through the perception of time and place:

But what do we mean when we count, that is, when we say *this* (for to *count* is to repeat *this*). What is *this*? What is it to determine something? What is it except the perception of time and place (*sensus temporis et loci*), i.e., of motion either, on the one hand, of a given thing in relation to us or to a thing already determined, or, on the other hand, of our own movement (e.g., the motion of our hand or the finger by which we point), or the motion of some already determined thing, like a stick, in order to point to a given thing?⁶⁴

When this character talks about space and time as specifying a *this*, it is a being, say Socrates, that is known to be in a certain place and at a certain time. From the point of view of contemporary metaphysical theories, this position is closer to that which maintains temporal continuity than that of simple individuation by space and time. The Philosopher also maintains that the souls or, as he prefers to name them, minds, “become *these*, by place and time”⁶⁵; the idea is not only that the soul is in time and space, but also that the series of the space-time things and events has a certain identity. If the world had different elements (for example, that Judas did not betray Jesus Christ), it would be a different world and not the world in which we are living (this is the famous law of series from Leibniz’s mature philosophy). In the fragment about individuation, the Philosopher uses the word “*anima*”; one might wonder whether the character expresses Leibniz’s position. Another explanation can be that this is Leibniz’s view, but it is so different from the positions of the scholastics and moderns (as the Theologian says⁶⁶) that Leibniz feels the need to take some measure of precaution. I incline to believe that this influenced his choice of words.

This view is close to the fourth position of individuation from the end of the 70s. Leibniz then maintains that individuation depends on mind not in the sense that our spirit understands the difference between two things, but in the sense that the mind is the principle of individuation. This mental individuation prepares the way to the individuation through the complete concept in his mature metaphysics and the law of the series from the late years. In a fragment from March 18, 1676, Leibniz argues that “matter changes perpetually, because it exists only in virtue of a relation, as I

⁶³*De transsubstantione* (1668 (?)), A VI, 1, 508–512; L 118.

⁶⁴*Confessio philosophi* (1672/1673), A VI, 3, 147; Sleigh Jr., pp. 102–103.

⁶⁵*Confessio philosophi* (1672/1673), A VI, 3, 148; Sleigh Jr., pp. 104–105.

⁶⁶“You speak of astounding things, which, I believe, have not come into the mind of any scholastic even in a dream, but which, nevertheless, no one can disavow, for they are taken from practical experience. For no man reasons otherwise when he must distinguish things that are entirely similar” (*Confessio philosophi* (1672/1673), A VI, 3, 148; Sleigh Jr., pp. 104–105).

have shown in other occasion – i.e. on the ground of the principle of individuation of every thing”.⁶⁷ Thus matter cannot be a principle, because matter changes, and so matter has no unity (and being) and has no identity. This is against the position maintained by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas that matter is the principle of individuation.⁶⁸ The relation to which this text refers is what we already have seen in the Paris notes, namely that the matter is always united with a mind.⁶⁹ Only on this basis can matter receive its unity (and being) and identity. Leibniz connects also individuation with this which shows that he begins to associate the difference between individuals with other elements than matter and form. As for the reference to “other occasion”, it is clear that it is neither *Disputatio de principio individui* nor *Confessio philosophi*. It could be *Meditatio de principio individui*, but it is dated 1 April 1676. Whatever could settle the things from a detectivist-historical point of view, the confirmation of the relationship with mind is explicitly made in the *Meditation on the principle of the individuation*, where Leibniz maintains that

indeed, unless we admit that it is impossible that there should be two things which are perfectly similar, it will follow that the principle of individuation is outside the thing, in its cause. It will also follow that the effect does not involve the cause in accordance with specific reason, but in accordance with its individual reason, and therefore that one thing does not differ from another in itself. But we admit that two different things always differ in themselves in some respect as well, it follows that there is present in any matter something which retain the effect of what precedes it, namely a mind (*mentem*).⁷⁰

3 Conclusions

To sum up, we saw that in discussing the unity and identity of substance, Leibniz employs the term “mind” (*mens*) before 1678–1679 and the term “soul” (*anima, l'ame*) after 1679. This is associated with a break in his thought. The transformation of substantial form from something mind-like in his early metaphysics to something soul-like in the late metaphysics shows a very special evolution of thought. From this point of view, to use indistinctly the terms “mind” (*mens*) and “soul” (*anima*)⁷¹ is to hide a fundamental metaphysical distinction.

There is a possible objection with respect to this point: is not the later use of “soul” (*anima, l'ame*) in continuity with the earlier use of “mind” (*mens*)? Referring to the notion of spirit, one could maintain that the spiritual sphere is incorporeal and immaterial and therefore mind and soul are something of spiritual nature. I think

⁶⁷A VI, 3, 392.

⁶⁸For a different interpretation, see Mugnai (2001), Ariew (2009).

⁶⁹“it is necessary that a mind is added to matter, i.e. that incorporeal substances are supposed to exist” (A VI, 3, 67).

⁷⁰*Meditatio de principio individui* (1 April 1676), A VI, 3, 490; Parkinson, p. 51.

⁷¹See Catherine Wilson (1999, p. 236), Yvon Belaval in Leibniz (1961, p. 25, 29, 35, 37, 39, 71, 77, 83, 87, 89, 93, 101).

that matters are more complex. In the *Monadology*, Leibniz maintains that all simple substances or created monads might be called *entelechies*.⁷² If we wish to designate by soul (*l'ame*) everything that has perceptions and appetites, all simple substances or created monads could be called souls (*les ames*). But since the sentiment is something more than a simple perception, the general terms “monad” or “entelechy” are appropriate to simple substances which only have perception and only those should be called souls (*les ames*) whose perception is more distinct and accompanied by memory.⁷³ But it is the knowledge of necessary and eternal truths which distinguishes us from simple animals and gives us reason and the sciences, lifting us to the knowledge of ourselves and of God. It is this within us which Leibniz calls the rational soul (*l'ame*) or spirit.⁷⁴ Therefore, only a part of the class of animate things has a spiritual nature, and this fact confutes the thought of an equivalence between soul and spirit.

It is obvious that Leibniz's metaphysical tools, grounded in the new theory of substance as something with unity, identity and activity, allowed him to build a complex metaphysical system for explaining our complex world and provide reasons for morality, jurisprudence and theology.

References

- Arthur, Richard. 2003. The Enigma of Leibniz's Atomism. *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* 1: 183–227.
- Ariew, Roger. 2009. Descartes and Leibniz on the Principle of Individuation. In *Branching off. The Early Moderns in Quest for the Unity of Knowledge*, ed. Vlad Alexandrescu, 95–115. Bucharest: Zeta Books.
- Beeley, Philip. 1996. *Kontinuität und Mechanismus*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.
- Blank, Andreas. 2005. *Leibniz: Metaphilosophy and Metaphysics. 1666–1686*. Munich: Philosophia Verlag.
- Blank, Andreas. 2010. *Biomedical Ontology and the Metaphysics of Composite Substances. 1540–1670*. Munich: Philosophia Verlag.
- Blondel, Maurice. 1893. *De vinculo substantiali sed de Substantia composita apud Leibnitium*. Paris: Alcan, 1893; repr. Blondel, Maurice, *Œuvres complètes*, tome I, Paris, PUF, 1995.
- Boehm, A. 1938. *Le Vinculum substantiale chez Leibniz*. Paris: Vrin.
- Brown, Stuart (ed.). 1999. *The young Leibniz*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Cover, J.A. and O'Leary-Hawthorne, J. 1999. *Substance and individuation in Leibniz*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dyck, Corey W. 2005. Descartes and Leibniz on the concept of substance and the possibility of metaphysics. In *Descartes and Cartesianism*, eds. ND Smith, JP Taylor, 21–40. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Fichant, Michel. 1994. *La réforme de la dynamique. De corporum concursu (1678) et autres textes inédits*. Paris: Vrin.
- Fichant, Michel. 1998. *Science et métaphysique dans Descartes et Leibniz*. Paris: PUF.

⁷² *Monadologie* (1714) 18, GP VI, 609–610; L 644.

⁷³ *Monadologie* (1714) 19, GP VI, 610; L 644.

⁷⁴ *Monadologie* (1714) 29, GP VI, 611; L 645.

- Garber, Daniel. 1982. Motion and metaphysics in the young Leibniz. In *Leibniz: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. Michael Hooker, 160–184. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Garber, Daniel. 2009. *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Garber, Daniel. 2011. *Materia*, force, and corporeal substance in Leibniz's philosophy. In *Materia*. A cura di Delfino Giovannozzi, pp. 409–421.
- Gassendi. 1658. *Opera omnia*, 6 vols. Lyon: Laurentii Anisson, Ioan. Bapt. Devenet.
- Gassendi. 1684. *Abrégé de la philosophie*, 7 vols. Ed. Fr. Bernier, second edition, Lyon: Anisson, Posuel et Rigaud.
- Geach, P.T. 1962. *Reference and Generality*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Ishiguro, Hide. 1998. Unity without simplicity: Leibniz on Organisms. *The Monist* 81.4: 534–552.
- Leibniz. 1961. *Confessio philosophi. La profession de foi du philosophe*, ed. Yvon Belaval. Paris: Vrin.
- Kabitz, W. 1909. *Die philosophie des jungen Leibniz*. Hildesheim: Winter.
- Kulstad, M., Loemker, M., Snyder, D. (eds.). 2009. *The Philosophy of the Young Leibniz*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Look, Brandon. 1999. *Leibniz and the 'Vinculum substantiale'*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- McCullough, Laurence B. 1996. *Leibniz on individuals and individuation. The persistence of Premodern Ideas in Modern Philosophy*. Kluwer: Dordrecht.
- Mercer, Christia. 2001. *Leibniz's Metaphysics. Its Origin and Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mercer, Christia. 2004. Leibniz and His Master. The correspondence with Jakob Thomasius. In *Leibniz and His Correspondents*, ed. Paul Lodge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moll, Konrad. 1978. *Der Junge Leibniz*. Stuttgart: Fromann-Holzboog, 3 vols.
- Mugnai, Massimo. 2001. Leibniz on Individuation: From the Early Years to the *Discourse* and Beyond. *Studia Leibnitiana* XXXIII/1: 36–54.
- Nita, Adrian. 2012. Leibniz on subject and individual substance. *Filozofia nauki* XX. 2(78): 57–67.
- Nita, Adrian. 2013. Essays on Theodicy after three hundred years. *Revue roumaine de philosophie* 57, issue 1: 149–160.
- Palkoska, Jan. 2010. *Substance and intelligibility in Leibniz's metaphysics*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Robinet, Andre. 1969. Du nouveau sur la Correspondence Leibniz-Des Bosses. *Studia Leibnitiana* I/2: 83–103.
- Wilson, Catherine. 1999. Atoms, minds and vortices in *De Summa rerum*: Leibniz vis-à-vis Hobbes and Spinoza. In *The young Leibniz and his philosophy (1646–1676)*, ed. Stuart Brown. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Woolhouse, Roger. 2010. *Starting with Leibniz*. London: Continuum.