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# Book Review

Renato Cristin and Kiyoshi Sakai, eds. *Phänomenologie und Leibniz*. Freiburg/ Munchen: Karl Alber, 2000, 350 pages, €56.

Among the historical icons of modern philosophy frequently alluded to in Husserl scholarship, attention to Husserl's own references to Leibniz has been relatively rare.[1] On the one hand, this lack of attention is understandable. In the context of modern philosophy, Descartes, Hume and Kant appear to be the most obvious predecessors to Husserlian phenomenology. On the other hand, Husserl refers to this phenomenological trinity of modern philosophy just as often to criticize them as to praise them. Despite acknowledging his ingenious discovery of the realm of pure subjectivity, Husserl attacks Descartes for treating subjectivity as an ontological primitive on the basis of which an "absurd transcendental realism" (i.e., ontological dualism) is found (cf. *CM* §10). Though a pioneer in the exploration of the empirically given as the foundation of knowledge and truth, Husserl finds fallacious Hume's conclusion in a global skepticism. And despite their shared critical motivation and philosophical purpose, Kant's transcendental philosophy remains for Husserl too "constructive" and, therefore, metaphysically adventurous. In contrast, Husserl's occasional references to Leibniz are surprisingly free of the usual reproaches. Since Leibniz must count as among the wildest speculative metaphysicians in the tradition, and usually considered a hard conceptual reductionist (therefore, an especially egregious constructivist thinker) to boot, one feels pressed to ask: Why refer to Leibniz at all? and, Why not hold Leibniz up as the very model of what is phenomenologically unacceptable?

Husserl's Leibnizian allegiance takes shape in two directions. First, Leibniz gets invoked in Husserl's logical writings – most frequently in *Formale und Transzendentale Logik*. Following Cobb-Stevens, one may think of this aspect of Husserl's Leibnizianism in line with Husserl's reformation and defense of intensional logic. Like Leibniz,[2] Husserl defends a logical approach centered on concepts and meanings against the revitalized advent of the extensional approach among his contemporaries (best represented by Frege and Russell). Second, in the 1920s, Husserl adopts Leibniz' language of the "monadology" in his analyses of the "concrete ego" and intersubjectivity. In contrast to the "transcendence in immanence" of the Cartesian "cogito," Husserl intends the "monad" to capture the totality of phenomenologically available data consti-

tutive of the "concrete ego in its full concreteness." From this perspective, we may think of Husserl's talk of the "monad" as marking his transition from "static" to "genetic" phenomenology. Consequently, Husserl's own "monadology" underscores the amplification of his concerns with passive genesis, the lived body, internal time constitution and the problems of alterity. In this light, an exploration of Husserl's relationship with Leibniz promises to be a rich opportunity for helping us better understand not only the development of genetic phenomenology but the connection between the early and the later Husserl as well.

As a book-length study of Leibniz' phenomenological relevance and import, Cristin and Sakai's *Phänomenologie und Leibniz* should therefore be welcomed as a significant contribution to the scholarship. Before highlighting select entries in this collection, let me begin by praising the design of the book. The book is divided into research and documentary portions. In the documentary portion, Cristin and Sakai furnish two early phenomenological interpretations of Leibniz' metaphysics: first, a short essay from 1921 exemplary of the Leibniz scholar (and a pupil of Husserl's) Dietrich Mahnke's efforts at the phenomenological reformation of Leibnizian metaphysics; and, second, excerpts from Heinrich Ropohl's dissertation on Leibniz' ontology from 1932, which was supervised by Heidegger. The latter document is accompanied by Heidegger's *Gutachten*, in which Heidegger praises Ropohl for his emphasis on the finitude of the Leibnizian "monad," which allows for an ontological alternative to the epistemological (e.g., Cassirer's) and natural-scientific (e.g., Wundt's) approaches. A fairly detailed lexicon of phenomenologists who have been concerned with Leibnizian issues is also included in the documentary portion. Aside from Husserl himself, the most notable among them[3] are Heidegger, who delivered two book-length lectures on Leibniz; and Aron Gurwitsch, whose last book was a full-length study of Leibniz' metaphysics.

The eight articles of the research portion of the volume are arranged in logical order. Intended primarily for students of phenomenology, the book opens with introductory essays on Leibniz' metaphysics by two well-regarded Leibniz scholars, Hans Poser and Klaus Kaehler. Poser helps orient the reader by focussing on Leibniz' multi-layered conception of "phenomena" as it relates to his metaphysics of substance. In so doing, Poser helps us at least appreciate why the phenomenological approach may be an attractive way of interpreting Leibniz' metaphysics. According to Poser, since Leibniz views "phenomena" as the externalized achievement of perceptual subjectivity, we may understand the "monad" as that which – by virtue of its own individuality – constitutes the unity of what would otherwise be the "multiplicity of its perspectival representation of the world" (p. 40).

Along similar historical lines, Kaehler expands upon Poser's emphasis on Leibniz' epistemology and philosophy of mind by pointing out that "one can also say throughout that self-consciousness and 'I' are the paradigm for the

understanding of the conception of the monad" (p. 49). With this – not incontrovertible[4] – claim in place, Kaehler proposes to mediate his discussion of the relationship between Leibniz and Husserl by recourse to Kant. Kaehler proposes to think of both the Leibnizian and the Kantian conceptions of subjectivity along "methodological" lines: subjectivity is to be conceived primarily (though certainly not exclusively) as a set of theoretical acts of reflection on its own intentional achievements, what Kaehler has elsewhere called the "methodische Zwiespalt" (p. 60).[5] Though Kaehler thereby sets up the historical discussion of Leibniz so that it lends itself to a ready comparison with Husserl, he closes with a warning against such comparative efforts in general. According to Kaehler, despite their methodological conception of subjectivity, both Leibniz and Kant leave a remainder: for Leibniz, substance as such is the object of methodologically specifiable reflexive procedures; and, for Kant, the "gedankenlosen Anschauungen" that must be *accompanied* by the "I think" are in no way exhausted by the "I think." On Kaehler's view, because Husserl fails to provide compelling arguments for subjective unity, the scope of what Husserl calls the "monad" winds up co-extensive with the *entire* phenomenological project: "'monad' would then be nothing other than the name for absolute subjectivity, whose true actuality can only be its complete self-knowledge – science as actuality, which 'constructs itself in its own element'" (p. 73).

The next two articles focus on that logical aspect of Husserl's Leibnizianism mentioned above. In his contribution, Guido Zingari focuses on what may be one of the most interesting points of intersection between Leibniz and Husserl: namely, the notion of "possibility." As is well known, according to Leibniz the formal criterion of logical possibility possesses ontological import. As expanded upon by Christian Wolff, such ontological conception of logical possibility has been one of sorest points of contention since Kant's devastating critique. After all, how can merely formal logical possibility generate any *thing* at all? However, as Zingari correctly points out, Leibniz almost surreptitiously introduces into his notion of "possibility" a material content he describes, in turn, as "inclinatio," "tendance" or "prétension" towards existence. Thereby, Leibniz implies a conceptually irreducible additional element that, under conditions of compossibility, compels the expression of the best of all possible worlds. Due to this material content in the formal, for Leibniz cognition need not be purely conceptual and sensation need not be devoid of conceptual content. Accordingly, Leibniz himself introduces the talk of "essence" in contrast to "concepts" and "ideas." In this light, one might have expected Zingari to orient his discussion around Husserlian "essences" and "intuition." But surprisingly, Zingari does not do this.

I found the essay by Jaromir Danek and Christian Möckel to be quite incisive and useful in furthering our understanding of Husserl's own views on Leibniz. Based on an interpretation of Leibniz' notion of "mathesis universalis,"

Danek and Möckel propose to explain Husserl's own conception from his writings on formal ontology. To this end, Danek and Möckel focus on the diversity in epistemological strength between analytic (apodictic) and synthetic (probable) truths in Leibniz, "which simply make up the poles of monadological panlogicism" (p. 103). In so doing, they outline a basic segregation between Husserl's probabilistic coherence theory of scientific truth, which is concerned with the formal relationship between concepts, and its material correlate in subjective intentional achievements.

The remaining four articles address that second aspect of phenomenological Leibnizianism: the assimilation of Leibniz' language of the "monadology." Julia V. Irlbarne offers an interesting way of looking at the notion of the "Monadenall" as a kind of teleological and regulative idea. Kiyoshi Sakai's focus on Leibniz' perspectivalism to discuss Heidegger's notion of "Sichzeigen" suffers from the usual problems of the perspectivalist interpretation: namely, since Leibniz denies the substantial reality of space, his perspectival imageries remain little more than metaphoric. Consequently, Sakai winds up explaining the obscure with the vague.

In his article, Hiroshi Kojima provides a sweeping overview of Husserl's conception of the "monad." Accordingly, Husserl's "monad" must be understood as the immediate result of the reduction (Kojima goes so far as to claim that "in the later Husserl, the phenomenological reduction always already signifies a reduction to the monad" [p. 184]). The "monad" denotes an internal relationship between subject and world (p. 189), a relationship Kojima correctly orients around a centralized lived body (p. 191). On this reading, the "monad" must be construed as "essentially intersubjective" (p. 202). Kojima thereby shows off the breadth of scope and crystallizes the significance intended in Husserl's own "monadology."[6] As far as the collection goes, Kojima's is clearly the best article.[7]

The research portion of the volume concludes with an article by one of its editors, Renato Cristin. Along with Kaehler and Kojima, Cristin is one of very few people who have devoted themselves to a phenomenological reformation of Leibniz' metaphysics;[8] thus, his contribution merits special attention. In it, Cristin calls for nothing less than a "paradigm shift" in phenomenology (232ff.). Though erudite and tantalizing, Cristin's article is also desultory and inappropriately grandiose, while offering little in the way of an argument that would compel assent. In fact, he winds up endorsing what he diagnoses as a "paradox, in which the I is at once both constitutive of intersubjectivity and is constituted by intersubjectivity" (p. 233). First of all, Cristin's formulation does not count as a paradox but as a circularity: its problem is not that it is wrong, but that it is uninformative. Second of all, regardless of whether it is a paradox or a circle, why would anybody feel compelled by it? On the contrary, were Cristin right, one should feel dissuaded from endorsement. But I see little reason to believe Cristin is right, since there are no real arguments to

be detected in his favor; nor does he enjoy any encouragement from the foregoing articles. Instead, like Sakai, Cristin gets himself caught up in the web of Leibniz' metaphoric imagery (in Cristin's case, the image of the monad reflecting the totality of the universe of which it is stipulated to be a part), which (on Leibniz' own advice) should never be read literally. Indeed, when literally read, such images can only count as what Bertrand Russell mocked as a "fairy tale;" and precisely such metaphysical fairy tales remain the target of phenomenological critique.

Regardless, should there be any further interest in this direction of research, Sakai and Cristin's *Phänomenologie und Leibniz* serves well as an introductory reference guide, and some of its research contributions shed a good amount of light on this minor tradition in 20th century Leibniz scholarship. However, the question of whether or not the two aspects of phenomenological Leibnizianism – i.e., the logical conceptualism and the monadology – enjoy an inherent connection with one another is a question the volume leaves open ended.

## Notes

1. Cf. Cristin, Renato. "Phänomenologie und Monadologie. Husserl und Leibniz," pp. 163–174; Kaehler, Klaus. "Die Monade in Husserls Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität," pp. 692–709; Mertens, Karl. "Husserls Phänomenologie der Monade. Bemerkungen zu Husserls Auseinandersetzung mit Leibniz."
2. Leibniz was a proponent of the more traditional intensional approach despite his acquaintance with Arnauld, whose Port-Royal logic is the origin of the extensional approach.
3. Merleau-Ponty, in whose later writings a certain sensitivity to Leibnizian concerns is clearly discernable, is conspicuously omitted.
4. Due largely to the influence of Russell's dismissal of Leibniz' concerns with epistemology and the philosophy of mind, the "subjectivist" interpretation is rarely broached by Anglo-American scholars.
5. Kaehler, Klaus. *Leibniz. Der methodische Zwiespalt der Metaphysik der Substanz.*
6. Along related lines of genetic research, I recommend Kojima's *Monad and Thou.*
7. Though Kojima doesn't deal much with Leibniz.
8. Cf. Cristin, Renato. *Heidegger and Leibniz: Reason and the Path.*

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