Mis-readings of Leibniz: Deleuze and Whitehead against Badiou

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Abstract:
The paper is motivated by the desire to identify exactly what Leibniz has contributed to Deleuze and Whitehead’s particular version of (non-organic) vitalism. This reading of Leibniz is compared with those of Badiou (with a little help from Heidegger, who specifically demonstrates the dependence of logic on ontology rather than of ontology on logic). The paper compares each of these philosopher’s interpretations of the fundamental principles that ground Leibnizian monadology, with the intention of highlighting the implications of these readings for political theory. In particular, Badiou’s notion of a schema of torsion is examined and distinguished from Deleuze’s notions of actualization and realization.

Introduction

The political motivation for this paper is straightforward. In his review of Logic and Existence, Jean Hyppolite’s reconstruction of Hegelian philosophy, Deleuze (1953) foreshadows the necessity to construct a philosophy of difference that does not “take things up to contradiction”. Along with his interpretations of Duns Scotus, Hume, Kant, Spinoza, Whitehead and Bergson, Deleuze’s analysis of Leibniz’s philosophy of expression makes a major contribution to this task of constructing an alternative and non-organic form of Vitalism, designed to ultimately displace the more familiar organicist tradition that can be traced from Rousseau’s conception of the social contract through to the German Idealism of Hegel and his contemporaries.

Under the latter form of vitalism, the distinction between the (externally caused and atomistic) machine and the (self-caused and internally related) organism carries over to that holding between the state and civil society respectively (Quadrio, 2009). Under the former, the genesis of products (Modes) from their respective constitutive essences (Attributes) is (integrated) through Substance as the infinite power to act, which in theoretical terms is conceived genealogically as both an immanent cause and as self-cause (Substance acting through its essence). A closely related paper (Juniper, forthcoming), examines how Deleuze constructs this genealogy from a close reading of Kant’s three Critiques (specifically, the Third Critique’s “Analytic of the Beautiful”, and both the Transcendental argument and the “Transcendental Dialectic” in the second half of the First Critique) distinguishing it from Badiou’s conception of Kantian philosophy as
a “subtractive ontology”1. This paper will compare Deleuze’s reading of Leibniz with that of Badiou, with the objective of identifying the specifically Leibnizean sources of this (non-organic) vitalism contrasting this reading with that of Badiou. A more detailed examination of the political implications of such a vitalism, both in theoretical and practical terms, must remain the task of subsequent research2.

In his work on Leibniz, Heidegger (1984) comments explicitly on the diversity of interpretations of Leibniz’s monadological metaphysics, suggesting that diversity of this kind is true of all authentic philosophy. The result of any effort to distil the essence of Leibniz in such a way that it would be agreed upon by all, he reasons, would surely be something dead.

Alain Badiou (2005: 315), for one, finds in Leibniz the paradoxical combination of a “prodigiously modern thought” with a “conscious conservative will”. In actuality, however, he suggests that this will served as a prelude to Leibniz’s more radical anticipations because inventive freedom could only be exercised once an adequate foundation for thinking could be guaranteed.

In *Being and Event* Badiou provides us with a series of philosophical, poetic and political examples of what he calls the “generic event”. Examples of such “truth-events” range from the October Revolution for Lenin, Crick and Watson’s discovery of the double-helix, and St. Paul’s revelatory “road to Damascus” experience of the truth of the resurrection, through to Picasso and Braque’s discovery of synthetic cubism. As Bosteel (2001, 2002) reveals, Badiou’s manner of grasping the event is closely related to his earlier thinking about ‘schemas of torsion’. For him, Rousseau’s notion of the social pact provides one of the clearest political examples of torsion at play. Badiou homes in on the apparent contradiction in Rousseau’s conception of the social pact as something that is both presupposed and constituted by the ‘general will’. He discerns in this paradoxical torsion the signature of the evental form: namely, once constituted, it’s being becomes what is always and already presupposed (Badiou, 2005: 345-6). Thus, for Rousseau the body politic operates as a supernumerary multiple for which the ultra-one of the event is the social pact! The prospect of a self-belonging of the body politic to the very multiple that it is, could never violate the pact as it would destroy itself! In this manner the pact supplements the state of nature insofar as it is interposed between nature (void) and itself.

Badiou discerns the presence of a similar “schema in torsion” at play in the work of other philosophers and poets, including Leibniz. In the work of the latter philosopher, Badiou suggests that torsion is instituted by the Leibnitzian question, *par excellence*, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” On the basis of there being something rather than

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1 Similar interpretations of Deleuze along these Kantian lines can be found in Kerslake (2002), Shaviro (2009) and Smith (1997). Badiou’s work, however, is not examined in any of these papers.

2 In Juniper (forthcoming) it is argued that Deleuze’s notion of double causality provides vitalism with a materialist framework for transforming the traditional organicist dichotomy between the freedom and autonomy of noumenal spirit and the mechanism of phenomenal nature. Moreover, it is shown that this transformative notion can be infused with a mathematical robustness through the (non-metaphorical) deployment of the category theoretic concept of an adjunction, insofar as the latter is assigned the role of an Idea in both the Kantian and Lautmanian sense of this term.
nothing, he observes that Leibniz is able to infer that essence, in and of itself, strives for existence or that logic desires the being of what conforms to it. While the axioms or principles that Leibniz constructs impose the question, Badiou observes, the complete response afforded by the Leibnizian system of monadology, which supposes the axioms, also confirms them. By way of justifying this observation the following section of the paper will largely draw on Heidegger’s reading of Leibniz, examining the latter’s conceptions of substance and knowledge. It will lay bare Heidegger’s core objective, which is to demonstrate the dependence of logic on ontology rather than of ontology on logic. This section sets the context for an interrogation of different interpretations of Leibniz’s underlying principles or axioms on the part of Heidegger, Russell, Broad, and Deleuze. Badiou’s reading of Leibniz is examined in the fourth section of the paper and conclusions follow.

Leibniz on Substance and Knowledge

This section of the paper draws on Heidegger’s masterful interpretation of Leibniz for two purposes. First, Heidegger clearly demonstrates how Leibniz takes over from Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics the crucial distinction they make between active and passive power. Specifically, Heidegger shows how this distinction informs Leibniz’s crucial notion of conatus or striving, the conceptualisation of pre-hension as a “gripping-in-advance”, and his subsequent analysis of processes of actualisation and realization. Second, in clarifying the step-by-step unfolding of knowledge and judgement in Leibniz’s logic, Heidegger argues, against both Hegel and the seemingly opposed tradition of logical positivism, that logic must be grounded in metaphysics rather than metaphysics in logic. This claim justifies the efforts of Deleuze and Whitehead to fashion a metaphysics of difference that does not take things up to contradiction.

Heidegger contends that, at the centre of Leibniz’s monadology is an attempt to construct a positive rather than a negative definition of substance. While Descartes had defined substance as the thing, which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist, Spinoza had, in like manner, defined substance as that which is in itself and is conceived by itself, that of which the concept does not require the concept of another thing from which it needs to be formed. Leibniz discovered the positive conception that he required in Giordano Bruno’s notion of the monad (μοναδ): a Greek term conveying the characteristics of simplicity, unity, oneness, individuality, and solitude.

Monads are conceived as formal “atoms”, ‘little gods”, or “animating points”: far from requiring any unification in themselves, they are that which gives unity insofar as they are primordially simple points of active force (vis primitiva) or principles of formation (forma or ειδος) (Heidegger, 1984, 77; citing Leibniz, 1969, 482). Monads grasp themselves along with perception, presenting the world from a unique viewpoint so that each monad is the universe in concentrated form. Crucially, although monads are oriented in advanced towards a pre-disposed harmony, they share with all finite substance a passivity or resistance, which is correlated with what the monad is not but could well be. This negative and finite aspect of the drive characterises what Leibniz understands by prime matter (materia prima) and, in addition, conditions the monad’s relationship to the resistance or weight associated with secondary matter (materia secunda, massa).
For both Leibniz and the Scholastics Divine knowledge becomes the cognitive ideal for humans. This knowledge, however, includes both what is possible and what is or will become actual. The distinction Aquinas made between the active disposition to act and the passive disposition towards being formed carries over to a twofold distinction between active and passive forms of power or *potentia*. In Leibniz, this active force (*vis primitiva*) is embodied in his conception of the drive (*conatus*), conceived as a self-propulsive striving or appetite. Over and above this appetitive conception, however, Heidegger introduces the correlated Leibnizian notion of pre-hension, which he defines as a “gripping in advance”. Prehensions unify every possible multiplicity by anticipating them in advance, in the form of a temporal successiveness. Thus, what becomes unified are transitions fromprehension toprehension. It will be revealed below that although Badiou accepts this anticipatory notion of prehension, he completely ignores the distinction between active and passive power, which will subsequently be taken up by Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze and Whitehead.

Heidegger (1984, 57) points out that, for the Scholastics, God’s knowledge is not achieved in a succession of acts; rather, it is an immediate seeing of things in their presentness. He reconstructs the divine chain of inference, which flows from simplicity, to immutability, to eternity, to present intuition (*intuitus praesens*). This chain is recapitulated in Leibniz’s system (1969, 291), as depicted in the following diagram:

- Knowledge
  - Obscure
    - Does not suffice for recognizing the thing represented
  - Clear
    - Confused
      - Inadequate
        - When every ingredient making up a distinct concept is not known distinctly (is not carried through to the end)
    - Distinct
    - Adequate
      - Symbolic
      - Intuitive
        - When it is possible to think all the notions composing a complex notion
        - The mode of appropriating the highest state of analysis

Heidegger (1984, 59-65) explains that, for both Leibniz and the Scholastics, an obscure notion is one that does not suffice for recognizing the thing represented. Knowledge is confused when the marks distinguishing one thing from others cannot be enumerated in
succession. Distinct knowledge, which arises when we have sufficient marks or characteristics to distinguish one thing from another is adequate when every ingredient that makes up a distinct concept is known itself distinctly. Whenever our knowledge is adequate we have a priori knowledge of a possibility, for if we have carried out our analysis to the end and no contradiction has appeared the concept is obviously possible. In adequate knowledge we grasp what the thing is in its essence or inherent possibility or compatibility. Finally, intuitive knowledge obtains for a complex notion when we can think simultaneously all the simple notions composing it.

Against the thrust of the thesis set out in his lectures on Leibniz (1969, 103)—that: (1) logic is grounded in metaphysics; and that (2) logic is nothing other than the metaphysics of truth—Heidegger observes that philosophers (such as Russell, and apparently at times, Leibniz) who hold fast to the notion of the primacy of logic over metaphysics argue that: (i) logic is a free-floating ultimate “thinking”; (ii) logic thus has primacy over all the sciences; and (iii) even metaphysics as a knowing is subordinate to logic (Leibniz, 1969, 104).

The rest of Heidegger’s text lapses into an analysis of Dasein, which he conceives in terms of its “preliminary understanding of being and dispersal into bodiliness and sexuality”, a dispersal that can only occur in accordance with a structure of historicity and in terms of a “thrownness” into nature, here understood as a multiplicity (Heidegger, 1984, 138). These multiple beings, however, among which Dasein is thrown and to which Dasein belongs are, nevertheless surpassed by Dasein. This is because Dasein possesses an intrinsic possibility of transcendence as being-in-the-world: a process through which Dasein makes itself known to itself primordially as freedom in self-understanding. This self-understanding in turn has a threefold ecstatic, temporal structure in the form of the “now”, the “no-longer-now”, and the “not-yet-now”, the aspects of which are nonetheless bound together in a unity that is itself ecstatic and autonomous, in the sense that it produces the horizon of possibility in general (see Heidegger, 1984, 207-8).

Briefly Heidegger returns to Leibniz’s monadology for comparison. Insofar as Leibniz conceived of the two properties of monads—appetition and perception—as transcendental structures, the latter’s conception only departs from his own, Heidegger suggests, in two essential ways. First, Heidegger (1984, 209-10) notes that Leibniz takes the Cartesian ego cogito as the basis of his conception of the monad. Second, he observes that for Leibniz monads are enclosed in a sphere incorporating the whole world-as-immanent into their contents. Thus Monads need no widows, not because they have everything within, but ultimately because transcendence is an ecstatic temporalization conceived by Heidegger as a self-opening and expanding into the world such that intra-wordly beings become manifest for Dasein. And freedom understands itself on the basis of Dasein’s capacity for ecstatic self-projection, always holding this capacity before itself as a responsibility (Heidegger, 1984, 213-14). The origin of the ground, for Heidegger is thus freedom as the ‘freedom for ground’, in the ‘for’ of the temporalization of the understanding of being.
Deleuze on Leibniz

In contrast to this Heideggerian reading—informed as it is by his earlier work on *Being and Time*, Deleuze is more influenced by Couturat, Bergson and Whitehead. In Chapter Six of *The Fold* Deleuze sets out a Whiteheadian reading of prehension, styling the latter philosopher as the true successor to Leibniz (i.e. leader of the school). For Deleuze (1993, 77-8), both Whitehead and Leibniz concur in the view that the event has four components. The first component is extension conceived as the stretching of one element over its following elements. As such, the event is the whole for which the elements are the parts; but a whole conceived as an infinite series without final term or limit; a vibration with an infinity of harmonics or submultiples. The second component of this extensive series is its series of intensive properties—height, timbre, tint, saturation—each converging towards a limit, with limits establishing relations of conjunction. The third component is the individual conceived, for Whitehead, as both creativity and a “concrescence” of parts or datum. Here, conjunctions arise through prehension conceived as an individual unity drawing together antecedents and concomitants, moving from world to subject, fromprehended datum to the one whoprehends. Prehension in turn is threefold, characterised by the subjective form or manner in which the datum is ‘folded’ into the actively prehending subject; subjective aim assuring the passage from one datum to another; and satisfaction as a self-enjoyment of the subject. Finally, there are eternal objects, which guarantee the continuity of, and duration within, the flux of prehensions.

Deleuze (1993, 79) notes that for Whitehead, eternal objects as pure potential must be distinguished from prehensions, which are always current forms (although can be potential in relation other prehensions). Prehensions, however, do not grasp other prehensions without apprehending (feeling) eternal objects: a process which produces an “ingression” into the event (sometimes in the form of qualities, sometimes as figures determining extension, and sometimes as things). These conceptions, Deleuze (1993, 80) contends, are mirrored in Leibniz’s notion of monads as current forms actualising virtualities (i.e. as innate ideas, perceived substantive qualities, and figures of extension).

Nevertheless, the critical difference between Whitehead, the Leibnitzian, and Leibniz himself entails the phenomenon of incompossibility. Deleuze notes that although Whitehead’s prehensions can draw upon other prehensions or exclude them, they always operate within the same universe. For Leibniz, in contrast, bifurcations and the divergence of series generate borders between incompossible worlds. While all incompossible monads include a single and same world, God compares worlds and chooses the richest world possible. Accordingly, for Leibniz, the world is both a virtuality (of actualised monads and souls) and a possibility (realized in matter or bodies) (Deleuze, 1993, 104-5). While actualisation is distinct operating through distribution, realization is collective operating by resemblance. The relationship between the each and the every of the monad and the one of the body is explained through harmony. In the sphere of appurtenance, of the self, is found the mark of what the self does not possess: extrinsic and primary matter as the very requirement of having a body. The pre-established harmony of soul and body rules their real distinction, while union of soul and body determines their inseparability. Deleuze (1993, Chapter 8) subsequently speaks of “two floors” in the Baroque house: the upper floor of monads concerned with actualization of
the virtual, with each monad expressing the sum of the world, and the lower floor concerned with realization in relation to the material universe of bodies.

For Leibniz, this dichotomy between the two floors carries over to perception itself. Deleuze (1993, 86) comments on the fact that the requirement of having a body is sometimes based on the principle of passivity, obscurity and confusion and at other times on activity, clarity and distinction. Leibniz’s reconciliation of this dichotomy, he suggests, is achieved through a distinction between micro-perceptions (“pricklings” or little folds) that are minute, obscure and confused in passing from one perception to another, and macro-perceptions (large folds or drapes) that are conscious, clear, and distinct.

Far from being a totalization or relation of part to whole, he suggests, the movement from the molecular to the molar is rather one from the ordinary to the remarkable (Deleuze, 1993, 87-8). A conscious perception is produced when at least two heterogeneous parts enter into a differential relation that determines a singularity, as when the colour green is perceived through a differential relation between yellow and blue. Thus clarity comes of obscurity and darkness and continually plunges back into it. Differential relations perform the role of a “filter”, but one that changes at each level and from one monad to the next (Deleuze, 1993, 89, 91). As we consider more evolved monads, the differential relations of a deepening order become more numerous determining “a zone of clear expression that is both more extensive and increasingly hermetic” (Deleuze, 1993, 92).

In response to the rhetorical question “Why can’t we get along without bodies?” Deleuze (1993, 96) introduces the notion of resemblance: as minute perception are to conscious perceptions so too are vibrations of matter to the organ. Resemblance “is equated with what resembles, not with what is resembled”, likeness as a model “makes matter be that which it resembles. The calculus of differential relations has a psychological rather than a physical reality: differentials are always differentials of consciousness. In contrast, bodies—which possess two essential characteristics: the power of diminishing infinitely and the power of being in a constant flux—work through communication and propagation “like the ripples a stone creates when it is thrown in the water” (Deleuze, 1993, 97).

Deleuze summarizes the stages of Leibniz’s deductive reasoning as follows: having posited the monad’s requirement of having a body (in the form of primary matter), Leibniz argues that perception, insofar as can vary from obscurity to clarity, manifests a relation of resemblance with the material receptor that receives vibrations. These

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3 See Russell (1937, “The Labyrinth of the Continuum”) for a nuanced reading of Leibnizian ‘virtuality’. In this virtual context, Russell recognises the crucial role of the notion of repetition, which is discrete where aggregate parts are discernible (as in number) and continuous where the parts are indeterminate. However, Russell observes that Leibniz denies that anything actual is continuous in this indeterminant sense: points and instants are not actual parts of time and space, which are themselves ideal or virtual. As such, nothing extended can be a true component of an aggregate of substance, which is actual. Confusion “comes from looking for actual parts in the order of the possible, and indeterminant parts in the aggregate of actuals” (Russell, 1937, 111). For ideals, the finite whole is logically prior to the parts into which it is divided whereas for actuals such as substance the aggregate is logically subsequent to the individuals which compose it. Leibnizian conceptions of this nature clearly influenced Whitehead in his interpretation of the granular nature of the continuum.
receptors, which are called organs or organic bodies, constitute the vibrations they receive to infinity. While the physical mechanism of perception is not identical to its psychic counterpart, the latter resembles the former. Using this resemblance as a model, God creates matter in conformity with what resembles him: “an infinitely vibratory matter (of infinitely tiny parts) in which receptive organs are distributed everywhere, swarming” (Deleuze, 1993, 98) Thus, God endows monads with organs and an organic body corresponding to its perceptions. Significantly, it is this aspect of Leibnizian thought that Badiou singles out in his commentary.

Interpretations of Leibniz’s Principles
Deleuze (1993, 68) argues that the crisis-ridden character of the Baroque period finds expression in a changing role for philosophy as a vehicle of legitimation. The philosopher has not yet become the Kantian judge, nor the empiricist Inquisitor; rather he is a lawyer developing new principles with which to justify the world. The efflorescence of principles in Leibniz’s thought, for Deleuze, reflects the replacement of the Platonic Good by a jurisprudential ‘theodicy’.

For Badiou (2005, 316), the two fundamental principles of Leibnizian thought, which guarantee the submission of being to language, are those of non-contradiction and sufficient reason. The first principle pertains to being-possible and the second to being-existent. In contrast, Deleuze contends (1993, 42) that for Leibniz,

The concept is not a simple logical being, but a metaphysical being; it is not a generality or a universality, but an individual; it is not defined by an attribute, but by predicates-as-events.

In this light, Deleuze (1993, 52) reveals that for Leibniz predicates “are never attributes except in the case of infinite forms or first quiddities; and even there they are more like conditions of possibility for the notion of God, non-relations that would condition any possible relation.” Relations in turn are types of event. Attributes, however, express a quality and designate an essence. In contrast, the predicate is a verb that is irreducible to either a copula or an attribute. Deleuze notes (53) that it was the Stoics who first raised the event to the status of the concept by making it the incorporeal predicate of a subject of the proposition: “not ‘the tree is green,’ but ‘the tree greens’”. In this way, propositions, for both the Stoics and Leibniz, state a ‘manner of being’ of the thing. This notion of the proposition also amounts to a clear rejection of the Aristotelian coupling of ‘essence-accident’. Deleuze (1993, 44) warns us that,

Leibniz’s principles are not universal empty forms; nor are they hypostases or emanations that might turn them into beings. But they are the determination of classes of beings.

The principle of identity makes us becomes aware of a class of beings, that of the Identicals, which are undefinables in themselves, perhaps existing beyond our ken. The

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4 See Russell (1937, 4) for a slightly different reading of Leibniz’s principles.
identicals, as infinite in themselves, are neither whole nor have parts, they are fundamental qualities or absolute forms, maintaining no relation with each other, immune to contradiction by each other (Deleuze, 1993, 44-5):

They might be called the “attributes” of God. There we find in fact the only thesis that ties Spinoza to Leibniz, their common manner of requiring in the ontological proof of the existence of God a detour that Descartes had confidence enough to cut short: before concluding that an infinitely perfect being necessarily exists, it had to be shown that it is possible (a real definition), and that it does not imply contradiction. Now it is precisely because all absolute forms are incapable of being contradicted that they can belong to the same Being and, in being able to, they effectively belong to it. Since they are forms, their real distinction is formal and carries no ontological difference among beings to which each might be attributed: they are all attributed to a single and same Being that is both ontologically one and formally diverse.

In the Leibnizian system, Deleuze (1993, 57) discerns a hierarchy of beings ranging from absolutely simple Identicals through relatively simple Definables, to limitatively simple Conditionables, to wholly simple Individuals. For each class the nature of the relevant predicates changes from the forms and attributes of Identicals, governed by auto-inclusion; to relations among Definables, governed by reciprocal inclusion; to the relations and laws of Requisites, governed by unilateral and localizable inclusion; to the relations with existence of Events or Modes, governed by non-localizable though unilateral inclusion.

Associated with each class is a type of infinity and a unique principle: infinity by itself and the principle of contradiction for Identicals; infinity by case and the principle of similitude for Definables; infinite series with an internal limit and the principle of sufficient reason for Conditionables; and infinite series with an outer limit and the principle of indiscernibles for Individuals.

Deleuze (1993, 45) further contends that each of the levels in the hierarchy of classes of being is derivative from Identicals as primitive notions, which comprise the first level. The Definables at level two are defined by two primary beings in a simple relation. Conditionables at level three are “composed of composite derived beings defined by three primaries, or by a simple primary and a simple derived being in a relation that is itself composite” (Deleuze, 1993, 45).
Leibniz’s System According to Deleuze

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Beings</th>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Infinity</th>
<th>Principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identicals (Absolutely simple)</td>
<td>Forms or attributes</td>
<td>God</td>
<td>Auto-inclusion</td>
<td>Infinity by itself</td>
<td>Principle of contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definables (relatively simple)</td>
<td>Relation</td>
<td>Extensions or Sizes (wholes or parts)</td>
<td>Reciprocal Inclusion</td>
<td>Infinity by cause</td>
<td>Principle of similitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditionables (limitatively simple)</td>
<td>Requisites</td>
<td>Intensions or things (having degrees or limits)</td>
<td>Inclusion unilateral localizable</td>
<td>Infinite Series with internal limit</td>
<td>Principle of sufficient reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals (wholly simple)</td>
<td>Events or Modes (relations with existence)</td>
<td>Existsents or Substances</td>
<td>Inclusions unilateral non-localizable</td>
<td>Infinite series with outer limit</td>
<td>Principle of indiscernibles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deleuze (1993) p. 57

Following the lead of Couturat, Deleuze (1993, 57) observes that each of the principles described above are all variants of the principle of reason. In relation to Identicals, the principle of sufficient reason rules in the form of the principle (or “reciprocal”) of non-contradiction, which suffices as the reason for these absolutely simple beings. The principle of indiscernibles, in turn “is only the explication of Reason at the level of wholly simple individuals”; whereas the principle of similitude is the explication of Reason at the level of Definables. Deleuze (1993, 58) goes on to suggest that two poles—one in which the principles are folding themselves together and another in which they are unfolding—account for the fact that “Everything is always the same thing” on one and the same basis while “Everything is distinguished by degree, everything differs by manner”.

Heidegger’s (1984, 52) reading of Leibniz also begins by recognizing the same two principles: truths of reasoning follow the law or principle of non-contradiction, whereas truths of fact follow the principle of sufficient reason. Heidegger (1984, 53) observes that, with some justification, the Leibnizians Wolff and Baumgarten went so far as to derive the latter from the former. Nevertheless, he proceeds by distinguishing a first or primary class of truths, directly manifesting identity, from a second derived class, which included necessary truths, which could be reducible to original identities, and contingent truths, which only admitted of a progressive and never fully accomplished reduction to identities. Primary truths are thus groundless in the sense that they need no grounding or deduction. In contrast, necessary and contingent truth are in need of grounding. As such

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5 See C. D. Broad (1975, 11-13) for a somewhat different interpretation that distinguishes between four key principles in Leibniz’s thought. The first of these—what he calls the Principle of Grounded Connection—which requires that there must always be some foundation for the connexion between the terms of any true proposition, and this foundation must reside in the notions of the terms is, for all intents and purposes, identical to Heidegger’s principle of demonstrating grounds and Deleuze’s Principle of Reason.
they fall under the principle of reason (principium rationis) or better, under the principle of demonstrating grounds (principium reddendae rationis). Insofar as necessary truths are subject to the principle of non-contradiction as the principle of reductability, they too fall under the principle of demonstrating grounds, which must accordingly be deemed more primordial. It is apparent that Heidegger’s principle of demonstrating grounds, and Deleuze’s Principle of Reason are one and the same. Heidegger’s merit (1984, 54; 57), however, is to raise concerns about this essential principle on the basis that it is inadequately clarified in the work of Leibniz, especially in regard to the connection the latter attempts to establish between reason, ground, concept, truth, and being. The second half of Heidegger’s lecture series attempts to articulate this connection by relating truth to transcendence, ground to freedom, concept to schema, and the copula to being. In so doing, he predicates logic on metaphysics and ontology, rather than ontology on logic. Heidegger observes (1984, 55) that the principle of reason,

[…] holds first rank, albeit unclearly, among the principles.
A connection emerges between reason, or ground, and truth and being, with reference to identity.

Other metaphysical principles—those of harmony, constancy, fittingness, existence, and the identity of indiscernibles are all connected to it, in such a way that it takes its bearings from the scientia Dei, which operates as an immediate, present intuition to which all things are subject in their presentness.

Badiou’s Reading of Leibniz
Badiou contends that, for Leibniz, being-possible could only reside as an Idea in the infinite understanding of God. As such, it would be entirely subordinate to pure logic. Moreover, the notion of intrinsic perfectibility authorized the urge of being-possible towards existence. Nevertheless, in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason, what is presented must be thought according to a suitable reason for its presentation as what it is compared to what it otherwise could have been. In this regard, Leibniz clearly rejected the notion of any role for chance (as represented by the Epicurean notion of the clinamen). Instead, truth must be pursued to the point where reason is given for reasons, even where this requires the asymptotic resolution of complex ideas into their primitives (tautologies or identical propositions), by analogy with the recursive construction of an infinite series (Badiou, 2005, 317). While local conditions and dispositions certainly come into play, for Leibniz God serves as the global limit term: being-in-totality is to be found in the nameability of what there is; irrespective of whether this is accomplished through the language of logic, via a local empirical analysis, or through the global calculation of maxima in accordance with the principle that God produces the maximum of being through a minimum of means. As the constructability of the constructible, God designates the place of laws of the nameable.

Moreover, Badiou observes that, for Leibniz, “the entire regime of being can be inferred from the confrontation between these two axioms and one sole question: Why is there something rather than nothing? For Badiou, the response that is proffered corresponds to that of a “schema in torsion”: on the basis of there being something rather than nothing it is inferred that essence, in an of itself, strives for existence or that logic desires the being
of what conforms to it. While the axioms impose the question, the complete response, which supposes the axioms, also confirms them.

At this point in his exposition, Badiou (2005, 317-18) describes the efforts Leibniz is obliged to make in excluding any ‘indiscernibility’ between two real, absolute beings in an existing world. This is because all difference, for a constructivist, can only be attributed to beings on the basis of language. That is, for constructivism being and name coincide “only insofar as the name, within the place of the complete language named God, is the effective construction of the thing” (Badiou, 2005, 320). As such, indiscernability in regard to any chosen ontological predicate represents the ultimate obstacle to thought.

Badiou next introduces the problem of the continuum into his deliberations. For Badiou, Leibniz controls the excess permitted by the assumption that natural being is infinitely divisible, through the introduction of singularities. Within the Leibnizian region of inflexion the imagination, which only perceives denumerable “leaps and discontinuities”, is threatened by a non-denumerable infinitude. As Badiou sees it, Leibniz’s response to such a threat is to render these infinite gradations commensurable through the operations of a Divine Mathematics, which conceives of them as being “so many coordinates of the same curve” situated within the mind of God. Irrespective of whether we are dealing with atoms or the void itself, in Leibniz’s system their indiscernibility or ‘indifferent difference’ must be rejected, for matter is more perfect than the void, and if the void exists then language is incomplete. Atoms of substance do exist, but these are monads conceived as natural unities destitute of parts (Badiou, 2005, 322). For Leibniz, then, such chains of belonging without ultimate terms (which can thus be sub-divided without end), would clearly be prohibited by the Axiom of Foundation in his set-theoretic ontology. To get around this problem himself, however, Leibniz falls back on the pre-Cantorian notion of monads as “halting points”. Infinite divisibility is both legitimated and tamed, as it were, by conceiving of the proliferating infinitude of monads as so many “metaphysical points”.

Badiou, however, argues that this solution has a clear down-side for, “no void operates to ensure the suture of multiples to their being as such” (Badiou, 2005, 321). For him, this attempt at a solution merely defers the problem by making the monads themselves indiscernible. Accordingly, he suggests that Leibniz is forced to make them qualitatively discernible (i.e. as pure names), as pure interiorities, or figures, and ultimately as logical subjects “without windows”. In this singular form, they could only be recognised as a product of representation by the state, much like individual voters who are counted-as-one within an electoral system. For Badiou, therefore, it is this the absence of the void in Leibniz’s system, which is ultimately responsible for the latter’s political conservatism.

In Logics of Worlds, the second volume of his magnum opus, Badiou returns to the consideration of Leibnizian metaphysics. After citing Leibniz’s (1696) maxim that “[i]t is always and everywhere in all things just as it is here”, Badiou (2009, 325; citing Leibniz’s 1696 Letter to Sophie), argues that Leibniz’s thoughts revolve around two things: unity and infinity. From his own perspective, this amounts to a question of what
the world must be, for the infinite of its detail to be so firmly enveloped by the One that
everything, everywhere is the same thing. In response Badiou suggests that the new
calculus played a crucial role in Leibniz’s conception of unity and infinity for, “if a series
converges on a limit it can be thought both as the infinite detail of its terms and as the one
of the limit that recapitulates it”.

Moreover, he suggests that Leibnizian thought, remains captive to several images. First,
there is the notion of units of substance as different ‘concentrations’ of the universe.
Here, each monad is positioned as an active indivisible ‘mirror’ (Badiou, 2009: 326).
While the soul ‘finitely’ represents the infinity of God, each substance constitutes a
‘trace’ of God’s omniscience and omnipotence. As such, for Leibniz, souls are
‘abbreviated’ worlds. Badiou contends that the image of ‘expression’ sums up all the
other terms.

Like the limit, therefore, every object expresses the world because it expresses its laws or
reasons: the ontological consideration of objects is matched by the transcendental
consideration of their arrangement, which Leibniz calls sufficient reason. This reason
itself must be transcendent in the sense of being outside matter, separate from the objects
whose degree of existence it establishes. Any local correlation between two objects is
thus determined by a ‘pre-established harmony’: they agree because they stand under the
same law (Badiou, 2009: 327). For Leibniz, this pre-established harmony is once again
granted by the divine calculus.

Badiou (2009: 328) contends, and this point is crucial, that the ontological entry point for
both he and Leibniz is “like a metaphysical mathematics”, applied to individual points of
being or atoms, while the logical point of entry is the indexing of real beings on a rule
determining intensities of existence and relations of identity and difference. Relation is
strictly subordinated to the linked but individual and atomic terms; it creates nothing in
the order of existence (substance) or localisation (accident). Thus, death (as the ascription
of the minimal value of a transcendental) is a category of appearing and not (the
nothingness of) being.

However, Badiou (2009: 329) also complains that, for Leibniz, there is only one actual or
really apparent world (though an infinity of possible worlds each governed by a certain
claim to exist in proportion to the perfection which it involves) - that of the calculus,
while for him there is an egalitarian infinity of actual worlds, each constructed around
distinct transcendentals. For Leibniz, the infinity of possible worlds has its place in the
divine intellect and the existential uniqueness of the greatest degree of perfection offsets
the essential plurality of the possible. This power of the One is recapitulated in monads
no less than in the primary and harmonious unity of the divine. For this reason Leibniz is
always tempted to renounce “his greatest metaphysical decisions: the existence of the
actual infinite and the non-being of relations” (Badiou, 2009: 330). Badiou suggests that,
for Leibniz, the former is always endangered by the threat of aggregation, while the
second is threatened by the absolute and substantial bond of the vinculum substantiale.
Accordingly he concludes that,
Today, it is beyond Leibniz that we must recover the onto-logical correlation—without any support besides itself—between the disseminating multiplicity and the rule that objectifies its elements.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this overview of interpretations of monadology will serve to indicate the continuing importance of Leibniz to current philosophical debates. Heidegger’s focus on the dual characterisation of monads in terms of appetite (conatus), on one hand, and perception, on the other hand, links Leibniz’s thinking to that of Spinoza (no less than Freud and Lacan), and to Whitehead (no less than Locke), respectively. Moreover, his refusal to predicate Leibnizian metaphysics on logic rather than logic on metaphysics can be seen as a direct assault on the logical positivist strand of Analytical philosophy.

The overview provided above of Deleuze and Badiou’s discussion of Leibniz reveals remarkably little overlap. Each could be talking about two entirely different philosophers. Deleuze’s analysis of Leibniz’s psychology of micro- and macro-perception in terms of differentials and differential relations links this reading closely with his own analysis of Spinoza’s logic of expression. Moreover, his analysis of Leibniz’s Two Floors serves once again as a vehicle for instituting a transcendental empiricism. On one hand we have the transcendental and animistic fold of actualisation in the soul, on the other hand there is the materialistic fold of realization in the body—and between each of these folds we have the zone of inseparability (the Zweifelt) that produces the crease or seam. This interpretation is surely worthy of comparison with Badiou’s alternative argument that Leibniz’s work provides evidence of a ‘schema in torsion’. Here, in a nutshell, we have a recapitulation of the very marked division between the (non-organic) vitalism of Deleuze and Whitehead, on one hand, and Badiou’s generic theory of the event. Of course, in one fundamental respect the vitalist philosophy of Deleuze also departs from its counterpart in German Idealism. Deleuze would never argue that class antagonism could be eliminated through the ameliorating force of an internal, self-determining, final cause or telos, that was initially nurtured within the bosom of civil society.

In Logics of worlds, Badiou draws on category theory to construct his idiosyncratic and atomistic version of a “metaphysical mathematics”. His fundamental theorem of atomic logic (Badiou, 2009: 250, 574) stipulates that for any given world, every atom of that world is a real atom (i.e. one whose being is characterised by its transcendental degree of identity with a fixed and representative element selected from particular multiple to be found within that world). Despite the crucial importance of processes of actualisation in the thinking of Leibniz, Deleuze, and Whitehead, Badiou’s mathematical constructions deliberately preclude the formalization of any such dynamic process, even though he provides numerous examples in the more discursive sections of his work, that draw upon the strategies of slave revolt and guerrilla warfare. This paper has demonstrated that the distinction between the potential and the actual resides at the core of Leibniz’s notion of prehension, which in turn, is inseparable from Whitehead’s vitalist efforts to trace the movement of ingress of eternal objects into actual occasions, or the concrescence of actual occasions with other actual occasions as subjects or superjects are formed. The
determined neglect of these aspects of Leibnizian thought in Badiou’s work reflects a misguided, if not pathological, exercise of denial and exclusion.

References


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For Badiou, this paradoxical form what distinguishes the truth-event. Russell introduced the theory of types into set-theory to avoid the liar’s paradox. His intervention was prevents such paradoxes by precluding the possibility of constructing sets that would include themselves as their own members. The truth event is a multiple that includes both the elements of the evental site and itself. This paradoxical self-belonging is constitutive of the event as the ultra-one of the situation.