



## Heidegger on the Being of Monads: Lessons in Leibniz and in the Practice of Reading the History of Philosophy

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## ARTICLE

# HEIDEGGER ON THE BEING OF MONADS: LESSONS IN LEIBNIZ AND IN THE PRACTICE OF READING THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>

Paul Lodge

This paper is a discussion of the treatment of Leibniz's conception of substance in Heidegger's *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. I explain Heidegger's account, consider its relation to recent interpretations of Leibniz in the Anglophone secondary literature, and reflect on the ways in which Heidegger's methodology may illuminate what it is to read Leibniz and other figures in the history of philosophy.

**KEYWORDS:** Leibniz; Heidegger; substance; monad; methodology; force

In 1928 Heidegger gave the lecture course *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (MFL). Part of the course, which was published by Heidegger in 1967 in his collection *Pathmarks* (P), contains an interpretation of Leibniz's conception of substance.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I will discuss this component and consider its relationship to some prominent accounts of Leibniz on substance that have appeared in recent Anglophone scholarship.<sup>3</sup> I will also consider whether there are methodological lessons that Anglophone scholars might learn from Heidegger by considering the hermeneutic principles that he employs.

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<sup>2</sup>The version in *Pathmarks* is entitled 'From the Last Marburg Course'. The differences are mainly due to Heidegger's omissions from MFL in P. However, there are some additions and I shall draw on both versions below.

<sup>3</sup>It should be noted I will be concerned here only with the ways in which a reading of Heidegger's lectures might be brought into dialogue with the reception of Leibniz in recent Anglophone literature. Furthermore, the discussion is aimed primarily at those who are unfamiliar with Heidegger's lectures. There would be much more to be said were considerations of the reception of Heidegger's account of Leibniz in non-Anglophone secondary literature included.

## 1. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

At the beginning of *Pathmarks*, Heidegger offers an account of why he chose to lecture on Leibniz in 1928, telling his readers that the ‘interpretations were shaped by the insight that in our philosophical thought we are in dialogue with a thinker of previous times’, where ‘this means something other than completing a historiographical presentation of philosophy’s history’ (GA9 373/P63).

We can see from this that Heidegger did not take himself to be engaging in what Robert Sleigh Jr. has called ‘exegetical history’ (*Leibniz and Arnauld*, 2). With exegetical history, the aim is to clarify the views of historical figures as accurately and with as much objectivity as possible. In MFL Heidegger is more explicit about his opposition to this approach:

[It] would be a totally misguided conception of the essence of philosophy were one to believe that one could finally distil *the* Kant, *the* Plato by cleverly calculating and balancing off all Kant interpretations or all Plato interpretations. This makes as little sense with Leibniz. What would result would be something dead ‘Kant as he is in himself’, Kant *an sich* ... The actuality of the historical, especially the past, does not emerge in the most complete account of the way it happened.

(GA26 88/MFL 71–2)

Sleigh contrasts ‘exegetical history’ with ‘philosophical history’, the aim of which is to develop one’s own philosophical views through a critical discussion of historical figures (*ibid.*). Exponents of the latter also aim to present accurate accounts of views of historical figures, but for the purposes of discussing ways in which they connect up with currently relevant philosophical issues.<sup>4</sup> In some cases, historical figures may turn out to have been ‘right’. In many cases, however, they turn out to be ‘wrong’ and we ‘learn’ from their ‘mistakes’. Another crucial difference between philosophical history and exegetical history, which Sleigh does not emphasize, is the likelihood that philosophical historians will be selective in the subject matter they discuss in a way that is influenced heavily by their own philosophical interests. By contrast the exegetical historian is more likely to be led wherever the texts take her and/or to be interested in the overall philosophical worldview of her chosen philosopher. Is Heidegger doing philosophical history then? Whilst his approach is closer to philosophical than exegetical

<sup>4</sup>Sleigh puts his own work in the first of his two categories and a paradigmatic example of the latter for him is Jonathan Bennett. Bennett provides an interesting discussion of this method in the introduction to Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, 1–9. Something like this distinction can be found in Russell (*Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, xii), in Rorty’s (‘Historiography of Philosophy’) discussion of ‘historical’ and ‘rational’ approaches, and Laerke, Smith, and Schliesser’s discussion of ‘appropriationist’ and ‘contextualist’ approaches (*Philosophy and Its History*, 1–3).

history, I think the answer is ‘no’, and that it is most obviously construed as a third way which is more readily associated with ‘Continental philosophy’. I shall refer to this as ‘dialogical history’.<sup>5</sup>

The contrast with Sleight’s philosophical history concerns the ways in which historians’ philosophical interests enter into their interpretative practice. With philosophical historians, a key desideratum is the provision of a philosophically neutral interpretation that would be readily assented to by a chosen historical figure. Then, and only, is there an attempt to find out what might be of worth in that view. Consider now how Heidegger proceeds after offering his critique of exegetical history:

The actuality of what has been resides in its possibility. The possibility becomes manifest as the answer to a living question that sets before itself a futural present in the sense of ‘what can we do?’ The objectivity of the historical resides in the inexhaustibility of possibilities, and not in the fixed rigidity of a result.

(GA26 88/MFL 72)

Heidegger’s understanding of being ‘in dialogue with the thinkers of previous times’ involves the idea that both sides of the conversation emerge only as a result of the questions asked. There is no sense in which one should articulate the views of another person on their own terms because this endeavour is futile. This is not to say that Heidegger abandons the thought that there is something beyond the text being revealed in the interpretation. However, he does not think that we can recover the definitive way in which the text did this originally, given that its capacity to reveal is partly a function of its place in a living dialogue.

Speaking of his analysis of Leibniz, Heidegger observes that ‘We must suppose ... that this monadological interpretation of beings was initiated with an authentically philosophical intention’ (GA26 94/MFL 76). Heidegger then represents himself as in pursuit of the authentic philosophical intention in question. This intention is revealed at the beginning of the discussion in *Pathmarks*, when Heidegger notes that he was ‘guided by its perspective on the ecstatic being-in-the world of human beings granted by a look into the question of being’ (GA9 373/P 63). In other words, Heidegger self-consciously reads Leibniz in such a way that he would stand in a productive relation to Heidegger’s conception of the being of human beings. Indeed, for Heidegger it makes no sense to suggest that there could be anything else going on. He is not looking to discover Leibniz’s views as an end in itself, but to enter into dialogue regarding a common subject matter, something that requires that the written text speak Heidegger’s own language to at least some degree.

<sup>5</sup>My ‘dialogical history’ is essentially the unnamed third approach discussed in Laerke, Smith, and Schliesser (*Philosophy and Its History*, 3–4).

Whilst I think most of the material that I will discuss below should be regarded as the fruits of dialogical history, there is one place in MFL where Heidegger alludes to an even more radical approach:

Our interpretation must risk proceeding beyond Leibniz, or, better, going back more originally to Leibniz – even with the danger of departing from what he in fact said.

(GA26 88/MFL 72)

I shall call this fourth methodology ‘creative history of philosophy’. Unlike dialogical history, it is history of philosophy that emerges from the reading of an historical text with no deep regard at all for the thoughts of the figure who is represented as the author. Indeed, at the limit, this approach requires nothing more than the attribution of a position to an historical figure, which is mediated by the reading of her or his writings. This method seems to me to be reminiscent of that adopted on at least one occasion by a well-known figure in the Anglophone tradition, namely P. F. Strawson. In *Individuals* (Strawson, *Individuals*), Strawson discusses Leibniz. But he does not claim to be trying to make sense of him on his own terms. Indeed, he admits that the name is being attached to a position that is a device of his own making.<sup>6</sup> Like Strawson, in this passage Heidegger appears sanguine about an issue that often comes up when people read his accounts of historical figures, namely, that one may be learning about Heidegger’s views monologically rather than dialogically.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. SUBSTANCE AS MONAD

Bearing in mind these methodological considerations, I shall first turn to ‘the guiding context of the problem’ in MFL. Heidegger characterizes this as follows: ‘On the basis of the monadology, we want to know about the being of beings’ (GA26 89/MFL 72). As Heidegger notes in *Pathmarks*, Leibniz follows in a long tradition of substance metaphysicians. Thus, when discussing Leibniz, the question of the being of beings becomes a question about ‘the substantiality of substances’ (GA9 373/P63).

Heidegger begins his account by observing that the subject of his enquiry is ‘the monadology’ (ibid.). This might lead one to expect him to pay attention to the work that is commonly known as *The Monadology* (G VI, 607–23/AG 213–5). However, this is not the case. Rather, Heidegger is indicating

<sup>6</sup>See Strawson, *Individuals*, Chap. 4.

<sup>7</sup>In fact, I see nothing in Heidegger’s discussion of monads in MFL that should be regarded as creative history rather than dialogical history. However, Heidegger’s 1951 lecture course on Leibniz, *The Principle of Reason* (GA 10), does appropriate Leibniz’s texts in a much more radical way.

that he takes as his starting point Leibniz's use of the term 'monad' to pick out substances or genuine beings, and his thought that, for Leibniz, 'the essence of substance resides in it being a monad' (GA26 90/MFL 73; GA9 373–4/P 63). In MFL, Heidegger identifies the texts he regards as the most important for his purposes, and includes the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and correspondence with Arnauld. In fact, Heidegger's analysis makes no explicit appeal to these texts or any others written before 1694, and he mostly draws on the correspondence with De Volder of 1698–1706 and other texts dating from this time or later.<sup>8</sup>

The analysis begins with an explanation of Heidegger's understanding of 'monad'. Returning to the original Greek word *μονάς*, he offers a number of candidates, 'the simple, the unity, the one ... the individual, the solitary' (GA26 89/MFL 72; GA9 373/P 63), and claims that all these are intended by Leibniz. Leibnizian substances have 'the character of the simple unity of the individual, of what stands by itself' (GA26 90/MFL 73; GA9 373/P 63). Immediately afterward, however, Heidegger provides a preview of where his elucidation of the substantiality of Leibniz's substances will lead. To be a monad will be to be that which 'simply and originally unifies and which individuates in advance' (*ibid.*). Here we begin to see that Heidegger thinks of the unity of monads as connected with the fact that substances *unify*, rather than their being uncomposed, and there is an indication that this involves 'looking ahead'.

At this point, *Pathmarks* skips five pages of the MFL text in which Heidegger contrasts Leibniz's account of substance with those of Descartes and Spinoza and explains why Leibniz rejects Descartes' attempt to 'see the being of physical nature ... in *extension*' (GA29 91/MFL 73). Here Heidegger mentions two important arguments against the Cartesian conception of body (see GA 26 93/MFL 75). The first trades on the fact that extension is essentially divisible cannot provide a principle of unity. The second, which appears in a letter to Bayle from 1687 (see GP III, 48), trades on two results which Leibniz established in his *Brief Demonstration*: 1) that Descartes's claim that the 'quantity of motion' (determined by the product of speed of a body and its size) in the universe as a whole is conserved is false; and 2) that what is actually conserved is a quantity measured by the product of the square of the speed of a body and its size.<sup>9</sup> Whilst the reasoning that Leibniz employs is somewhat unclear, his conclusion is not.<sup>10</sup> The conservation of the product of size and the square of speed gives us grounds to reject the idea that the substance of bodies can be extension alone. Instead, we must acknowledge that bodies are endowed with a distinct attribute force [*vis*], which is the cause of motion.

<sup>8</sup>See GA26 87/MFL 70–1.

<sup>9</sup>A VI, 4 2027–30/L 296–8.

<sup>10</sup>See Lodge, 'Force and the Nature of Body in *Discourse on Metaphysics* §§17–18'.

Heidegger draws these two strands together to ‘adequately define monad’ (GA9 374/P 64). Monads are ‘not themselves in need of unification but rather that which gives unity’ (GA26 95/MFL 77; GA9 374/P 64) and this unifying activity is connected with their force. They are said to be units that are ‘primordially unifying’ and characterized as ‘primordially simple force’ (ibid.). Here the term ‘primordial’ indicates more than a mere connection. Heidegger’s thought is that ‘unifying’ and ‘simple force’ are terms that express different ways in which one and the same thing appears. The main task that Heidegger sets for himself in the remainder of his discussion is providing an explanation of this.

With primordial status conferred on the unity of monads and their being endowed with force, Heidegger turns his attention to the latter, observing that ‘understanding the metaphysical meaning of the doctrine of monads depends on correctly understanding the concept of *vis primitiva*’ (GA26 96/MFL 77; GA9 374/P 64) but also that it is crucial to his analysis that force be ‘understood from the perspective of the problem of defining unity in a positive way’ (GA9 374/P 64).<sup>11</sup> He begins his account of Leibniz’s notion of force by turning to the journal article *On the Emendation of First Philosophy and the Notion of Substance*.<sup>12</sup> In Heidegger’s eyes it is a crucial text. Thus, he tells his students, ‘Whether we push through to the ontological significance of the monadology or remain stuck in the vapidness of popular philosophy depends on whether we understand this article or not’ (GA26 96/MFL 78).

Heidegger draws attention to the way in which Leibniz, in this article, contrasts his views about force with those of the Scholastics through the distinction Leibniz draws between his own ‘active force [*vis activa*]’ and the ‘mere power [*potentia nuda*]’ (GP IV, 469/L 433). As Heidegger notes, Leibniz is keen to stress that, whereas the Scholastics conceived of active power as a faculty which gives rise to action only when there is an appropriate external condition, active force ‘contains a certain acting that is already actual’ (GA26 82/MFL 102; GA9 65/P 375). Leibniz allows that the activity of *vis activa* may require the ‘removal of an impediment’ (GP IV, 469/L 433), but he insists that ‘some action always arises from it’ (GP IV, 470/L 433). Thus, any impeding can only be partial. In order to make the difference between *vis activa* and the Scholastic notion of power clearer Heidegger observes:

We call what Leibniz means here ‘to tend toward ...’ or, better yet, in order to bring out the specific, already actual moment of activity: to press toward or *drive* [*Drang*]. Neither a disposition nor a process is meant, rather a letting

<sup>11</sup>In emphasizing this Heidegger’s focus automatically moves away from many texts in which Leibniz himself starts by considering the material world and the role of force in the production of motion. For a survey of the ways in which Leibniz conceives of the relationship between the forces of bodies and his substance metaphysic, see Garber (*Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*, 2009, 287–301, 305–9).

<sup>12</sup>GP IV, 468–70/L 432–4.

something be taken on (namely, taken upon oneself), a being set on oneself (as in the idiom ‘he is set on it’), a taking it on oneself.

(GA 26 102–3/MFL 82; GA9 375/P 65)

Here Heidegger decides not to render *vis activa* as ‘force [*Kraft*]’ which might ‘suggest the idea of a static property’ (GA 26 103/MFL 83; GA 9 376/P 65). Rather it is *Drang*, or ‘drive’ in the English translation by Heim.<sup>13</sup>

There are two crucial issues for Heidegger: First, he wants to emphasize the fact that, unlike Scholastic power which is ‘merely ... a disposition which is about to act but does not yet act’ (GA26 102/MFL 82; GA9 375/P 64–5), drive is ‘self-propulsive’ and, rather than being triggered by the presence of some external condition, ‘leads into activity, not just occasionally but essentially’ where ‘this leading requires no prior external stimulus’ (ibid.). The second issue is clarified in the revisions for *Pathmarks*, where scholastic power is said to be ‘a present-at-hand capacity in something present at hand’ (GA9 375/P 64–5). One feature of what it is for something to be ‘present at hand’ is that it is intelligible only from a third person perspective. As will become clear below, Heidegger takes Leibniz’s conception of substance to be derived from the first person perspective.

At this point Heidegger reaches a provisional conclusion: For Leibniz ‘every being has this character of drive and is defined in its being as having drive’ (GA26 103/MFL 83; GA9 376/P 66). But nothing has been said to clarify ‘the structure of drive’ (ibid.), given that we have been offered no account what kind of activity it is that all beings engage in essentially. The remainder of Heidegger’s discussion is largely concerned with this issue and its relation to the unity of monads.

### 3. THE EGO AS LEIBNIZ’S ‘GUIDING CLUE’ OR PARADIGMATIC IDEA OF BEING

Before tackling the question of the structure of drive, Heidegger observes that he ‘needs to interpose another consideration’ (GA26 105/MFL 85; GA9 380/P 68), one he famously takes up in the introduction to *Being and Time*.<sup>14</sup> If one wishes to clarify the being of beings one must find a way to make this being available for investigation. And, according to Heidegger, Leibniz, like Heidegger, does this by taking our own being as paradigmatic.

Heidegger offers a brief version of his own justification for doing this. On the one hand, we are beings who ‘comport ourselves toward beings’ (GA26

<sup>13</sup>Loemker uses the term ‘conatus’ here (L 433), which is commonly found in other translations of Leibniz.

<sup>14</sup>See SZ 26–7.



105/MFL 85; GA9 379/P 68),<sup>15</sup> something we do only because we have some understanding of the being of those beings. Whilst Heidegger does not think of this as essentially involving self-conscious awareness of the being of other beings – the absorbed playing of a piano would count, for example – in order for such directedness to be possible, that towards which there is comportment must be understood to be a being in some sense. One could not play the piano without ‘knowing’ that there was a piano there to be played. However, such comportments are exhibited by other people. So it is natural to ask why Heidegger thinks that progress requires that we focus on our own being. Here the thought is one that is central to Heidegger’s approach in the late 1920s. Unlike the being of other beings our own being is always a ‘concern for us’ (GA26 106/MFL 85; GA9 379/P 68). And this is something which presupposes, like the playing of the piano, some kind of understanding of that being. Indeed, Heidegger claims that our understanding of the being of other beings is always conditioned by the way in which we understand our own being and that without such an understanding other beings would not show up for us at all.

There is no explicit ascription of this motivation to Leibniz. However, Heidegger seems to regard it as an explanation for the fact that Leibniz turns to the being of the ‘I’ in order to explicate the nature of monads. But more important for my discussion is Heidegger’s observation that this is what Leibniz does, that is, that ‘Constant regard for our own existence, for the ontological constitution and manner of one’s own “I”, provides Leibniz with the model of the unity that he attributes to every being’ (GA 26 106/MFL 85/GA9 380/P 68).<sup>16</sup> Heidegger provides a number of passages which testify to this (see MFL 86–8/107–9; P 68–70/379–83), including the following, from a letter to Sophie Charlotte of 1702 ‘On What is Independent of Sense and Matter’:

The thought of myself, who perceives sensible objects, and the thought of the action of mine that results from it, adds something to the objects of the senses. To think of some color and to consider that one thinks of it are two very different thoughts, just as much as color itself differs from the ‘I’ who thinks of it. And since I conceive that other beings can also have the right to say ‘I’, or that it can be said for them, it is through this that I conceive what is called substance in general.

(GP VI, 502/AG 188)

Although Heidegger thinks that Leibniz offers the ego as the guiding clue for our understanding of the being of beings, he is quick to draw us away from a ‘superficial and arbitrary reading’ that would lead us to think that

<sup>15</sup>I follow the translation from P which differs slightly from the version in MFL, but not in ways that are material to the present discussion.

<sup>16</sup>See note 19 below.

this ‘is simply anthropomorphism, some universal animism by analogy with the “I”’ (GA26 110/MFL 88; GA9 384/P 71). Instead he suggests we ask ‘Which structures of our own Dasein are supposed to become relevant for the interpretation of the being of substance?’ (GA26 110/MFL 88; GA9 384/P 72). And we are taken back to the questions: ‘How does the drive that distinguishes substances as such confer unity? How must drive itself be defined?’ (GA26 111/MFL 89; GA9 385/P 72).

#### 4. HEIDEGGER’S ACCOUNT OF DRIVE

Heidegger moves next to the heart of his analysis. At this point things become hard to understand. However, it is possible to discern a number of central features, some of which provide ways of thinking about Leibniz’s conception of monads that might be fruitful to exegetical or philosophical historians. I will try to clarify Heidegger’s presentation in this section and return later to the things that I regard as potentially illuminating.

A key passage for Heidegger is from Leibniz’s letter to De Volder of 30 June, 1704:

It can be further suggested that this principle of activity [drive] is intelligible to us in the highest degree because it forms to some extent an analogue to what is intrinsic to ourselves, namely, representing and striving.<sup>17</sup>

(GP II, 270)

In this passage, Leibniz draws attention to the intrinsic features of the ego. With these in focus, Heidegger’s aim is to explain why Leibniz characterizes our activity thus, by appealing to the way in which drive might function as a unifying principle. It is Heidegger’s view that this ‘deepest metaphysical motive’ was one that ‘remained concealed from Leibniz himself’ (GA26/MFL 90; GA9 386/P 73). And, as a result of this Heidegger uses some neologisms to try to draw attention to phenomena that he thinks have hitherto received inadequate attention. The main elements in the position that Heidegger ascribes to Leibniz are as follows:

##### 4.1. (a) Drive is simple

Since drive must confer unity, drive itself cannot be in need of unification. It is for this reason that drive (one might prefer to say, a being whose essence is drive) ‘must itself be simple’ and ‘must have no parts in the sense of an aggregate, a collection ... must be an indivisible unity’ (GA26 111/MFL 89; GA9 385/P 72).

<sup>17</sup>This is Heim’s rendition of Leibniz. It includes Heidegger’s interpolation of the term ‘drive’, but is not otherwise particularly idiosyncratic (see LDV 307).

#### 4.2. (b) Drive unifies a manifold

Given that substances confer unity, there must be something that needs unifying. With drive playing the unifying role, it follows ‘that there must be something manifold that [drive] unifies’ (ibid.).

#### 4.3. (c) The manifold is internal to drive

If drive is to unify a manifold there ‘must be a manifold right there in the monad’ and ‘the monad as simple and unifying must as such predelineate the possible manifold’ (GA26 111/MFL 89; GA9 385/P 72–3).

#### 4.4. (d) The manifold has the character of drive

Given c), that is, that the manifold is in the monad which has drive as its essence, it follows that the manifold must ‘have the character of drive, must have movement as such’ (GA26 111/MFL 89; GA9 385/P 73), and that it ‘is the changeable and that which changes’ (ibid.).

#### 4.5. (e) Drive is self-surpassing

From d) it follows that ‘The manifold must have the characteristic of being driven for [*Gedrängte*]’ (GA26 112/MFL 89; GA 9 385/P 73), or ‘driven ahead [*Be-drängte*]’ (ibid.); and ‘There is thus in drive itself a self-surpassing; there is change, alteration, movement. This means that drive is what itself changes in driving on; drive is what is driven onward [*Ge-drängte*]’ (GA26 112/MFL 89; GA 9 386/P 73).<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.6. (f) Drive is prior to what is unified

Since drive is ‘simply unifying’ (GA26 112/MFL 90; GA9 386/P73), it must be ‘an original organizing unification’, and hence ‘prior to that which is subject to unification’ and ‘anticipate by reaching ahead to something from which every manifold has already received its unity’ (ibid.).<sup>19</sup> It is thus ‘reaching out [*ausgreifend*], and as reaching out, must be *gripping in advance* [*umgreifend*] in such a way that the entire manifold is already made manifold in the encircling reach’ (ibid.).

Later Heidegger adds: ‘it must already anticipate every possible multiplicity, must be able to deal with every multiplicity in its possibility ... Drive must therefore bear multiplicity in itself and allow it to be born in the driving’ (GA26 114/MFL 91; GA9 387/P 74). In other words it is ‘the

<sup>18</sup>I deviate here slightly from the translation at MFL 89 and the slightly revised translation at P 73.

<sup>19</sup>The translation follows P here.

source of multiplicity' (ibid.). Heidegger then equates this aspect of the monad with its being 'in its essence basically "re-presentative" [*re-präsentierend*]' (GA26 112/MFL 90; GA9 386/P 73)

#### 4.7. (g) Drive, perception, and appetite

Soon after, Heidegger considers the relationship between the notion of representation that he has introduced and Leibniz's term 'perception [*perceptio*]' and the attendant notion of 'appetition [*appetitus*]' (GA 26 113/MFL 91; GA9 387/P 74). Here his view is that this bifurcation is due to the fact that Leibniz 'has not himself grasped the essence of *vis activa* with sufficient radicality ... In fact, drive is in itself already a perceptive striving or striving perception' (ibid.). However, Heidegger notes that 'appetition does not mean the same as drive' since '*Appetition* ... refers to a particular, essential, constitutive moment of drive, as does *perception*' (GA26 114/MFL 91; GA9 387/P 74).

#### 4.8. (h) The nature of the manifold

It is not until the end of his account of drive that Heidegger clarifies what comprises the manifold, where we learn: 'What it unifies ... is nothing other than the transitions from prehension to pre-hension [*von Vorstellen zu Vor-stellen*]' (GA26 115/MFL 92; GA9 388/P75).<sup>20</sup>

Some of the forgoing account is relatively clear. From (a) it can be seen that drive, and hence that which has drive as its essence, is simple and has no parts. When combined with (d) and (e), we also see that this simplicity is supposed to be compatible with the fact that drive changes. The driving monad is to be construed as a 'continuously changing' unified being rather than a sequence of discrete, temporally successive, and qualitatively distinct states that stand in some unity-conferring relation to one another. The unifying function of drive is thus connected with the ways in which temporally removed stages of drive are nonetheless stages of the same drive. According to Heidegger, it is from the problem of the persistence of the monads despite their manifold differences that Leibniz's insistence on the unifying nature of the monad derives. The manifold that must be unified is, as we are told with (c) internal to drive, because it is, as we learn from (d), nothing other than drive itself, or more intelligibly, as we are told in (h), the successive moments in drive.

What is missing here is an account of how substances discharge this function. Here the material in (f) is pertinent. In some sense, as well as being the manifold, drive is prior to the manifold. The explanation of this finally

<sup>20</sup>Whilst 'Vorstellen' is more naturally translated as 'to imagine', Heim's introduction of the term 'prehension' (which means roughly the same as 'apprehension') is an effort to retain some of what he, plausibly, takes to be Heidegger's intention – namely, to indicate the fact that that which is unified is a temporal sequence of perceptual states.

emerges in the closing section of the lecture, where Heidegger's discussion turns to the role that drive plays in the individuation of monads. As we have seen, *qua* unifying, drive is prior to itself *qua* manifold. This is now cashed out in terms of a notion that is familiar to readers of Leibniz, namely a 'point of view'.

#### 4.9. (i) Drive and points of view

Heidegger suggests that in driving perception 'there is a *possession of unity in advance* to which drive *looks*' (GA26 117/MFL 94; GA9 390–1/P 77), or 'there is a "point", as it were, on which attention is directed in advance' (GA 26 117/MFL 95; GA9 391/P 77), which is equated with 'the unity itself from which drive unifies' (ibid.). Furthermore, 'What is in advance apprehended in this viewpoint, is also that which regulates in advance the entire drive itself' (GA 26 117/MFL 95; GA9 391/P 78).

Heidegger's explanation of a point of view is not fleshed out. However, we can see that he thinks of drive as containing essentially a representative content to which all, and only, its stages contribute. Heidegger does not at this point bring in something else that Leibniz invokes at times, namely his analogy with laws of the series. But it seems to me that this is the kind of idea that he has in mind – i.e. that at every moment in its history a particular drive contains within it something that both encapsulates and unifies all the stages of its development and which finds its complete expression only through the entire development of the drive. If the monad were fully to develop there would be a vantage from which its history could be told that would include all its previous representations, and it is the latent presence of this vantage point throughout the development which enables the monad to proceed towards it. The monad drives towards a point from which the sum of its previous states could be represented, and hence unified, analogous to the way in which one might drive towards a destination, whose identity as a destination would be predicated on its including all the previous stages of the journey. And like the journeyer, the monad is only able to strive to get there because it already has some understanding of where it is going.

### 5. WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM HEIDEGGER'S ACCOUNT?

In the remainder of this paper I want to explore a number of ways in which Heidegger's reading of Leibniz might illuminate our thinking. I will in some cases embed this within the context of scholarly discussions. However, the extent to which I do this will be relatively limited. In particular, I will restrict myself to the ways in which Leibniz's thought has been discussed in Anglophone literature.

### 5.1. Textual points

I want to draw attention first to the texts that Heidegger discusses. As noted above, the earliest of Leibniz's writings is the 1694 article *On the Emendation of First Philosophy*, and many of Heidegger's quotes comes from the correspondence with De Volder and other works dating from the 1690s and early 1700s.

A positive feature of this is the fact that Heidegger emphasizes the significance of the 1694 publication. Whilst this text is well known to scholars, it is not the most easily accessible piece for Anglophone readers. It appears only in the rather dated (and expensive) volume edited by Loemker called *Philosophical Papers and Letters* and not the more recent (and cheaper) editions of Leibniz's works that students might expect to encounter.<sup>21</sup> Heidegger's suggestion that 'Whether we push through to the ontological significance of the monadology or remain stuck in the vapidness of popular philosophy depends on whether we understand this article or not' (GA26 96/MFL 78) may verge on the hyperbolic. However, in the article Leibniz sets out a manifesto regarding the way that metaphysics ought to be pursued as well as introducing the public for the first time to his view that the concept of force is crucial for a proper understanding of the concept of substance. Thus, I think Heidegger is right to suggest that this is a central text for our understanding of Leibniz's project. And, whilst well known to scholars, it is not currently accorded the status it deserves in the English-speaking world.

A less positive feature of Heidegger's choices is that they allow him to ignore many texts that would make it harder for him to present his account as if it were a dialogue with the essential core of Leibniz. Over the past thirty years or so Anglophone scholars have become particularly interested in the fact that Leibniz seems not have had a stable conception of substance over time, and, in particular, that it was only in the 1690s that he began to self-consciously articulate a view that contained the monadological theory.<sup>22</sup> And in his 2009 book *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*, Daniel Garber provides a thoroughly documented account which would make it hard for anyone to maintain that Heidegger is correct to assume that the monadological metaphysics provides *the* single entry point for an analysis of Leibniz's understanding of substance.<sup>23</sup> The force of this criticism can be blunted by thinking about the way in which Heidegger's

<sup>21</sup>I have in mind AG and *Leibniz: Philosophical Writings* (Everyman's University Library, 1973) edited by G. H. R. Parkinson and translated by Mary Morris.

<sup>22</sup>For a summary of some of the main positions, see Lodge, 'Garber's Interpretations of Leibniz on Corporeal Substance in the 'Middle Years''. Other significant contributions include Baxter, 'Corporeal Substances and True Unities'; Phemister, 'Leibniz and Elements of Compound Bodies'; Hartz, *Leibniz's Final System*; Rutherford, 'Leibniz as Idealist'; Garber, *Leibniz: Body Substance, Monad*. This is not to say that the consideration of this idea is especially novel (see e.g. Cassirer, *Leibniz' System in seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen*).

<sup>23</sup>See Garber (2009).

account of Leibniz is a function of the methodology that he employs. However, were one to approach Heidegger's account of Leibniz as if it were one from which one could discern a plausible account of *the* view of substance that Leibniz intended to articulate then one would be led astray.

### 5.2. Force as drive

Turning to the content of the account the Heidegger provides, there are a number of features, *qua* exegetical historian, that I find illuminating in his discussion of the nature of monads. The first is Heidegger's decision to translate *vis* as *Drang* or 'drive'. This choice usefully marks the fact that Leibniz's notion of force [*vis*] is a technical one whose connotation differs from what people are likely to associate with the term. *Vis* is not, as Heidegger points out, like the scholastic notion of power (a notion which has affinities with a dominant conception of dispositions that we find in contemporary metaphysics), in that it needs no external stimulus for its actualization. And, perhaps more importantly, it is unlike the notion of force that we are accustomed to from Newtonian physics which exists only where there is an interaction between distinct entities. Leibniz's *vis* is an intrinsic principle of motion.

### 5.3. Perception and appetite as founded in drive

A second point arises from Heidegger's analysis of perception and appetite. Here he claims that Leibniz's appeal to drive undercuts the need to appeal to the notion of appetite in understanding the grounds for intramonadic change. Heidegger's thought is that, whilst Leibniz did not grasp this, appetition, like perception, is a 'constitutive moment of drive' (GA 26 114/MFL 91; GA 9 387/P 74) and not something which gives rise to the changes that occur within monads. Heidegger does not clarify the way he is using the term 'moment' here. However, it seems that he is suggesting that perception and appetition are abstract ways of conceiving a principle of change that is essentially representational, or as Heidegger puts it that 'drive is in itself already a perceptive striving or striving perception' (*ibid.*).

Heidegger may be less generous to Leibniz than Leibniz deserves here. In the texts from the De Volder correspondence at the heart of Heidegger's discussion, there is nothing that invites the thought that perception and appetite are ontologically basic. It is the notion of *vis* that plays this role, or, as Leibniz prefers in a number of writings from the early late 1690s and 1700s the notion of 'dynamism' (LDV 12; 73; 241; 339), which he describes as 'an attribute from which change follows whose subject is substance itself' (LDV 73).<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, the view that Heidegger presents is far from standard in secondary literature and seems to me to deserve further attention.

<sup>24</sup>Also see *On Body and Force Against the Cartesians* from 1702 (GP IV, 395/AG 252).

Whilst it may be that Leibniz regards perception and appetite as essential for an account of monadic change that answers to standard explanatory demands – e.g. that furnishes answers to determinate questions about what are regarded as particular changes in individual monads – this need not mean that he thinks the change is brought about through an interaction between two distinct faculties.

#### 5.4. The ego as the guiding clue

Also prominent in Heidegger's analysis of monads is his claim that Leibniz's conception of the monad is drawn from our self-conception. This may seem obvious, given that Leibniz characterizes the intrinsic features of monads in quasi-psychological terms. However, it has been argued that the *New System* and texts from succeeding years are strikingly at odds with what we find around a decade earlier in this regard.

In *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*, Daniel Garber offers a detailed analysis of Leibniz's conception of the matter and form of substances and their relation to the concept of force based on texts from the 1680s. Garber argues that, whilst Leibniz's account of the nature of minds is not radically different from the conception that he will later attribute to all monads, his account of the nature of material reality is. The material world is grounded in primitive active and passive forces which are 'not only the ground-level physical realities', but also 'the ultimate metaphysical realities that ground the created world' (*Leibniz: Body Substance, Monad*, 318). Garber's idea is that in the 1680s, Leibniz conceives of the nature of the material world as comprising the ground of dispositions to produce and resist changes in the locomotion of material things with no evidence of an attempt by Leibniz to understand the ground itself further.

Garber is at odds here with the prominent view of Robert Adams.<sup>25</sup> However, Adams's claim is not that Leibniz positively interprets the physical forces that Garber takes to be basic in monadological terms. Rather he is concerned that there is no 'Leibnizian' way to understand the dispositions to which Garber refers other than to identify them with the forces that will be given a 'psychological' reading in the later writings. In response Garber's main complaint is that Adams, like others before him, is illegitimately projecting a later conception back into these texts.<sup>26</sup>

Heidegger draws attention to texts in which Leibniz explicitly claims that we are to understand the nature of *vis* by appeal to our internal awareness of the operations of our souls. It is clear in these passages that Leibniz thought that subjecting the world experienced in sense to a certain kind of intelligibility was necessary for a proper understanding of its nature. The texts Heidegger highlights remind us that Adams's philosophical intuition about how the

<sup>25</sup>See Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, 327–8, 338, 347–9.

<sup>26</sup>See Garber (2009, 166–72).



forces of bodies might be understood is not merely an interpreter's imposition. Leibniz raised the issue himself and chose to approach it by appeal to self-knowledge.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the epistemic issues that Leibniz emphasizes in the passages Heidegger highlights provide us with clues as to what kinds of textual evidence we might look for to help decide whether Garber's position is defensible.

### 5.5. Unity and the unifying function of drive

Finally, I think there are things to be learned from Heidegger's emphasis on monads being understood (at best latently by Leibniz) as unities in the sense that they play a *unifying* role. Here Heidegger goes against a reading of why Leibniz regards substances as unities that is clearly found in texts spanning his career. In these passages Leibniz takes it as given that there are composite, and hence divisible, entities, and argues from the convertibility of unity and being that the existence of these composites requires that there be entities that are not divisible from which they are composed.<sup>28</sup>

By contrast, when Heidegger considers the thesis that monads are unities, he is adamant that Leibniz's commitment to this stems from the need for beings that *unify*, something that he thinks could not be done by entities that were not themselves unities. It should not be thought that the need for monads (or perhaps substantial forms in the 1680s) to play a unifying role is ignored by commentators. Indeed, to the extent that people take Leibniz's commitment to corporeal substances seriously (i.e. extended beings which are nonetheless unities), they include a commitment to entities that perform such a function. But this is not where Heidegger places his focus. As we saw above, the manifold that Heidegger regards as unified by the monad is internal to the monad itself; the heart of Leibniz's authentic concern when he focuses on unity (although perhaps unnoticed by Leibniz himself) is connected with the persistence of individual monads.

One might balk at the thought that it is this function that is the ultimate basis for Leibniz's obsession with monadic unity. But as far back as 1977, Robert Sleight Jr. raised the issue of whether monads should be thought to have temporal parts and, if so, whether this might compromise their reality as beings which have identity over time.<sup>29</sup> Sleight himself did not offer a solution to the problem in his paper, and, as far as I am aware, it is a challenge that has not received much attention and about which there is much more to

<sup>27</sup>Also, see Phemister, *Leibniz and the Natural World*, 177–82 for discussion of the first- and third-person perspective in Leibniz.

<sup>28</sup>This strategy is common in the correspondence with Arnauld and other documents from the 1680s (see Garber, 'Leibniz and the Foundations of Physics' and 2009 chapter 2). But Leibniz also argues for the existence of monads in something like the same way in his correspondence with De Volder in the early 1700s (see LDV 275; 285–7; 301–3) and as late 1714 in the *Monadology* (GP VI, 607/AG 213).

<sup>29</sup>See Sleight, 'Leibniz on the Simplicity of Substance', 120.

be said. One recent effort attempts to deal with the issue by placing monads outside of time and treating the attribution of temporal parts to them as ideal.<sup>30</sup> This solution has a lot of merit, but it requires deflating passages in which Leibniz appears to understand the existence of monads in such a way that their temporality involves a robust notion of succession.<sup>31</sup> Whilst I do not have the space to examine it further here, the account I have extracted from MFL seems to me to do more justice to this and to provide a starting place for further investigation.

### 5.6. Methodological considerations

The last place in which I think readers of Leibniz may have something to learn from Heidegger is by considering the methodology that he employs. I began my discussion by distinguishing four ways in which one might read historical texts: via exegetical history, philosophical history, dialogical history, or creative history. The key contrast between the first two conceptions and the second two is that with the former there is a sense in which understanding what the historical figure intended is a regulative ideal. With dialogical and creative history, there is no such pretension. The text is engaged with, but the enquiry is entirely one of first order philosophy. It is the truth, or at least the philosophical interest, of what the interpreter takes away from the reading that is of importance and, if there is little left that the author might have attested to, that does not undermines the results.

One important challenge that Heidegger poses comes from a key presupposition he brings to bear on reading texts, namely that, *qua* interpretations, they will always have a lot of the interpreter in them. Leibniz viewed from nowhere may serve as a regulative hermeneutic ideal for some, but as Heidegger insists, this ideal can never be reached. And his recommendation is that we get as clear as possible about what we are asking of a text when we engage with it, and what it is about our interests that leads us to ask our questions.

One might think this point need no longer be emphasized given its prevalence in twentieth century hermeneutics. But if one turns to articles and books written about Leibniz in English today, the majority read as if the author lacked any self-conscious engagement with these issues. Thus, Heidegger's challenge remains a significant one and he offers an important reminder that providing an account of Leibniz *an sich* can at best be a regulative ideal. Nonetheless, there is still a difference between Heidegger's method and reading texts such that one tries to allow the author to 'speak', and/or where one extends this to listening carefully to the way in which the text interacts with contemporary and antecedent philosophical

<sup>30</sup>See Whipple, 'Continual Creation and Finite Substance in Leibniz's Metaphysics'.

<sup>31</sup>For example, see LDV 289.

voices. The claim that we cannot remove our interests entirely as readers is clearly not the same as the claim that we cannot stand at different removes from them.

A second issue that Heidegger forces us to think about is whether it is legitimate to recoil, as many historians of philosophy seem to, from the idea of dialogical or creative history of philosophy. It seems to me that this urge to recoil might come from three worries, each of which meets opposition from Heidegger's practice.

A first worry might be that such a cavalier approach to text is likely to be of no help in understanding what a cherished dead figure actually thought. But, of course, there is nothing in the dialogical or creative method that precludes the generation of interpretations that might be appropriated by the exegetical or philosophical historian. Indeed, in considering ways in which Heidegger's account in MFL and P might illuminate Leibniz, my approach has been to point to things that have just this kind of status. The evidence here suggests that there is enough continuity between the Leibniz that emerges and what currently passes for the concerns of Leibniz 'himself' that our understanding of the latter might be augmented by reading Heidegger. And it seems obvious this is could also be true of a radically creative historian of philosopher. If clear about what they are doing, historians of any stripe are free to cherry pick for their own ends.

A second possible worry is that the dialogical and creative historians are likely to end up being neither good historians nor good philosophers. But this kind of reaction seems to amount to little more than the claim that they will not be doing history of philosophy as the critic conceives it, or philosophy as she conceives it. In the case of Leibniz, I have suggested that Heidegger may have things to say that the community of exegetical historians and philosophical historians could usefully appropriate, but it would be no serious criticism of his endeavour if he did not. Nor is it the case that the dialogical and creative historians could reasonably be accused of failing to do good philosophy *qua* dialogical and creative historians. Dialogical and creative history as I am conceiving of them are not first order philosophy. Rather they are engagement with historical texts in the service of generating first order philosophy.

Presumably the only legitimate complaint here could be that dialogical and creative historians do not generate good philosophy as their end product. This worry will be something that applies, or not, *ad personam*. And it would be hard to deny that my canonical dialogical and creative historians have enriched philosophy in ways that would have been impossible without this approach. Absent his dialogical and creative engagements with key figures in the history of philosophy there simply is no Heidegger, and without *Individuals* it is hard to believe there would have been the Strawson we know either. And if Heidegger and Strawson are not to one's taste, then it should be easy to see elements of this kind of approach in the work of other people once one starts to look. To pick two radically different

examples, Giles Deleuze's treatment of Leibniz in *The Fold* (Deleuze, *The Fold*) and Jerry Fodor's *Hume Variations* (Fodor, *Hume Variations*) come to my mind, and I would have thought that anyone should be able to find dialogical and creative history that fits their first order philosophical tastes. If there is a residual concern, I suspect that it may be due to irritation that dialogical and creative history does not require engagement with the hard won interpretations of those more concerned with exegesis. But if so, there is a danger that this may be due to resentment as much as anything else.

A final worry might be harder to get people to admit explicitly, namely, that if one admits that dialogical and creative history have value, one might cede too much to those who have little sympathy for the role of history of philosophy as a branch of academic research. This is a natural worry, given the experiences that some historians of philosophy have had. The feeling of being marginalized and of being regarded as less philosophically able than one's peers, is something that I think many carry with them in the professional environment that is twentieth first century Anglophone academic philosophy.

People know of the famous sign that was posted on the door of Princeton philosopher Gilbert Harman in the 1980s: 'History of Philosophy: Just Say No!' In explaining his actions, Harman acknowledged that history of philosophy could reasonably be conducted only as proposed by exegetical historians. More precisely, he observed:

[A] study of the history of philosophy tends not to be useful to students of philosophy. (Note 'tends'.) Similarly, it is not particularly helpful to students of physics, chemistry, or biology to study the history of physics, chemistry, or biology.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, he rejected the legitimacy of philosophical history, dialogical history, and creative history of philosophy. Harman claimed he had acted in good faith. But unfortunately his error was typical of the way those in positions of power dismiss those with opposing views. Even allowing that it was a careless act, it was still an act which carried the implication that the efforts of people identifying themselves as trying to do history other than exegetically were worthless. Furthermore, it implied that even the acceptable version of the history of philosophy was likely to be of no value to those studying the subject itself.

The story of Harman's sign did the rounds within the profession as a joke. But it is difficult to escape the thought that it was an expression of views that could have reasonably been taken as posing an existential threat to those working in academia as historians of philosophy in philosophy departments. Furthermore, the story seemed to capture a more general sense of how history of philosophy was regarded in many Anglophone philosophy

<sup>32</sup>See <http://philosophy.princeton.edu/about/eighties-snapshot>.

departments at the time. It is not hard to see why some historians might have felt like members of a threatened group who needed to develop a respectable identity within the space that was being offered to them. Indeed, with the retrenchment in place and feelings passed on to their academic children, it would be surprising if there were not those, perhaps subliminally, who spurn dialogical and creative philosophy partly because they are worried that those who stray beyond the exegetical are likely to put the future of the history of philosophy as a distinct academic specialization in jeopardy.

But it is thirty years since Harman and, to whatever extent these ghosts still haunt, it is time to move on. Harman was just wrong. Whilst he himself may have been incapable of enriching his philosophy by turning to the history of the subject, there is no sense in which dialogical history, creative history, or indeed the philosophical history that Harman also had in his sights, sit uncomfortably with first order philosophizing. Furthermore, there is no reason to think that rich exegetical history is any different, provided its relationship to philosophical history, dialogical history, and creative history is cultivated in a certain way. It is time to reverse whatever normative shifts Harman's diatribe might have engendered.

If we are to reap the huge philosophical benefits that are there to be reaped from a subject whose 2000-year-plus history bequeaths us numerous texts written by highly sophisticated philosophers, far from consigning them to history, we should regard them as documents that can enrich our philosophical lives every time we visit them with open eyes.<sup>33</sup> This might look like an advertisement for privileging the other forms of history of philosophy over exegetical history. However, it seems better to me to recognize exegetical history as something that can play a vital role in allowing the philosophical historian to do her work. By consulting works of exegetical history her readings are likely to be enriched, whether through fine-grained exegesis of her chosen author or consideration of the broader philosophical context that can only arise from careful consideration of such things as the roles of 'minor' figures whom she might find less philosophically inspiring. There is an inevitable division of labour here given the amount of potentially fruitful data, and whilst this may mean that exegetical history is sometimes perceived as a kind of under-labouring, there is clearly no shame to be had in that, especially where the labour requires talents that many of the consumers do not themselves have.

But where does this leave dialogical and creative history? The dialogical and creative historians I have focused on are people who seem to have

<sup>33</sup>In saying this I do not, of course, mean to imply there are no other reasons to value the study of the history of philosophy. Furthermore, as Sarah Hutton has emphasised recently (Hutton, 'Blue-Eyed Philosophers Born on Wednesdays'), there are important connections to be explored between engaging in careful exegetical history of philosophy and the recovery of the writings of women philosophers and other neglected figures. However, even in this case, my inclination is to think that the greatest value of this kind of project lies in the role that it can play in shaping philosophy itself.

engaged with texts in isolation from other readers. And with such people in mind, it might appear that this practice has little to gain from the results of other modes of engaging with historical texts. Here I think it has to be admitted that dialogical and creative history may well be able to operate successfully in isolation, provided that they are practised by philosophers who have questions of their own that grip the philosophical community. But it seems at least possible that benefits might arise from interaction with philosophical and exegetical history for any would-be creative historians today.

In conclusion then, my reflections on Heidegger's approach to reading suggest a way in which we might articulate the virtues of a methodological pluralism in the history of philosophy that accords significant status to work that is at the more exegetical end of the spectrum. But at the same time, there is an important presupposition. The justification that I have offered for this is, in the end, that it serves the greater goal of advancing the progress of philosophical thinking itself. It is immensely enjoyable to do exegetical history of philosophy, and it fosters a kind of intellectual community that is, at its best, a common enterprise in which there is a great deal of mutual respect. But the argument I am advancing is predicated on the thought that it can, and perhaps should, gain its true meaning from its service to philosophy itself. And it goes without saying that all philosophers are under-labourers in that respect.

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- AG = *Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989).
- GA9 = *Martin Heidegger, Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1996).
- GA10 = *Martin Heidegger, Der Satz vom Grund*. Translated as *The Principle of Reason*, translated by R. Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
- GA26 = *Martin Heidegger, Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1978).
- GP = *Die Philosophische Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, 7 vols., edited by C. I. Gerhardt (Berlin: Weidmann, 1875-90; reprint ed. Hildesheim: Olms, 1960). Cited by volume and page.
- L = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd ed., edited and translated by Leroy Loemker (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969).

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