Leibniz’s Metaphysics
Its Origins and Development

This is the first systematic study of the development of Leibniz’s philosophy. By placing his vast writings in their proper intellectual context and by analyzing unnoticed early works, Christia Mercer shows that Leibniz developed his philosophy much earlier than previously believed and for reasons that have not been recognized. Leibniz’s Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development offers a major reassessment of Leibniz’s thought. It will engage philosophers, historians, and scholars of religious studies.

For too long, the history of early modern philosophy has been a tale of tidy progress according to which Leibniz developed his metaphysics primarily in reaction to the old scholasticism and the new Cartesianism. Leibniz’s Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development shows that this story is inaccurate. By uncovering a German school of conciliatory eclectics who trained the young Leibniz, Mercer places his early texts in an entirely new light. By excavating Leibniz’s long-hidden views about substance, God, and method, Mercer exposes for the first time the underlying assumptions and ultimate goals of his philosophy. It becomes clear that Leibniz’s relation to Descartes, Spinoza, and other major seventeenth-century thinkers is significantly different than previously thought. This study will compel scholars to reconsider many of their assumptions about early modern science, theology, and philosophy.

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For Tommy George and Wanda Jo:
Yippie-ki-yo-ki-yey
## Contents

**Acknowledgments**  
page xi

**References to Leibniz's works**  
xiii

**Introduction: first truths and half truths**  
1. Half truths  
2. First problems  
3. A different approach to first truths  
15

### PART ONE: METAPHYSICS OF METHOD

1. Eclecticism and conciliation, 1661–68  
2. A walk in the woods  
3. Method and metaphysics in the seventeenth century  
4. The woods revisited  
5. Leibniz’s two-part method  
23  
24  
27  
39  
49

### PART TWO: METAPHYSICS OF SUBSTANCE

2. Aristotelian assumptions, 1668–69  
1. Metaphysical and religious harmony  
2. The theological writings and Leibniz’s Metaphysics of Substance  
   - *Confession of nature against the atheists*  
   - *On transubstantiation*  
   - *Conspectus*  
   - *Demonstration of the possibility of the mysteries of the Eucharist*  
3. Leibniz’s Aristotelian assumptions  
63  
64  
68  
70  
82  
89  
90  
94

3. Original conception of substance, 1669  
1. Reformed philosophy  
2. Letter to Thomasius  
3. Conciliation and the Metaphysics of Substance  
99  
100  
109  
110  
114  
119  
124
## CONTENTS

4 Second conception of substance, 1669–early 1671 130
   1. Substantial difficulties 133
   2. Letter to Thomasius revised 137
   3. Development of a perfect union 144
   4. Development of a conception of mind and activity 157
   5. Second conception of substance 166

PART THREE: METAPHYSICS OF DIVINITY

5 Platonist Assumptions 173
   1. Leibniz and Platonism 174
   2. The Supreme Being: its unity, self-sufficiency, perfection 178
   3. Plenitude 180
   4. The Supreme Being as transcendent and immanent, as unity and multiplicity 184
   5. Reflective harmony and sympathy 192
   6. Ideas and knowledge 196
   7. Matter and the hierarchy of being 198
   8. Platonism in Leipzig 200

6 Metaphysics of Divinity, 1668–early 1671 206
   1. Universal harmony 208
      Emanative Harmony 209
      Reflective Harmony 217
   2. Mind 221
   3. Creation stories, 1668–early 1671 225
      Speculative Creation Story 225
      Emanative Creation Story 230
   4. Platonist epistemology 243
      Ideas as objects of knowledge 244
      Intellect and the material world 246
      Divine light 248
   5. Leibniz’s original Platonism 250

PART FOUR: METAPHYSICS

7 Matter, passivity, and panorganic vitalism, 1670–71 255
   1. Material difficulties 257
   2. Material progress 261
   3. From passivity to vitality 270
      Panorganic vitalism 273
      Panorganic vitalism and the Passivity Problem 281
   4. Other evidence 282

8 Phenomenalism and Preestablished Harmony, 1671 300
   1. Gap between the apparent and the real 302
## CONTENTS

2. Thinking about Preestablished Harmony 309
   Sixth note from the *Elements of natural law* 314
   *On perceiving and thinking* 319

3. Metaphysical cohesion and Preestablished Harmony 329
   Resurrection, core of substance, and Prearranged Diffusion 331
   Eucharist, core of substance, and Prearranged Diffusion 335

4. Preestablished Harmony and the Principle of Sufficient Reason 340

9 Preestablished Harmony, late 1671–early 1672 345
   1. *Studies on the universal characteristic* 345
   2. Metaphysics of *Studies on the universal characteristic* 360
      Purity of mind and changeability of substance 362
      Activity and passivity in the passive principle 365
      Emanation, instantiation, and clarity 366
      Perception and unity, sympathy and difference 372
      Unity, diversity, and Preestablished Harmony 378

3. Method and metaphysics, 1670–1672 381

10 Final steps toward the mature philosophy, 1672–79 385
   1. Early Paris years, 1672–73 388
      The *Philosopher’s confession* 389
      Physical papers of 1672 397
      *On the true method in philosophy and theology* 403
   2. Substance and plenitude, 1676 408
      Theory of corporeal substance 409
      Plenitude and minds: *On the secrets of the sublime or on the greatest of things* 413
      Plenitude and traces 419
      Plenitude and distinctness: *Meditation on the principle of the individual* 421
   3. Substance and divinity, 1676 427
      Emanative Harmony 427
      Preestablished Harmony 436
   4. Completeness and truth, 1676–79 441
      Substances, aggregates, and completeness 442
      Substances, subjects, and truth 448
   5. Matters of interpretation 451

Conclusion: the truth behind the *First truths* 462
   1. Metaphysics of Method 462
   2. Metaphysics of Substance and Metaphysics of Divinity 468
   3. Leibniz and seventeenth-century philosophy and science 471
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I (Not exactly) First truths</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II Leibniz’s original assumptions</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index Locorum</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

This book is really two books in one, each of which comes with its own set of intellectual debts. The first, which is my PhD thesis and for which Cambridge University Press originally gave me a contract, was conceived at Princeton University, researched at the Leibniz Archives at the University of Münster (Germany), and completed at the University of Notre Dame. As a graduate student at Princeton, I had the opportunity to meet and work with Margaret Wilson, Dan Garber, and Bob Sleigh, whose philosophical acumen, scholarly skills, and personal generosity have inspired me over the years. My research in Germany was funded by the Fulbright Commission and encouraged by the editors of Leibniz’s philosophical writings at the Leibniz Forschungsstelle. Gerhard Biller, Martin Schneider, and especially Professor Heinrich Schepers helped me to find my way through the labyrinth of Leibniz’s papers. During the time I spent at the University of Notre Dame, Ernan McMullin, Dick Foley, Howie Wettstein, and Phil Quinn encouraged the completion of my thesis. I also benefited from the support of the intellectual community at the University of California, Irvine, and from a grant awarded by the American Council for Learned Studies. Among the people who made helpful comments on the original manuscript, from which major parts of chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the present book are taken, I would like particularly to thank Don Rutherford, Bernard Reginster, unnamed readers for Cambridge University Press, Phil Quinn, Alan Nelson, Stuart Brown, Ohad Nachtomy, Mark Kulstad, and Stephen Menn.

The second book was conceived during a second lengthy research trip to Germany, this time supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Although I had returned to the Leibniz Archives to prepare the thesis for publication, in my attempt to answer some questions that remained from my earlier research, I discovered Leibniz’s youthful Platonism and the Platonism of his teachers. With this recognition, I was forced to rethink everything but the core of my original interpretation. Chapters 5 through 10 of the book are based on the research funded by the Humboldt Foundation, some of which took place in Oxford. My colleague at the University of Oslo, Eyfi Emilsson, has greatly helped me grasp the rudiments of Plotinian metaphysics, while Sarah Hutton has enlightened me on matters concerning early modern Platonism more generally.

Terence Moore, my editor at Cambridge University Press, and my colleagues at Columbia University (especially Isaac Levi) have been patient...
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

and supportive while I extended my original manuscript nearly four-fold. During the completion of this second project, the understanding and sympathy of my partner, Stephen Grover, and our children Harris and Josiah Mercer have been constant and unending, not unlike the One itself. Among the people who have made helpful comments on the final manuscript, I would like particularly to thank Eyfi Emilsson, Dan Garber, Mark Kulstad, Alan Gabbey, Ed Curley, Justin Smith, Ric Arthur, Sean Greenburg, Charlotte Methuen, Joseph McAlhany, Tom Collins, and especially Stephen Grover.

In the tedious process of finishing this book, I have benefited greatly from the women in my life. Among philosophers, I would like to thank Penelope Maddy, Sue Weinberg, Lisa Lloyd, Eileen O’Neill, and especially Margaret Wilson; among the non-philosophers, there are Linda Nagle, Lucy Perrotta, Margaret Harris Grover, Janet Rodriguez, Sharon Ullman, and especially Jo Mercer. Each, in her own way, has been a source of strength and inspiration.
References to Leibniz’s works

My primary source is *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923. I abbreviate my references as follows: capital roman numerals = series number; lower case roman numerals = volume number; arabic numerals = page number. Because the fourth volume of series six is itself three volumes (A, B, C) and because the pagination is consecutive, there will be some citations in which the page number is more than three digits. For example, VI iv [B] 1444 = series six, volume four (part B), page one thousand four hundred and forty four. Each text in each volume of the Academy edition is numbered. When I refer to a whole text as opposed to only part of it, I sometimes refer to it by its number. For example, Leibniz’s thesis, *Metaphysical Disputation on the Principle of Individuation* = VI i N.1.

Leibniz published very little during his lifetime. To distinguish between published and unpublished works, I capitalize all the words in the title of the published ones and only the first word in the title of unpublished ones.

Abbreviations


Translations

My policy is to cite the primary source and, in those cases when there is a translated version of the passage, to cite the translation after a colon. As a translator, my goal has been to stay close to the original text and to include Leibniz’s capitalization of key terms. Therefore, I have often deviated from the translation cited. In cases where the original language is very unclear, I have attached an original language quotation to the citation in the note. Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.