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Mind and Body

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's philosophical reflections on mind and body. It first considers Leibniz's distinction between substance and aggregate, referring to the former as a being that must have true unity (what he calls *unum per se*) and to the latter as simply a collection of other beings. It then describes Leibniz's extension of the term "substance" to monads and other things such as animals and living beings. It also examines Leibniz's views about the union of mind and body, whether mind and body interact, and how interaction is related to union. More specifically, it asks whether mind and body together constitute an *unum per se* and analyzes Leibniz's account of the per se unity of mind-body composites. In addition, the chapter explores the problem of soul-body union as opposed to mind-body union and concludes by discussing Leibniz's explanation of soul-body interaction using a system of pre-established harmony.

Keywords: Leibniz, mind, body, substance, aggregate, unum per se, mind-body union, soul-body union, soul, pre-established harmony

Introduction

Leibniz systematically distinguishes between substances and aggregates. A substance is a being that must have true unity (Leibniz calls it an *unum per se*), whereas an aggregate is merely a collection of other beings and not itself a single thing or a substance. An aggregate has merely accidental unity, which, in Leibniz's view, originates in some mind perceiving the collection together (Leibniz calls it an *unum per accidens*). Leibniz illustrates this distinction by contrasting, for example, herds and armies (aggregates) with sheep and soldiers (substances). Characterizing substance as *unum per se* fits rather nicely with the account we find in Leibniz's *Monadology* (1714); that is, that the world is constituted by the harmonious perceptions and appetites of infinitely many simple, active, mind-like substances—what he calls *monads*. A monad, insofar as it is *simple*, is not at risk of failing to meet Leibniz's strict criteria of substantial unity.

Yet for many years prior to the *Monadology*, and even in the *Monadology* itself, Leibniz appears willing to extend the term "substance" to things other than monads: *animals* and, more broadly, *living beings* are characterized as substances. But living beings are not simple substances; they are composites of a soul (or dominant monad) and an organic body, a body that is itself constituted by a mass of infinitely many other substances. Given that a substance must be an *unum per se*, can Leibniz establish that living beings are substances? Or should he conclude that the only substances are simple, mind-like monads?

One way to approach these questions is to consider Leibniz's views about the union of mind and body. The central questions I address in this chapter are:

1. Do the mind and body interact? How is interaction related to union?

2. Do mind and body together constitute an *unum* per se? If so, what is Leibniz's account of the per se unity of mind-body composites?

A few points of clarification are required concerning how we should understand the character of these questions for Leibniz. For some philosophers (Descartes, for instance), the human being is the only mind-body composite. For Leibniz, however, the problem of mind-body union is not restricted to human beings but has a broader application. *Soul*, for Leibniz, is a genus with various species falling under it: rational souls—minds—and nonrational souls—what Leibniz sometimes calls “forms.” For this reason, I will characterize the central question as one of *soul-body union*, rather than *mind-body union*. Furthermore, in Leibniz's view, the soul and body are not really distinct substances in their own right (as they are for Descartes and other dualists). The human body, on Leibniz's view, is not a material substance at all, but a collection or aggregate of substances—what Leibniz often calls “second matter.” (There are also difficult questions about the nature of the substances that make up these aggregates—are they composites themselves or are they mind-like simple substances?—that I will ignore at present.) Leibniz's account of the soul differs from the Cartesian one, too. In some texts, Leibniz characterizes the soul as a substance in its own right, whereas at other times he more guardedly describes the soul as only the *form* of a substance.

With all of this in mind, Leibniz's answers to our posed questions can be outlined as follows, leaving the details aside to be developed later. Leibniz denies that soul and body genuinely interact, but he does not deny the *appearance* of interaction. He proposes the system of pre-established harmony to explain the apparent interaction of soul and body.¹ However, I will argue that pre-established harmony is not an explanation of the *unity* of soul-body composites, although it does account for *union* in another sense.² Despite this fact, there are texts in which Leibniz seems to claim that soul and body together constitute an *unum* per se.³ Nevertheless, I will provide reason to think that Leibniz does not provide an account of soul-body unity. I will suggest that if there are any prospects in Leibniz for providing such an account, they do not rely on any relation (such as pre-established harmony) between the soul and the body but, instead, on certain *structural features* of soul-body composites.

Soul-Body Interaction

Pre-established harmony is Leibniz's alternative to the extant seventeenth-century accounts of soul-body interaction. In the *New System*, after discussing the shortcomings of Descartes's and Malebranche's treatments of the problem, Leibniz writes, “I was led, little by little, to a view that surprised me, but which seems inevitable, and which, in fact, has very great advantages and rather considerable beauty.”⁴ He goes on to elaborate his view:

[W]e must say that God originally created the soul (and any other real unity) in such a way that everything must arise for it from its own depths, through a perfect *spontaneity* relative to itself, and yet with a perfect *conformity* relative to external things.⁵

Although there is, strictly speaking, no causal interaction between soul and body, pre-established harmony stands in for an account of interaction, since, as Leibniz continues,

[t]here will be a perfect agreement among all these substances, producing the same effect that would be noticed if they communicated through the transmission of species or qualities, as the common philosophers imagine they do.⁶

Although not a causal relation, pre-established harmony is nonetheless a relation between soul and body, one that explains the appearance of their interaction.

In these passages, we find two main features of pre-established harmony:

Spontaneity: Everything that happens to a soul arises from its own depths. That is, for any state, x , of a soul, s , the causal ancestry of x contains only states of s .

Conformity: The states of soul and body *agree* with each other. That is, for any state of the soul, y , there is a corresponding state of its body, y^* , such that y and y^* agree with one another, though they have no causal connection.

Taken together, spontaneity and conformity explain the appearance of interaction between soul and body. Leibniz sometimes says that the soul and body each follow their own laws (the soul the laws of final causes, the body the laws of efficient causes or mechanical laws), yet they agree perfectly with one another.⁷ That is, a soul really does cause its own states, but it does not cause the states of any body. (One thing to note about these passages is that at no time is causal efficacy attributed to a body. A body, for Leibniz, is an aggregate of substances, and any causal efficacy it appears to have is ultimately explained by the *forms* of the substances in the aggregate. I will not develop this any further here, though.)

It is also worth noting that pre-established harmony has both a specific and a general application. The specific application of pre-established harmony explains the appearance of interaction between soul and body. The general application explains the appearance of interaction between any two (or more) substances. One way to express this aspect of Leibniz's view is to say that he denies *intersubstantial causation*—causation between substances—but accepts *intrasubstantial causation*—causation within a substance. Neither do minds, strictly speaking, interact with bodies, nor do bodies, strictly speaking, interact with each other. As such, my soul and body not only *conform* or *agree* with each other, they agree with all other created substances as well. Thus, the notion of *harmony* has various senses for Leibniz, including soul-body harmony, intersubstantial harmony, harmony between types of explanations (i.e., mechanical and final-causal), and so on.

At this point, we might wonder: how does pre-established harmony relate to soul-body union? I will take up this question at more length in the following section. For now, let us consider the following, slightly more modest question: how does pre-established harmony even explain the connection between a particular soul and body such that they jointly make up one animal? Given that the soul and body do not, strictly speaking, interact, and furthermore that each substance harmonizes with every other substance, not only the substances contained in its body, how can Leibniz explain the privileged connection between the soul and body of an individual animal? Leibniz's account is that souls perceive their own bodies more distinctly than they perceive anything else in the world.⁸ Thus, I perceive my hands, legs, and feet more distinctly than I perceive the chair I am sitting on or the table in front of me. This may sound somewhat surprising. As Antoine Arnauld plausibly objects, it seems odd to claim that I perceive, for example, the motions of lymph in my lymphatic vessels more distinctly than I perceive the motions of Saturn, since the motions of lymph in my lymphatic vessels are effectively inscrutable to me.⁹ Leibniz's response to Arnauld's question is somewhat puzzling: he claims that I perceive my body more distinctly than, for example, the motions of Saturn because my body provides my soul with a particular perspective on the world.¹⁰ That is, as Leibniz has written earlier in the correspondence with Arnauld, a particular mind "is an expression of the phenomena of all other bodies in accordance with the relationship to its own."¹¹ In effect, my body is the lens through which my soul sees the rest of the world. To make this slightly more palatable, it must be kept in mind that, for Leibniz, the entire physical world is interconnected such that, at any given time, my body expresses the entire universe.¹² This provides some basis for the view that I can perceive the universe beyond my body simply by perceiving my body. Ultimately, then, the distinctness of the perceptual relation explains why my body is *my body* despite the fact that my soul and body do not strictly interact and that my soul conforms with the entire universe.

Pre-established Harmony and Soul-Body Unity

Although pre-established harmony explains the apparent interaction of soul and body, I will argue that it does not explain how soul and body together constitute an *unum* per se, although it does explain *union* in another sense. Before we can address this issue, however, we must consider whether and to what extent Leibniz is committed to the unity of soul-body composites in the first place.

There is an ongoing controversy in the literature concerning Leibniz's commitment to *corporeal substances*. Daniel Garber has suggested that Leibniz's basic ontological commitments change dramatically between what he calls the "Middle Years" (roughly 1680–1700) and the "Mature Period" (roughly 1700–16).¹³ (There is also controversy about where to draw the dividing lines between the different periods of Leibniz's thought, although nothing I say here turns on the particular dates I have chosen.) Garber's contention is that, in the Middle Years, Leibniz is committed to *bona fide* corporeal substances, composites of soul and body that have true, substantial unity, and that these corporeal substances are the basic constituents of reality. Later on, this commitment disappears and the fundamental constituents of reality come to be simple, partless, active substances, which Leibniz calls "monads." However, others, Robert Adams and Robert Sleigh to cite two canonical sources, argue that Leibniz's commitment

to simple substances is already implicit in his views during the so-called Middle Years.¹⁴ That the commitment to simple substances comes to take center stage does not, therefore, betray a radical change of mind on Leibniz's part, but instead is just the natural development of his implicit commitments or maybe just an original commitment being made explicit. A third option worth noting, which has been highlighted by some of the recent literature on this topic, is that, even during the Mature Period, Leibniz uses the language of corporeal (or sometimes composite) substance.¹⁵ This suggests that the shift between corporeal substances and monads may not be primarily a developmental shift. Perhaps a better way to understand what is going on is to think of Leibniz as wrestling with different conceptions of substance throughout his entire career. I do not aim to settle this issue here, but merely to keep it in view while considering Leibniz's engagement with the question of soul-body unity.

This dispute has clear implications for the topic of soul-body unity because, if Leibniz was always a monadologist, it is possible that he never took seriously the view that soul and body together make up an *unum* per se. If this is correct, any search for Leibniz's account of soul-body unity will be in vain. I cannot definitively rule this option out. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that there are texts in which Leibniz at least seems to characterize soul-body composites, the human being in particular, as per se unities.¹⁶ For this reason, it seems worthwhile to look for an account.

A good place to start the search is with pre-established harmony itself. A *prima facie* reason to think pre-established harmony is a good candidate is that Leibniz often presents pre-established harmony as an account of soul-body *union*. One example is in Leibniz's *New System*, published in 1695, the full title of which is *New System of the Nature of Substances and their Communication, and of the Union which Exists between the Soul and the Body* (1695).¹⁷ The account of union we find there is pre-established harmony. Some commentators have suggested, on this basis, that pre-established harmony should be read as an account of the *unity* of soul-body composites. Daniel Garber, for instance, writes that "since the result of a union is a unity, and a genuine unity is, for Leibniz, a substance, this suggests that the hypothesis of concomitance [i.e., pre-established harmony] is supposed to account for the fact that mind and body together constitute a substance."¹⁸ However, there are reasons to resist this interpretation of Leibniz's view.

In an exchange with the Jesuit Father Tournemine between 1704 and 1708, Leibniz denies both that pre-established harmony provides an account of soul-body unity and that he ever intended it to do so. Tournemine had voiced concern that, although Leibniz often claims that pre-established harmony fares better than the Cartesians (by which Leibniz means the occasionalists) as an account of soul-body union, it does no better at explaining their unity.¹⁹ Here is Leibniz's reply:

I have to admit that I would be greatly mistaken if I objected against the Cartesians that the agreement which, according to them, God maintains immediately between the soul and the body, does not create a genuine unity, because most certainly my *pre-established harmony* could not do it any better. My aim was to explain naturally what they explain by perpetual miracles, and in doing so I attempted only to give an explanation of the phenomena, that is to say, of the relation we perceive between the soul and the body. But since this metaphysical union, which is added on to that, is not a phenomenon, and as we have not even been given an intelligible notion of it, I have not taken it upon myself to look for an explanation of it.²⁰

In this passage, Leibniz claims that the goal of pre-established harmony is (and was) to explain "the relation we perceive between the soul and the body," by which he means their apparent interaction. He distinguishes this goal from a different more ambitious one: to explain the "metaphysical union" between soul and body. In a letter to Burcher de Volder, which Leibniz wrote after reading Tournemine's objection but before publishing his reply, Leibniz characterizes the hope for an account of metaphysical union as "utopian."²¹ In this passage, Leibniz even appears dubious that the notion of metaphysical union has been given an intelligible characterization.

If we turn back to the *New System*, it is possible to see merely the aim that Leibniz suggests: an account of *interaction*. There, Leibniz characterizes pre-established harmony as a "mutual relationship, arranged in advance in each substance in the universe, which produces what we call their communication, and which alone constitutes *the union of soul and body*."²² This brief formulation of his view, read in light of his remark to Tournemine, can be seen as further indication that by "union" Leibniz means "communication" (i.e., the deflationary sense of "interaction" developed earlier in this chapter) and nothing more. If we turn to the *Monadology*, we find Leibniz using "union" and "conformity" almost interchangeably: "these principles [i.e., the principles of pre-established

harmony] have given me a way of naturally explaining the union, or rather the conformity of the soul and the organic body."²³

If pre-established harmony was always intended to account only for interaction, there is good reason to resist the claim that pre-established harmony explains the unity of soul-body composites. Interaction and unity are importantly different. Two things can interact without thereby constituting a unity.²⁴ When the sense of "union" involved in pre-established harmony is understood as "interaction," the plausibility of inferring *genuine unity* from *union*, as Garber does, quickly disappears.

Soul-Body Unity

Despite this, it is certainly possible that Leibniz is being disingenuous in his reply to Tournemine. Perhaps he has changed his view but is attempting to save face by denying that he ever had "utopian" hopes for pre-established harmony. Perhaps Tournemine's remarks prompted Leibniz to consider more deeply something he had been taking for granted.²⁵ Furthermore, if we look at some texts from Leibniz's Middle Years, it seems that Leibniz does, at least during this period, believe that soul and body together make up an *unum per se*. How can this be reconciled with Leibniz's claim that anything beyond "the phenomena" is a utopian dream, one that he never set about attempting to realize?²⁶

There are various passages from Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld, in which Leibniz attributes true unity to the composite of soul and body. Consider the following:

Supposing that there is a soul or *substantial form* in beasts or other corporeal substances, one must reason with respect to them on this point as we all reason with respect to man, who is *an entity endowed with a true unity* that his soul gives to him, notwithstanding the fact that the mass of his body is divided into organs, vessels, humors, spirits, and that the parts are undoubtedly full of an infinite number of other corporeal substances endowed with their own forms.²⁷

There are two aspects of this passage that I would like to highlight, although I will focus on the first for now:

1. Leibniz claims that the soul *gives true unity to the human being*. This suggests that a soul-body composite, in this case a human being, can be an *unum per se*.
2. Leibniz's phrasing is rather tentative: *we must reason* with respect to animals as *we all reason* with respect to man. It is unclear, therefore, how strong Leibniz's commitment really is here.

In another letter to Arnauld, Leibniz writes:

[I]t is the animated substance to which the matter belongs that is *truly one being*, and the matter taken as a mass in itself is only a pure phenomenon or well-founded appearance, as also are space and time.²⁸

In this passage, true unity is attributed to "the animated substance." Although it may be possible to understand "the animated substance" as indicating the soul, I think there is good reason to think that Leibniz means to indicate the soul-body composite. Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld is full of language suggestive of a roughly hylomorphic conception of substance. This is displayed by Leibniz when he says, "[a]s our body is the matter, and the soul is the form of our substance, it is the same with other bodily substances."²⁹ So it is natural to read "the animated substance" as referring to the soul-body composite.

What are we to make of Leibniz's claim to Tournemine that he never intended to explain the "metaphysical union" of soul and body in light of these attributions (and others like them) of true unity to the soul-body composite? Some commentators have identified the exchange with Tournemine as a turning point for Leibniz's theory of substance, after which he realized that he was no longer entitled to maintain the true unity of soul-body composites.³⁰ However, I think it is more likely that Leibniz is being straightforward with Tournemine; that is, that Leibniz never intended pre-established harmony to account for the unity of soul-body composites. As I see it, there are two ways to maintain this view. The first is to find a basis for downplaying the importance of the passages written to Arnauld (and others like them). The second (which I favor, as will become clear) is to consider that if Leibniz did in fact think that soul-body composites were true unities, he might have thought so, not in virtue of some relation (such as pre-established harmony) between the soul and the body, but for other reasons. I will briefly consider the first option

before turning, in the following section, to the second.

That all of the texts just considered are written to Arnauld provides some reason to wonder: does Leibniz equally attribute true unity to soul-body composites outside of the Arnauld correspondence? Could Leibniz's friendliness toward a roughly hylomorphic theory of substance be explained away as a nod to Catholic orthodoxy, one which wouldn't ruffle the feathers of the Catholic Arnauld?³¹ It is not altogether clear why Catholic Orthodoxy would require a commitment to corporeal substances with true unity, and none of the discussions of this possibility has provided a compelling explanation.³²

So, although it is possible that Leibniz's willingness to use the language of *corporeal substances* is ultimately a concession to the Catholics, more evidence is needed.

One reason, internal to the texts themselves and on the basis of which we might suspect that the commitment to corporeal substances is not very strong is that, as noted earlier, Leibniz's phrasing in some of the passages considered is rather cautious: *one must reason* with respect to animals as *we all reason* with respect to man. Perhaps Leibniz is simply noting a way in which "we all reason" rather than expressing a genuine commitment.

Still, there might be other, deeper theological commitments driving Leibniz's commitment to corporeal substances, although not Catholic ones. In particular, Leibniz's account of the Incarnation appears to be modeled after the union between soul and body and furthermore to require a proper substantial union between different substances.³³ The Incarnation is a mystery that Leibniz, as a Lutheran, would be motivated to accommodate. It is not only Catholic Orthodoxy, then, that might push Leibniz to account for soul-body unity, but also theological commitments much closer to home.

True Unity

Despite the evidence that Leibniz is willing to characterize soul-body composites as true unities, I do not think that pre-established harmony explains the unity of soul-body composites or that Leibniz ever thought so. Instead, I suggest that the more likely candidate for an account of unity is the *structure* of soul-body composites. Although I do not think that Leibniz ever argues for the per se unity of soul-body composites on this basis, I do think that it provides a way of understanding his stated commitment to this unity.

At least as early as 1685, Leibniz expressed the view that true unity involves *having no parts*. In the following passage, Leibniz characterized the difference between substances and aggregates in terms of having and not having parts, respectively:

But actually no entity that is really one is composed of a plurality of parts, and every substance is indivisible, and those things that have parts are not entities, but merely phenomena.³⁴

This passage was written near the beginning of Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld. It very strongly indicates that, at this time, Leibniz believed that *having no parts* is at least a necessary condition of *being a true unity*. Of course, more needs to be said about what it means to have or not have parts. I consider this further later. For now, the passage provides some insight into why and in what sense Leibniz would be willing to attribute true unity to a soul-body composite.

If we take another look at the quoted passages, the ones in which Leibniz attributes true unity to soul-body composites, we find that none of them offers a positive account of the unity of composites. Rather, each states that composite substances (e.g., human beings) are true unities despite the fact that the bodies of such composites have parts.³⁵ Consider once more: "man... is an entity endowed with a true unity that his soul gives to him, not withstanding the fact that the mass of his body is divided into organs, vessels, humors, spirits."³⁶

In my view, Leibniz's attributions of true unity to soul-body composites are, therefore, not based on pre-established harmony but instead rely on the structure of composites. At least two questions arise at this point:

1. How can Leibniz maintain that a soul-body composite such as a human being has no parts? Is it not plain that we have parts: cells, limbs, organs, and so on?
2. Why are soul and body themselves not considered *parts* of the composite substance? Even if we can

establish—in light of question 1—that the complexity of the body of a substance does not entail that the substance has parts, shouldn't we still conclude that a substance is composed of (at least) two parts: a body and a soul?

The problem indicated by question 1 can be addressed by distinguishing the *body of a substance* from the *substance itself*. In this way, Leibniz can maintain that the body of a substance has parts, although the substance itself has no parts. The body of a substance is still an aggregate for Leibniz, even though it is the body of a substance. There are various passages in which Leibniz clearly distinguishes the substance from its body, one of which we have seen earlier. In these passages, Leibniz attributes unity to the substance but not to the body. He makes analogous claims about the persistence of substances. Consider the following passage from the *New Essays*:

So we must acknowledge that organic bodies as well as others remain “the same” only in appearance, and not strictly speaking.... [A]s for substantial beings, *quae uno spiritu continentur* as one of the ancient jurists says, meaning that a certain indivisible spirit animates them: one can rightly say that they remain perfectly “the same individual” in virtue of this soul or spirit which makes the *I* in substances which think.³⁷

“Organic bodies” is Leibniz’s term for the bodies of substances. This passage claims that the body of a substance does not persist, although the substance itself does. In light of the distinction between the substance and the body of the substance, we can say that the things mentioned earlier—cells, limbs, organs—may be parts of the *body of the substance*, but they are not parts of the *substance itself*.

Leibniz faces more difficulty in attempting to respond to question 2. Why are the soul and body not parts of the composite substance? There is a preliminary response open to Leibniz in light of how he defines “part,” but it faces certain difficulties, as we will see. A part is, for Leibniz, a *homogeneous requisite*.³⁸ Soul and body might fail to be parts of the substance, on this definition, because they are not *homogeneous*, they are not the same kind of thing as each other or as the substance they jointly constitute.

As Leibniz writes to De Volder, “substantial unities are not parts, but the foundations of phenomena.”³⁹ To keep track of this, I will call soul and body *constituents* of composite substances (not parts). We can then distinguish two types of composition: *part-wise composition* versus *constituent-wise composition*. As we have seen in the earlier quoted texts, Leibniz is clear that part-wise composition is incompatible with per se unity. However, the presence of constituents could still be compatible with per se unity. If so, this would allow Leibniz to maintain the per se unity of the soul-body composite despite the presence of a plurality of constituents: so long as the constituents are not parts, per se unity can be maintained.

This line of response is complicated, however, by the fact that Leibniz does not give a straightforwardly hylomorphic account of substance. Unlike Aristotle, for Leibniz, soul and body are not strictly heterogeneous because a body is ultimately resolvable into a collection of soul-like monads. So, the soul is a monad, and the body is a collection of monads. In what sense, then, do the soul and body fail to be homogeneous? This line of reasoning pushes toward the conclusion that composite substances do, in fact, have parts and thus can be nothing more than mere aggregates.

Nonetheless, there may be some room for Leibniz to resist this conclusion. Despite the apparent homogeneity of the soul and body on the monadological analysis, Leibniz is explicit that monads are not parts. One way to make sense of this is to move away from relying on *homogeneity* to characterize parts and rely instead on the fact that, for Leibniz, parts are always essential to the wholes they compose. This gives a more robust way to distinguish between the parts of an aggregate and the constituents of a substance. As Leibniz writes, “what constitutes the essence of an entity through aggregation is only a state of being of its constituent entities.”⁴⁰ Unlike a substance, a change to the parts of an aggregate entails a change to the identity of the aggregate. If, for example, the MacLean herd is made up of three sheep, Angus, Barclay, and Calum, and Calum leaves the herd and is replaced by Dugald, then the MacLean herd is not, strictly speaking, the same herd anymore. Calum himself, by contrast, continues to be the same sheep even if he grows, gets shorn, or has his hooves trimmed. On this characterization, monads will fail to be parts because the removal of any given monad does not affect the identity of the composite. As Leibniz writes in the *Monadology*, “all bodies are in a perpetual state of flux, like rivers, and parts are constantly coming into them and going out.”⁴¹ Substances, however, “remain perfectly ‘the same individual.’”⁴² This provides a way, which does not rely merely on a terminological distinction, to maintain that soul-body composites, even

when understood as collections of monads, do not have parts.

But even if Leibniz thinks of soul-body composites along the lines I have suggested, as constituent-wise composites rather than part-wise composites, this does not fully answer the question of soul-body unity. At best, understanding the soul and body as constituents rather than parts of composites meets one necessary condition of substantial unity; namely, not having parts. But it seems that some account of the unity of the constituents—of soul and body—is still needed. Even granting that soul and body are constituents in the sense just elaborated, how could it be that a soul-body composite is not a *composition* in any problematic sense?

Here, we might consider two different ways to think about the structure of composite substance, formulated in terms of “form” and “matter”:

1. *Actual-Constituent View*: Form and matter are entities in their own right, so related as to compose a unified composite substance.
2. *Dual-Aspect View*: Form and matter are *not* entities in their own right, but aspects of a single thing, which we can consider separately (but which cannot exist separately).

Each of these views is represented within the scholastic-Aristotelian tradition to some degree, and Leibniz would have been familiar with them both.⁴³ The Dual-Aspect view more nearly aligns with Aristotle himself, although Aquinas also held something like this view, with the caveat that the human soul (being immortal) can in some way *subsist* without any matter. The Actual-Constituent view appears to have been held by, for example, William Ockham and Duns Scotus.⁴⁴ Leibniz’s own texts fall on both sides of this divide.

Which of these two conceptions of substance one favors has important consequences for whether and in what sense the “composition” of soul and body is compatible with true unity. On the Dual-Aspect view, one need not explain how the composition of form and matter results in a being with true unity because form and matter are not things in their own right. On this view, soul and body need not be even *constituents*, but instead something like *aspects* of the individual being. As such, no account of how they come together to form a true unity would be needed. On the Actual-Constituent view, on the other hand, some account does appear to be needed as to how these two (or more) distinct entities can compose a being with true unity. Some would deny that such an account can be given at all. Aquinas, for example, denies that more than one actual constituent can combine to form a being with true unity.⁴⁵

Because the Dual-Aspect view seems much more congenial to the possibility of accounting for the per se unity of a composite substance, it would be nice if there was evidence that this is how Leibniz understands the structure of composite substance. But, as I mentioned, the evidence is at best divided. Some commentators have picked up on the evidence inclining toward the Dual-Aspect view and proposed that Leibniz held something like Aquinas’s view.⁴⁶ There are, however, at least two reasons to resist attributing the Dual-Aspect view to Leibniz. First, even during the Middle Years, Leibniz characterizes bodies as aggregates of substances.⁴⁷ This suggests that the Actual-Constituent view is a better fit, insofar as substances are beings in their own right. Second, even by the earliest years of his Mature Period, the Dual-Aspect view seems to fit more neatly as a characterization of monads than of composite substances. Consider the following well-known passage from a 1703 letter to De Volder:

I therefore distinguish: (1) the primitive entelechy, i.e., the soul; (2) matter, namely, primary matter, i.e., primitive passive power; (3) the monad completed by these two things; (4) the mass, i.e., the secondary matter, i.e., the organic machine, for which innumerable subordinate monads come together; and (5) the animal, i.e., the corporeal substance, which the monad dominating in the machine makes one.⁴⁸

In this passage, Leibniz claims that the primitive entelechy (i.e., the form) combines with the primitive passive power (i.e., the matter) to complete, not the composite substance as we might expect, but the *simple substance* (i.e., the monad). The dominant monad is then distinct from and joined to its body, which is itself a mass of subordinate monads.

Given this characterization, it seems difficult to see how Leibniz could understand composite substance along the lines of the Dual-Aspect view. The composite substance is fairly clearly characterized as a collection of monads—that is, as independent beings—that bear certain relations to one another (the relevant relation here being *domination*). Consequently, it seems that he must think about composites along the lines of the Actual-Constituent

view. But, given Leibniz's exacting standards of substantial unity, this seems to preclude an account of the per se unity of composite substance—Leibniz appears to be of the same mind as Aquinas on this point. (But note also that even in this passage Leibniz claims that the machine is “one.”)

Despite the difficulty Leibniz faces in accounting for the per se unity of composites on the Actual-Constituent view, all hope may not be lost. Paul Lodge (2014) has recently suggested that the relation of monadic domination—articulated in (5) of the passage to De Volder just quoted—might ground the substantial unity of soul-body composites.⁴⁹ On Lodge's account, domination might be sufficient to ground per se unity because it provides an internal principle of unity for the collection of monads that make up the composite.⁵⁰ That this relation is internal marks a clear difference between soul-body composites and aggregates. Aggregates, such as flocks of sheep or armies, have an *external* principle of unity: some mind grouping the parts of the aggregate on the basis of relations that hold between them. For example, I think of the sheep Angus, Barclay, Calum, and Dugald as *the MacLean herd* because they are standing near one another in the same meadow. Unlike this example, the relation grounding the unity of a composite (i.e., domination) is *internal* to the collection. Furthermore, on Lodge's account, domination does not rely on the perception or grouping by some finite mind (as with the herd of sheep) but only on facts, represented by the divine mind, about the relations between the relevant monads. Thus, the domination relation, on Lodge's account, does not yield an aggregate in the way that my mental grouping of the four sheep does. For this reason, Lodge characterizes domination as a “non-aggregate relation.”⁵¹

As Lodge himself notes, this approach faces some textual obstacles. For example, Leibniz writes to Des Bosses that “composite substance does not formally consist in monads and their subordination.”⁵² Although not an explicit denial that the domination relation can ground the unity of composites, this text tends in that direction. Nevertheless, as I see it, Lodge's (2013) approach has two significant virtues. First, it reckons with the places in which Leibniz characterizes soul-body composites as having per se unity. We have seen some such texts from Leibniz's correspondence with Arnauld in the 1680s; there are others stretching well into Leibniz's mature philosophy.⁵³ Any approach that abandons the per se unity of composites is forced to explain these texts away somehow. Second, it aligns the question of unity with the question of what sense of “composite” is at stake. Aggregates, such as bodies, are clearly composites in a certain sense. But perhaps, as Lodge suggests, not all composites are aggregates. Or, put in the terms I have elaborated earlier: not all composites have parts. If correct, Lodge's account would provide just what Leibniz, on my account, needs: a way, independent of pre-established harmony, to account for the unity of the actual constituents of a composite substance.⁵⁴

One problem faced by any account given, on Leibniz's behalf, of the unity of soul-body composites is that, in his late correspondence with the Jesuit Bartholomew Des Bosses, Leibniz appears to admit that something more is needed to explain the unity of composite substance. On one interpretation of this correspondence, the lack of an account of the per se unity of composite substance is what prompts Leibniz to consider the introduction of a bond—*vinculum*⁵⁵ (which later becomes the substantial bond; the *vinculum substantiale*⁵⁶)—invoked to account for transubstantiation within the theory of monads. The status of the substantial bond within Leibniz philosophy is the subject of ongoing dispute, and I cannot engage the issue fully here. Still, one way to read the introduction of substantial bonds is to see it as Leibniz's own tacit admission that the Actual-Constituent view creates difficulty for the claim that soul and body constitute a composite with per se unity. This would square with some of the concerns I raised earlier about Leibniz's prospects for accounting for the unity of anything with more than one constituent.

Conclusion

One virtue of the approach I have developed is that it allows us to take Leibniz's remarks to Tournemine at face value. It also allows us to take seriously Leibniz's stated commitment to the per se unity of composite substance, at least in the Middle Years and perhaps beyond. On my interpretation, although Leibniz may have held that soul-body composites have per se unity, he did not hold that pre-established harmony was the explanation of their unity. However, my suggestions do not provide a complete account of the unity of composite substance.

Whether or not Leibniz can ultimately give an account of the per se unity of composites, one important consequence of my view is that the way in which Leibniz understands unity in the early to middle period prefigures very closely the way in which he understands simplicity later on—“simple, that is, without parts.”⁵⁷ This result has a direct bearing on the status of composites in any period of Leibniz's thought. What follows, in my view, is that

composites, understood in the specific sense of part-wise composites, were never part of Leibniz's fundamental ontology. Substances are always noncomposite, in this sense, for Leibniz. Perhaps Leibniz's transition to a monadological metaphysics is ultimately motivated by his inability to account for the unity of anything composite (i.e., anything with more than one part, constituent, element, ingredient, etc.). Or perhaps the transition need not abandon the unity of soul-body composites after all. A great deal hinges on what sense of "composite" is at stake. Relative to what has been achieved here, however, any conclusions on these matters must remain speculative.

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Notes:

(1) Pre-established harmony is also called the *hypothesis of concomitance*. See, e.g., A II ii 53.

(2) Some interpreters suggest Leibniz changed his mind on this issue. See, e.g., Daniel Garber, *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 80; and Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 10.

(3) The texts in which Leibniz seems to characterize soul-body composites as per se unities are often difficult to interpret. First of all, Leibniz rarely uses the phrase "*unum per se*" explicitly, using, for example, "*Ens vere unum*," "*veritablement un estre*," or "*unité véritable*" instead. (I should note that I am treating all such phrases as effectively equivalent, although there might be some reason to resist this.) Second, it is often not altogether clear what the unity is being attributed to; i.e., is it being attributed the soul-body composite or simply the soul? For a representative selection, which is by no means complete, see, e.g., A VI iv 627, A VI iv 1506-1508., A VI iv 1583, A II ii 249, GP IV 395, GP IV 459, GP IV 572.

(4) GP IV 484; AG 143.

(5) GP IV 484; AG 143.

(6) GP IV 484; AG 143.

(7) GP VI 620; AG 223.

(8) A II ii 116; GP II 74.

(9) A II ii 221; GP II 105–106.

(10) A II ii 240; GP II 113.

(11) A II ii 82; GP II 58; LA 65.

(12) GP VI 618.

(13) See Daniel Garber, "Leibniz and the foundations of physics: The Middle Years," in *The Natural Philosophy of Leibniz*, edited by K. Okruhlik and J. R. Brown (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1985), pp. 27–130; and Garber, *Leibniz*, p. 382.

(14) See Robert C. Sleigh Jr., *Leibniz and Arnauld: A Commentary on Their Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and Robert M. Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

(15) See, e.g., Jeff McDonough, "Leibniz's conciliatory account of substance," in *Philosopher's Imprint* 13/6 (2013),

pp. 1–23; Look-Rutherford, Introduction; and Richard T. W. Arthur and Peter Lopston, “Leibniz’s body realism: Two interpretations,” in *The Leibniz Review* 16 (2006), pp. 1–42.

⁽¹⁶⁾ For discussion of some early texts (late 1660s) in which Leibniz explicitly upholds the unity of soul-body composites, see Maria Rosa Antognazza, “Leibniz’s theory of substance and his metaphysics of the Incarnation,” in *Locke and Leibniz on Substance and Identity*, edited by Paul Lodge and T. W. C. Stoneham (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2014). The text Antognazza discusses in some detail is “De Incarnation Dei.” See A VI.1, 532.

⁽¹⁷⁾ GP IV 477–87.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Garber, *Leibniz*, p. 80.

⁽¹⁹⁾ For Tournemine’s criticism, see René-Joseph de Tournemine, “*Conjectures sur l’Union de l’Ame et du Corps*,” *Journal de Trevoux, ou Memoires pour servir a l’histoire des sciences et des arts*, vol. III (May 1703), 869; WFN 251.

⁽²⁰⁾ GP VI 595; WFN 250.

⁽²¹⁾ GP II 281; Lodge, p. 481.

⁽²²⁾ GP IV 484–85; WFN 18.

⁽²³⁾ GP V 620; AG 223.

⁽²⁴⁾ For further development of this view, see Rozemond “Body and Soul,” pp. 152–156.

⁽²⁵⁾ For development of this view, see Rutherford, *Rational Order*, pp. 273–276.

⁽²⁶⁾ This question treats the question of “metaphysical union” as equivalent to the unity of soul-body composites. There is some reason to worry about this identification, although I cannot fully engage this issue here.

⁽²⁷⁾ A II ii 250–51, n. 77; GP II 120; LA 154; emphasis added.

⁽²⁸⁾ A II ii 249; GP II 118; WFP 131; emphasis added.

⁽²⁹⁾ A II ii 250, n. 77; GP II 119; LA 153.

⁽³⁰⁾ See Rutherford *Rational Order*, pp. 273–276.

⁽³¹⁾ For this suggestion, see R. Adams, *Leibniz*, p. 307; see also Rutherford, *Rational Order*, p. 268.

⁽³²⁾ One possibility derives from the decree by the Fifth Lateran Council (1512) that the soul is to be considered the substantial form of the body. For discussion, including reasons to think this does not explain why the per se unity of corporeal substance is a Catholic commitment, see Rozemond “Body and Soul,” pp. 176–177.

⁽³³⁾ For a very helpful discussion of Leibniz’s account of the Incarnation in relation to his philosophy, see Antognazza, “Incarnation.” However, and as Antognazza also notes, it is not clear whether the type of union required by the Incarnation is the same as the substantial unity required by composite substances.

⁽³⁴⁾ A VI iv 627; Arthur, pp. 272–273.

⁽³⁵⁾ For development of the view that Leibniz presumes rather than argues for the unity of the composite, see Robert C. Sleigh, *Leibniz and Arnauld*, p. 107.

⁽³⁶⁾ A II ii 251; GP II 120; LA 154.

⁽³⁷⁾ NE 231.

⁽³⁸⁾ A II ii 251, n. 77; GP II 120; LA 153. See also GM VII 18–19; L 667–668 for a similar characterization with different terminology.

⁽³⁹⁾ GP II 268; Lodge 463.

(40) GP II 96–97; LA 121.

(41) GP VI 619; WFP 278.

(42) NE 231.

(43) For the development and discussion of a similar distinction, see Look-Rutherford xliii.

(44) For further discussion, see Marilyn Adams, *William Ockham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 633–670.

(45) For discussion, see M. Adams, *Ockham*, pp. 637–638.

(46) For development of this view, see R. Adams, *Leibniz*, pp. 269–274.

(47) See, e.g., GP IV 491; WFP 185.

(48) GP II 252; Lodge, p. 438.

(49) Paul Lodge, “Corporeal Substances as Monadic Composites in Leibniz’s Later Philosophy,” in *Leibniz’s Metaphysics and Adoption of Substantial Forms*, edited by A. Nita (Springer, 2014).

(50) Lodge, “Monadic Composites.”

(51) Lodge, “Monadic Composites.”

(52) Look-Rutherford 371; quoted in Lodge, “Monadic Composites.”

(53) Here is one from 1702: “This substance [i.e., a corporeal substance] of course, is one per se, and not a mere aggregate of many substances, for there is a great difference between an animal, for example, and a flock.” GP IV 395; AG 252

(54) Despite my sympathies with Lodge’s approach, I am hesitant to accept that domination grounds the per se unity of monadic composites. I see some difficulty in differentiating domination from a special case of relations of harmony, which I argued earlier in this chapter would not be sufficient for per se unity.

(55) Look-Rutherford 23. For discussion, see Look-Rutherford lv, lviii–lix.

(56) Look-Rutherford 227. For discussion, see Look-Rutherford lxii–lxxii.

(57) GP VI 607; AG 213.

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