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## Lezioni su Leibniz (1953-54)

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such as Hill, Bacon, Charleton, Digby, White, and Willis all held non-mechanist versions of corpuscularianism.

The central chapter in the book, and the hardest sell, as it were, is the discussion of Boyle in chapter 4. Boyle was the person who introduced the term ‘corpuscular philosophy,’ which he, himself, seemed to identify with the mechanical philosophy, and also the author of the *Origin of Forms and Qualities according to the Corpuscular Philosophy*, a brief for the new mechanism. Clericuzio does not deny that Boyle was a mechanist. Rather, he emphasizes that although in principle everything is reducible to size, shape, and motion, much of Boyle’s work is conducted at the level of “subordinate causes,” in which one can talk about bodies endowed with chemical properties. Though his views were grounded in size, shape, and motion, Boyle was generally uninterested in actually explaining the one in terms of the other, Clericuzio argues. Chapters 5 and 6 treat corpuscular chemistry as it was conducted in the last years of the seventeenth century, in the shadow of Boyle, first in Britain (chapter 5), and then in the rest of Europe (chapter 6).

There are some flaws in the book and its argument. Clericuzio’s style is somewhat abrupt; he tends to jump quickly from one figure to another, and his accounts are sometimes too compressed to be fully intelligible. Also, he has almost nothing to say about Descartes, the arch-mechanist. This is perhaps understandable given his theme—alchemy and corpuscularianism—but both Descartes and his more chemically oriented corpuscularian contemporaries would benefit from the contrast. Finally, Clericuzio does not always distinguish carefully between stronger and weaker versions of his thesis. There are a number of distinct and different ways in which alchemy, corpuscularianism, and mechanism relate. To take two extreme views, some, like Sennert, hold views strongly inconsistent with mechanism, while others, like Boyle, are mechanists in principle, though interested in chemical phenomena and uninterested in reductive mechanistic explanations in practice. But despite these reservations, *Elements, Principles, and Corpuscles* is a valuable addition to the literature, and a helpful corrective to the simplistic views of corpuscularianism and mechanism that have dominated recent discussions.

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Luigi Scaravelli. *Lezioni su Leibniz (1953–54)*. Edited by Gianfranco Brazzini. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2000. Pp. 260. €15.49.

*Lectures on Leibniz* publishes a series of lectures, edited by Gianfranco Brazzini, that were held by Luigi Scaravelli at the University of Pisa in the Academic year 1953/54. Scaravelli was a major ill-starred Italian scholar. Although probably the most significant philosopher in Italy after the death of Benedetto Croce, he nevertheless remained quite unknown. This collection of lectures offers an exceptional opportunity for insight into Scaravelli’s philosophical approach. The volume is structured into two parts. The first studies the physical theory of Descartes, to which a single extensive chapter is devoted, while the second focuses on Leibniz’s philosophy, and is subdivided into three chapters entitled “Physics,” “Logic,” and “Metaphysics.”

The first part starts out from Descartes’s modern philosophical revolution based on a conception of space as a discrete quantum. Leibniz sought to revise such a conception by developing his own physical theory, introducing the idea of continuity (*lex continui*) that allows reduction of space and movement to force (95). Accordingly, Leibniz dissolves the theoretical necessity of space, shifting from physical to metaphysical knowledge. Scaravelli emphasizes the role played by physics within the Leibnizian system of philosophy. Enquiry into the nature of space and movement brings the problem of the infinitesimal calculus to the fore, which Leibniz addresses by formulating a conception of the “simple” basically as an elementary unit. The main idea underlying Scaravelli’s interpretation involves a transition from reality into the metaphysical dimension, which is accomplished by discarding

the ontological character of space, time, and movement, and reducing these concepts to the idea of *conatus* (123). Scaravelli maintains that Leibniz has brought about a radical transformation of physics into psychology. Thus the idea of force becomes one of the two modes of metaphysical substance, whereas the other remains that of consciousness (128). Such a substance is the essence that logic studies as its own subject. Shifting into logic, Scaravelli points out that Leibniz was the reformer of the discipline, formulating the notion of substance as relation (*relatio*), which claims the role of the main category of the reason. According to Scaravelli's interpretation, Leibniz anticipates the concept of subjectivity as synthesis, which later will be developed by Kant in terms of the transcendental philosophy. For the Italian philosopher, Leibniz was the first author to establish a close link between logic and metaphysics, asserting that since logic constitutes objects, there is no difference at all between reality and thought (170). Scaravelli argues, however, that Leibniz totally failed in his endeavour to formulate a combinatorial logic since it was impossible to discover the basic elements with the tools of mathematics, a project which Leibniz defends starting from the early *Ars combinatoria*, continuing up to his late work *Theodicy* (157–8). Scaravelli contends that in the logical theory, Leibniz maintained two different definitions of substance: the traditional nominal and the new relational. Only by preserving the traditional idea of substance was it possible for him to build up a monadistic metaphysics while maintaining an analytical methodology. Analytic thinking was unable to provide a definitive solution to the problem of rationality that the author identifies within the restoration of identity in a separate and contradictory world. Scaravelli points that all these problems derive from the law of continuity.

The proper fallacy of the infinitesimal method comes to the fore in the breakdown of Leibnizian rationality as due to the intrusion of contradiction into the system of philosophy, with which Scaravelli deals in the final part of the volume. Scaravelli discerns the form of contradiction within the logical sorts of truth, necessity and contingency. He defines as contradictory the logical structure of the truth of reason, due to the need to postulate irrational numbers in order to respect the law of continuity. Contradictory also are the possible worlds, which have to maintain identity besides the principle of sufficient reason, which selects among different possibilities on the ground of the freedom of God's will (183). The idea of freedom explains the nature of the principle of sufficient reason, according to which God chooses the best possibility and creates the world. In the author's mind, choosing only on the basis of the moral best represents an escape from philosophy, since ontology borders on an extra-logical point of view. The consequence is that the principle of sufficient reason makes the world irrational.

This book provides an outstanding interpretation of the history of modern philosophy, focusing on a thinker whom Scaravelli considers fundamental for understanding the process toward the dissolution of metaphysics through modernity, which he exposes in his major work, *Critique of Understanding* (1942).

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Richard Glauser. *Berkeley et Les Philosophes du XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle: Perception et Scepticisme*. Sprimont: Mardaga, 1999. Pp. 352. Paper, NP.

One of the central criticisms Berkeley makes of his materialist opponents is that they are inevitably committed to skepticism concerning both the existence and nature of physical objects. This accusation is all the more striking for its uncompromising universality. Berkeley maintains that by virtue of their distinguishing between sensible ideas and the sensible qualities they represent, all materialist philosophers of the seventeenth century are either implicitly or explicitly committed to skepticism. No less striking is the solution put forward by Berkeley as the only possible remedy: the rejection of material substance and identifica-