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## GOD AS BOTH THE UNITY AND MULTIPLICITY IN THE WORLD

The two-part notion of unity and multiplicity stands at the center of Leibniz's philosophy and science. As the titles of the other papers in this collection suggest, it is a topic that extends to most areas of his thought. In this paper, I would like to excavate Leibniz's original understanding of this notion. I will argue that, once we place Leibniz's early texts in their proper philosophical context, we will be able both to identify the theological roots of this two-part notion and to grasp its most fundamental meaning.

Nearly from the beginning of his philosophical career, Leibniz maintained that the harmony of the world was constituted of unity and multiplicity. While it is clear that Leibniz took each of these features to be a criterion of goodness, their exact interrelation has not been easy to discern. Not unreasonably, some commentators have argued that they are in tension with one another. According to Rescher, for example, the "striking feature" of the criteria is that they "are opposed to one another and pull in opposite directions".<sup>1</sup> Some recent commentators have rejected Rescher's conclusion, but have acknowledged the difficulties in resolving the tension.<sup>2</sup> I will argue here that there can be no genuine tension between these good-making criteria because it is God who is both the unity and the multiplicity in the world: for Leibniz, the supreme being is the unity in the sense that the

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Rescher, *Leibniz's Metaphysics of Nature* (Dordrecht: 1981), 11. In the recent discussions by Rescher and others, scholars have focused on those texts by Leibniz in which the good-making criteria are described as simplicity or identity and diversity or variety. For my discussion here, there is no significant difference between this terminology and that of unity and multiplicity.

<sup>2</sup> See esp. David Blumenfeld, "Perfection and Happiness in the Best Possible World", in N. Jolley, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (1995), 382-410; Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*, New York: Cambridge University Press (1995), passim. For citations to other literature on the topic, see Rutherford and Blumenfeld.

unity in the world is constituted by it; it is the multiplicity in the sense that the variety in the world is merely its essence diversely manifested. This is a radical thesis and not one that has previously been advanced. Previous scholars have missed this fundamental fact about Leibniz's metaphysics because they have been unaware of his early Platonism.

That Leibniz's early thought owes a great deal to Platonism will come as a surprise to many. The Platonism extant in seventeenth-century Germany has not generally been recognized and the Platonism of the professors in Leipzig has not been noted. Many recent scholars have identified Platonic and kabbalistic elements in Leibniz's mature writings and have speculated about their source. Most have assumed that the recognizably Platonic flavor of some of Leibniz's mature writings was due to his increasing familiarity in the 1680s with the views of the Cambridge Platonists, while some have speculated about its scholastic and ancient sources.<sup>3</sup> These scholars have been correct in their recognition of Platonic elements in Leibniz's later thought, but they have looked too far afield for its source. Leibniz drank from the Platonic fountain as a young student in Leipzig. In his typical fashion, Leibniz took these raw materials and made them distinctly his own, but there is no doubt that he acquired a thorough familiarity with them as a university student and that they are the primary source of his conception of the relation between God and creatures. According to my account of the development of Leibniz's metaphysics, the basic features of his Platonism were in place in 1671-72, several years before he acquired a thorough familiarity with the thought of Henry More, Anne Conway, Francis Mercury van Helmont, or any other Cambridge Platonist.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in her recent book, Allison Coudert correctly identifies a number of Platonic features in Leibniz's mature thought and then assumes that the source of these ideas must be the Cambridge Platonists in general and Francis Mercury van Helmont in particular. See Allison Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Boston: 1995). Daniel Fouke proposes that Leibniz acquires his Platonic tendencies from the Platonism inherent in scholastics like Aquinas. See his "Emanation and the Perfections of Being: Divine Causation and the Autonomy of Nature in Leibniz", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 76: 168-194. Some studies have taken seriously the relation between Leibniz and ancient Platonists like Plotinus, but they have focused on Leibniz's later thought and have not acknowledged the role Platonism played in his philosophical development. The best of these studies remain Joseph Politella's "Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Cabalism in the Philosophy of Leibniz", unpublished dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (1938); and Rudolf Meyer's "Leibniz und Plotin", *Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa* V (1971): 31-54.

<sup>4</sup> Most scholars have agreed that the source of Leibniz's Platonist tendencies was some member of the so-called Cambridge Platonists, but they have disagreed about which member of More's wide circle most influenced Leibniz and when the influence occurred. To cite three examples, Coudert maintains that the relationship between van Helmont and Leibniz became important in the late 1680s and that the former was the major source of Leibniz's Platonism; Carolyn Merchant thinks that it was Anne Conway who had the most significant influence and that it took

A question arises at this point: if Leibniz made active use of Platonic ideas early in his career, then why didn't he call attention to it in the same way that he did to his use of Aristotelian thought? From his early period to his late, Leibniz proudly proclaims his rehabilitation of the philosophy of Aristotle. In an important publication of 1670, he argues that the new mechanical physics must be corrected with the philosophy of Aristotle; and in the first publication of a major part of his system in 1695, he spends nearly a fifth of the text justifying his use of the Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>7</sup> Why didn't he call similar attention to the benefits of the philosophy of Plato? Leibniz was not motivated to explain his Platonism because that philosophy had not become the object of ridicule. On the contrary, the vast majority of Leibniz's contemporaries were themselves inclined to turn to the Platonic tradition, both pagan and Christian, for inspiration concerning divine topics. However much Leibniz's Platonism might come as a surprise to us, it did not surprise his contemporaries. As Leibniz explains in the *Specimen of Dynamics* of 1695, "[j]ust as our age has already saved from scorn ... Plato's ideas", he will now "make intelligible the teachings of the Peripatetics concerning forms or entelechies" (GM VI 234f: AG 118f). In brief, I am making two claims: one about the intellectual context in which Leibniz's metaphysics developed, the other about the content of that metaphysics. The first claim is that the philosophy of Plotinus, Proclus, Augustine, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and of course Plato himself was widely known and highly regarded throughout the seventeenth century and formed a major part of the intellectual context in which Leibniz's cut his philosophical teeth. The second is that some of the most fundamental doctrines of Leibniz's metaphysics are thoroughly Platonic. In the present discussion I will give little support for the first claim except insofar as I argue for the second. In the late 1660s, Leibniz took his extensive background in Platonism and molded it to fit his own conception of substance. By combining his notion of God with his theory of individual substance, Leibniz went beyond the Platonism of his teachers and contemporaries and made that tradition his own.

I have argued elsewhere that the conception of substance developed by Leibniz during the 1660s has its roots in the Aristotelian philosophy, as he

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place in the 1690s; while Catherine Wilson argues that Ralph Cudworth was the Platonist who most influenced Leibniz and that it began in 1689. See Merchant's "The Vitalism of Anne Conway: Its Impact on Leibniz's concept of the Monad", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 17 (1979), 255-269; Wilson's *Leibniz's Metaphysics: A Historical and Comparative Study* (Princeton: 1989), 160f.

<sup>7</sup> For the early publication, see A VI, ii 433-444; for the late, see GP IV 477-87: AG 138-145.

interpreted it.<sup>6</sup> In order to grasp the complicated details of Leibniz's philosophical proposals about unity and multiplicity in the period of 1668-72, it is necessary to recognize that Leibniz intended to combine elements from the Platonic tradition with those from the Aristotelian. Although the texts of this period are obscure, they contain some of the crucial steps made by Leibniz on the way to the development of some of the fundamental doctrines of his metaphysics. We will be able to discern these steps once we recognize that within these texts Leibniz turns to a Platonic model when he has to articulate the relation between God and creatures (what I call his metaphysics of divinity) and to an Aristotelian one when he has to describe the features of individual created substances (what I call his metaphysics of substance).

### *Background to Leibniz's Platonism*

Before turning to the pure form of Platonism that Leibniz imbibed as a student, it is worth noting the unpure form that was also available to him. Recent scholars have emphasized the fact that scholastic philosophy itself is full of Platonism, and it has been argued that Leibniz's use of Platonic doctrine may have come from such sources.<sup>7</sup> While it is no doubt true that both Leibniz and his contemporaries imbibed large doses of Platonism along with their scholasticism and therefore that their Aristotelianism was by such means tainted, this was not the primary source of Leibniz's Platonic tendencies. What has not been previously noted - and what is important for an understanding of Leibniz's two-part notion of unity and multiplicity - is that as a student in Leipzig he learned a pure form of Platonism which was clearly distinguished from the thought of Aristotle and which continued to influence him for years to come. Let us now turn to those sources.

The nature of Platonism in seventeenth-century Germany has not been systematically studied and my own research to date has been cursory. But it is perfectly clear that the professors and students in Leipzig were thoroughly acquainted with that philosophical tradition. They were not scholars of Plato, but they were inheritors of a vast literature of writings which they

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<sup>6</sup> See Christia Mercer and R. C. Sleight, Jr., "The Early Metaphysics to the *Discourse on Metaphysics*", in N. Jolley, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*, 67-123. For a more complete account of that position, see my forthcoming *Leibniz Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development* (Cambridge University Press).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Fouke, "Emanation and the Perfections of Being: Divine Causation and the Autonomy of Nature in Leibniz", 176.

called Platonic and which they considered a treasure trove of ideas. Making frequent use of images that one finds throughout the history of Platonism, they speak of that philosophy both as a source of divine wisdom which like the sun illuminates everything it shines upon and as a fountain of truth which has flowed through the thinkers of many centuries and which nourishes their own thought.<sup>8</sup> The scope of their erudition in this area is impressive: they refer to the whole range of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance thinkers and move easily between pagan and Christian authors. It is important to emphasize that these German philosophers often do not distinguish among sources, but tend to treat Platonism as a warehouse of ideas to rummage through. What I would like to do now is to offer a summary of the Platonic doctrines which are proposed in the texts of Leibniz's predecessors in Leipzig and which influenced the development of his early conception of unity and multiplicity.<sup>9</sup>

A journey through this Platonic terrain may strike some readers as difficult going. Some of its landmark doctrines (e.g., emanation, levels of being) are not easy to grasp from our philosophical perspective. That some of the great philosophical minds in the history of philosophy have found such views obvious is small comfort. While I cannot hope to expand our philosophical intuitions here, I would like to make the background assumptions of Leibniz's metaphysics of divinity as plausible as possible. The very fact that some of these doctrines are extremely odd to us helps to explain why their full significance in Leibniz's philosophy has not been adequately appreciated by twentieth-century scholars. We must do what we can to understand these doctrines. For our present purposes we will have to be satisfied with the briefest of accounts and the most cursory of analyses. Although it is virtually impossible to determine which original sources most interested the young Leibniz, he was surely aware of the philosophy of Plotinus and Augustine. I have chosen to focus on the thought of these two philosophers

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<sup>8</sup> Marsilio Ficino had written about the Platonic philosophy that "all who desire to taste of the most delicious waters of wisdom must drink from that perennial fountain". See Ficino, *Opera* (Basil: 1576), p. 1945.

<sup>9</sup> R. T. Wallis explains: "'Neoplatonism' is a term coined in modern times to distinguish the form of Platonic tradition inaugurated by Plotinus [...] and lasting in its pagan form down to the sixth century A.D. from the teaching of Plato's immediate disciples (the 'Old Academy') and from the Platonism of the earlier Roman Empire ('Middle Platonism')". See Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: 1972), 1. I follow P. Merlan who thinks that *neoplatonism* as a term is "misleading, in that to some it may suggest a more radical difference between the philosophies of Plato and Plotinus than is warranted". See Merlan's "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus" in A. H. Armstrong, *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, England: 1967), 14-132, 14.

more than others for three reasons: their versions of Platonism were arguably the most influential in history, they are frequently cited by the professors and students at Leipzig, and Leibniz's early metaphysics of divinity bears a striking resemblance to many of their proposals. We cannot ascertain whether or not Plotinus and Augustine were the main sources of Leibniz's Platonism, but we can be certain that Leibniz learned about their thought as university student in Leipzig.

### *Unity and reality*

For many ancient thinkers, ontological priority was to be explained primarily in terms of self-sufficiency. As one scholar makes the point, "that which stands in need of nothing for being what it is is ontologically primary".<sup>10</sup> For Platonists, there was a hierarchy of self-sufficiency and being such that the lower stratum in the hierarchy was supposed to depend on and be caused by the higher. In Plato's *Republic* the sensible things depend on the Ideas or Forms which themselves depend on the Good. For many of the philosophers who followed Plato, it was taken to be obvious that unity and perfection were intimately related to being so that the more reality something has, the more unified and perfect it must be. For both Christian and non-Christian Platonists, the idea seems to be that there is a supremely perfect, wholly simple, and unified being on which all else depends. The implication was that only the highest being was wholly perfect, self-sufficient, simple, and real and that the beings in the lower strata had diminishing degrees of these features. What is less a unity, for example, is less real and what is less real is constituted and explained by what is more unified and hence more real.

The third century philosopher, Plotinus (205-270/71), focused primarily on the unity of the supreme being and maintained that the greater the simplicity or unity, the greater the reality, self-sufficiency, and perfection.<sup>11</sup> He writes:

there must be something simple before all things, and this must be other than all the things which come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things which derive from it [...] For if it is not to be simple, outside all coincidence and composition and really one, it could not be a first principle;

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<sup>10</sup> E. K. Emilsson, "Cognition and Its Object" in Lloyd Gerson, *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge, England: 1996), 217-249, p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> See also *Enneads*: III.8.10.20-26; VI.2.11.9-18, VI.9.1.14. With some minor variations, translations are by A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus: Enneads* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1990).

and it is the most self-sufficient, because it is simple and the first of all: for that which is not the first needs that which is before it, and what is not simple is in need of its simple components so that it can come into existence from them (V.4.1.6-15).<sup>12</sup>

From our twentieth century perspective, it is difficult to grasp why unity or simplicity should be the key metaphysical and ontological notion. Nor is a satisfactory justification of this assumption very easy to construct. Part of the motivation behind the assumption is the belief that what is eternally and immutably itself is what is most real. It is fascinating that for Plotinus and many other thinkers (e.g., many kabbalists) the supreme being did not admit of predication because to attribute anything to the One was to make a division between subject and property. Such thinkers believed it improper to attribute to the supreme being positive features and preferred instead to claim that the One just was perfection or being itself. The simplicity or unity of the One might be understood as what contains every positive attribute without distinction or division. It is like a storehouse of being within which there is neither distinction nor division and yet where every positive possibility exists potentially. There can be a distinction or division within being only outside the One. Plotinus is fairly straightforward about the relation between being and unity in the products of the One. He writes that "nothing is real which is not a unity" (VI.6.13.50) and moreover that "a thing is a unity by the presence of the One" (VI.6.14.27-28).

According to Plotinus, the "unbounded" perfection of the One is such that it "overflows" with being. As soon as something is produced or created, there is multiplicity in that the being and perfection of the One is manifested in a number of ways. When the being of the One overflows, it produces the world of Ideas. Although there are multiple Ideas, they are as unified as anything can be other than the One itself. In the words of one Plotinus scholar, they are "a unity-in-multiplicity".<sup>13</sup> The being of the world of Ideas itself overflows and eventually becomes the multitude of things in the material world. Of course, the Plotinian image of the overflowing of Being would not do for Christian Platonists. Orthodoxy demanded the free choice of God and many Christians turned to a model of God according to which the divine mind contained all positive essences or

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<sup>12</sup> For a very helpful account of the intuition behind this notion of unity, see E. K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge, England: 1988), chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup> See A. H. Armstrong, "Plotinus", *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, 241.

Ideas.<sup>14</sup> From Augustine (354-430) onward, the standard Christian conception of God was that of an infinite divine mind which contained the Ideas and which freely created a world modelled on them.<sup>15</sup> Each Idea was supposed to be a positive attribute that God chooses to instantiate in some way in the world. However, the result of the Christian account was like that of the Plotinian one: everything in the created world was understood to be a manifestation of the divine One. Glossing over details, the basic idea is that the multiplicity and diversity in the world is the essence of the supreme being variously manifested. It is noteworthy that the same basic idea appears in the thought of many Jewish kabbalists where the divine attributes are supposed to emanate to all levels of creation so that every being participates in all of them. Christian kabbalists like Raymond Lull and Johann Reuchlin, who were widely known in Germany in the seventeenth century, followed in this tradition and maintained that every creature exemplified all the divine attributes. For Lull, each creature is infused with all the divine features so that one can grasp them at every level of being.<sup>16</sup> The basic idea here is nicely expressed by Philo, the first century Jewish Platonist, who writes: "he [...] fills the whole world with himself".<sup>17</sup>

*The supreme being as transcendent and immanent, as unity and multiplicity*

Some obvious problems arise at this point. The supreme being is supposed to be wholly self-sufficient, yet it is said to be *in* everything. Creatures are supposed to be finite and limited, yet they are said to be *in* the supreme being and to share its features. The supreme being is supposed to

<sup>14</sup> In the *Timaeus* there is the suggestion that the Forms are somehow in the intellect of the creator who then models the things of the world on them, see 30c-d, 39e.

<sup>15</sup> At first glance, the idea of the supreme being choosing how to emanate itself seems extremely odd. After all, for Plato and Plotinus the basic idea was that it is the very *abundance* of the being of the One that by its nature *must* overflow. From this perspective, it seems at least odd, if not absurd, to think that the abundance of being could be controlled so that only part of it would flow forth. As he did with so many other Platonic doctrines, Augustine cleverly interwove the basic Platonic assumption and Christian doctrine. The result was a plausible creation story that became a commonplace among Christian theists.

<sup>16</sup> Johann Reuchlin was a German student of Pico della Mirandola and the first full-fledged modern Christian kabbalist. For a brief introduction to Reuchlin, see Moshe Idel, "Introduction to the Bison Book Edition" and G. Lloyd Jones, "Introduction", both in *Johann Reuchlin: On the Art of the Kabbalah*, trans. by Martin and Sarah Goodman (Lincoln: 1993). There is a good deal of secondary literature written on Lull. For a basic introduction, see Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: 1966).

<sup>17</sup> *De posteritate Caini* V. 14; trans. by C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody, Massachusetts: 1993).

be *in* the creatures, yet they are supposed to be *in* it. What are we to think? While I dare not take on anything like a full account of the relation between the supreme being and its products, I would like to summarize certain aspects of that relation. There are three closely related questions which are particularly relevant to Leibniz: (1) how can the supreme being or the One be transcendent from its products while they are *in* it? (2) how can the supreme being be both transcendent from its products and immanent in them? and (3) how can the One be both the unity and the multiplicity in the world? Answers to these questions will place Leibniz's own conception of the relation between God and creatures in its proper perspective.

Before facing these questions, however, it will be important to remind ourselves that they apply with equal force to the Judeo-Christian God. As Paul writes to the Ephesians, there is: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4: 6). In Acts we are told: "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17: 28); and in the Book of Psalms, we find that the "Lord, art high above all the earth" (Psalms 97: 9) and yet is intimately related to all things. At Psalm 148 (3-8), the entire universe is told to pay tribute to God who not only created all things, but also is their constant source:

Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you shining stars.  
 Praise Him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens.  
 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created;  
 He established them forever and ever; He gave them a duty which shall not pass away.  
 Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all depths;  
 Fire and hail, snow and mist, storm winds that fulfill His command.

God's wisdom extends to every worldly object. As Yahweh asks Job: "Who has put wisdom in the clouds, or given understanding to the mists?" (Job 38: 36). The answer of course is the supreme being. At the very first of the *Confessions*, Augustine worries aloud to God: "Without you, whatever exists would not exist. But does what exists contain you? I also have being [...] which I would not have unless you were in me. Or rather, I would have no being if I were not in you". To add to the confusion, Augustine quotes Paul, according to whom God is: "of whom all things are, through whom all things are, in whom all things are" (Rom. 11: 36).

How can the One be both transcendent and immanent? The problem is acute: according to Plotinus, the One is "alone by itself" and simple, while it is also "everywhere" and "fills all things". As Plotinus puts it: "How then do all things come from the One, which is simple and has in it

stances indivisibles ou bien des unités, comme les corps sont des multitudes sujettes à périr par la dissolution de leurs parties» (GP VI, 539). On trouve une forme d'inférence: «J'infère qu'il n'y a pas plusieurs êtres là où il n'y en a pas un qui soit véritablement un être» (GP II, 118). Cette affirmation relève d'un jugement: «il y a lieu de juger qu'il y a une infinité d'âmes qui...» (NE III, VI, § 24). Elle prend aussi une forme disjonctive: «ou bien il faut avouer qu'on ne trouve aucune réalité dans les corps, ou bien il faut reconnaître quelques substances qui aient une véritable unité» (GP II, 96).

On peut retirer de ces formules quelles qu'elles soient que l'essentiel consiste dans l'assertion qu'introduisent ces formes de parole: «il y a... il faut qu'il y ait». Or ce «il y a» résulte en tous les cas d'une attitude de la pensée qui s'estime en droit de juger sur le sens cognitif du «il y a... il faut». Une telle conclusion résulte d'un jugement de raison suffisante et non d'un jugement de raison nécessaire. Il n'est pas appuyé sur une non-contradiction, ni sur une identité formelle, comme on va le préciser. Car une seconde série de précisions concerne la liaison logique entre le «il y a» de l'agrégé et le «il faut» qui conclut au «per se».

On ne peut que relever l'ampleur de l'appel au verbe «supposer» qui intervient dans les justifications données. «Car toute multitude suppose l'unité» (GP II, 118); «toute multitude suppose des véritables unités» (GP VII, 552); «car tout être par agrégation suppose des êtres doués d'une véritable unité» (GP II, 96); «tout amas réel suppose des substances simples ou des unités réelles» (NE IV, III, § 1); «là où il y a plusieurs ou la multitude, il faut qu'il y ait aussi des unités, car la multitude ou le nombre est composé d'unités» (GP VII, 557); «puisqu'il n'y a point de multitudes sans de véritables unités» (GP II, 96, 97; VII, 552). La clé rationnelle de la formule relève donc d'une supposition: encore convient-il de recourir au sens plus métaphysique qu'hypothétique de la supposition. La multitude pose comme substance des unités.

L'explication la plus serrée qu'on puisse repérer est la suivante: «Il s'agit d'une proposition identique qui n'est diversifiée que par l'accent, savoir que ce qui n'est pas véritablement *un* être, n'est pas non plus un *être*» (GP II, 97). Si le fondement de la relation «il y a... il faut...» repose dans une identité, on est dans le champ d'un principe de raison nécessaire; mais cette proposition identique est diversifiée par l'accent! Ce n'est donc pas une proposition identique au sens de A est A, mais qui fait intervenir un différentiel atténué ou souligné.

Qu'est-ce qu'une proposition identique diversifiée par l'accent? Dans une table de définition des «signes» l'«accentus» est défini comme «*syllabae elevatio in vocabulo*» (C, 498). L'«*elevatio*» est ici provoquée par un terme souligné. Mais quel est la structure logique d'une telle pratique?

no diverse variety?" The solution to the problem lies in a distinction between the One insofar as it is supremely self-sufficient and the One insofar as it is the principle on which all else depends. Plotinus writes: "The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the principle of all things, not all things, but all things have that other kind of transcendent existence" (V.2.1, 1-4). The crucial point here is that the One is "all things" insofar as it is their principle or source and it is "not a single one of them" insofar as it is the perfect, self-sufficient, and unified reality. He continues: "All these things are the One and not the One: they are he because they come from him; they are not he, because it is in abiding by himself that he gives them" (V.2.2.24-26). The One is transcendent in that it is self-sufficient and in need of nothing else. Plotinus writes in a passage we have seen: "there must be something simple before all things, and this must be other than all the things which come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things which derive from it..." (V.4.1.6-10). But the One is also immanent in that it is the source of everything else and that on which everything constantly depends: the One "is the principle of all things [...] because as principle it keeps them in being [...] and because it brought them into existence" (V.3.15.27-29). These texts suggest a solution to our general problem as to how the One can be both transcendent from its products and immanent in them. In order to understand this, we need only recognize what one scholar has called their "nonreciprocal dependence".<sup>18</sup> The One is transcendent in that it exists wholly independently of all its creatures and needs nothing else to be what it is. For creatures, this is not the case; they depend fully and constantly on the One.

To conceive the complicated way in which the One is immanent in the world, we must turn to our first question: how the supreme being or the One can be transcendent from its products while they are *in* it? To grasp how the products of the One are *in* it while it exists independently of them, one must understand that their nature and being comes from the One and

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<sup>18</sup> The phrase 'nonreciprocal dependence' is used by O'Meara who summarizes his account in the following way: "Reality is a structure of dependence, the posterior depending on the prior, being constituted by the prior, incapable of existing 'without' the prior which can exist without it. The prior is thus part of, or in, the posterior (as constitutive of it), just as the posterior is potentially in the prior (as coming from it): causes are 'in' their effects and effects are 'in' their causes. But while a part of the posterior, the prior is also apart from it as independent of it. Thus the prior is both immanent in the posterior and transcends it: The One is 'everywhere' and 'nowhere.' As independent and as prior, the cause is different from the posterior, its effect, superior in perfection and more powerful: causes [which are prior 'by nature']... are superior to their effects." See Dominic O'Meara, "The Hierarchical Ordering of Reality in Plotinus" in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. by Gerson, 66-81, p. 79.

never exist independently of it while it exists independently of them. Think of a fountain which is unconnected to any source of liquid and yet which spews forth streams of water. The existence of the fountain in no way depends on the water and yet the nature and being of the water depends entirely on the fountain. Like the fountain, the One exists independently of what flows from it; like the water, the products of the One continually depend on their source. In this case, the products of the One and the water of the fountain "exist in" their source in that their very existence depends on it. The 'exists in' relation here consists in ontological dependency. In this sense, a being B exists in a being A just in case the whole being and nature of B depends continually on A. To speak metaphorically, B exists in A because the being and nature of B flows from A.

Let's now turn to our second question, namely, how the supreme being can be both transcendent from its products and yet in them? According to Plotinus and other Platonists, the One is entirely apart from and "beyond" its products and yet in them and constitutive of them. To grasp how the One is transcendent and yet in its products, we have to turn to the causal relation between it and them. In Plato's *Republic* the Good is supposed to be the cause or source of the Ideas which themselves are supposed to be the cause or source of the sensible things. In the Platonic literature, there are three standard ways to describe the causal relation between higher and lower strata in this ontological hierarchy. In the participation relation, the individual on the lower stratum is supposed to participate in that of the higher; in the model-image relation the higher is said to be a model for the lower or to generate the lower as an imperfect image of itself. It is important for our purposes that a lower level object can be said to have a property though in an inferior way to an object on the higher level. The attributes or properties of a higher sphere are transmitted to those of the lower but in a less perfect form.<sup>19</sup> The third way of describing the causal relation in the hierarchy and the one most relevant to Leibniz is that of emanation. Drawing on Plato's analogy to the sun in the *Republic* and assuming the other causal notions, this relation compares the One to the Sun whose rays flow from it. Oversimplifying somewhat, we can say that: if the perfect A has an attribute f, then A can emanate f-ness to a lower being B. In the emanative relation, A loses nothing while B comes to instantiate f-ness. A remains transcendent and pure, while B becomes an imperfect image of the

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<sup>19</sup> As Emilsson puts it in his *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study*, "It is an underlying feature of Plotinus' thought that the explanation of any feature must be in virtue of something that possesses the feature in question in a 'more perfect' way than the thing to be explained" (14).

perfect *f*. The emanative process is assumed to be continual so that B will participate in *f*-ness and have *f* even imperfectly only as long as A acts or emanates *f*-ness. It is important to emphasize the fact that, in the emanative causal relation (as with the other two), the *f* of A is greater and more perfect than that of B and yet that the *f* in B resembles its cause.<sup>20</sup> We are now prepared to explain how it is that the One is transcendent from its products and yet in them. The perfection and transcendence of the One remains unchanged while it continually emanates its attributes to its products, which then have those attributes in an imperfect and hence distinctive manner. Recent scholars have insisted, in a way that is quite relevant to Leibniz, that Plotinus is not a pantheist and does not believe that the being of the One constitutes the *being* of its products. The causal theory of emanation helps to see how this is so. As Plotinus writes in a passage quoted above: “all [created] things have that other kind of transcendent existence... [T]he One is simple and has in it no diverse variety” (V.2.1.1-5). For any attribute of a creature, that attribute is derived from the One and yet the attribute exists in the creature in a way quite distinct from that of the One. Plotinus puts it nicely when he explains that the One “is like the things, which have come to be” except that they are “on their level” and “it [the One] is better” (VI.8.14.33-34). The One is *in* the creatures in the sense that it emanates its attributes to them; it remains transcendent from them because it neither loses anything in the emanative process nor shares any of its perfections with them. It is perfect; they are not. Plotinus writes: “[the One] must be other than all the things which come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things which derive from it, and all the same able to be present in a different way to these other things” (V.4.1.6-8). Elsewhere, he explains “the One is always perfect” while “its product is less than” the One (V.1.6.39-40).

The Platonic conception of the causal relation between the supreme being and its creatures helps to explain how the Judeo-Christian God can be, in Paul’s words, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians, 4: 6). As Augustine makes the point in his *Confessions*:

I considered all the other things that are of a lower order than yourself, and I saw that they have not absolute being in themselves, nor are they entirely

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<sup>20</sup> For some of Plotinus’ comments on emanative causation, see *Enneads*, V.1.6.37-39, IV.3.10.32-42, V.5.9.1-10. The account of emanative causation offered here is based on but varies slightly from the excellent discussion of Eileen O’Neill, “Influxus Physicus”, in *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. by S. Nadler, Steven (University Park, Pa: 1993) 27-55. For more on emanative causation in Plotinus, see John Bussanich, “Plotinus’s Metaphysics of the One” in Gerson’s *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 38-65, esp. 46-58; and O’Meara, *op. cit.*, sects. II, III.

without being. They are real in so far as they have their being from you, but unreal in the sense that they are not what you are. For it is only that which remains in being without change that truly is... [God] himself ever unchanged, he makes all things new (VII.17).

The causal relation between the supreme being and its products offers a fairly straightforward account of how the One can be both transcendent and in its products. Here the 'exists in' relation is to be understood in terms of emanation where the basic idea is that attributes of the One emanate to its products and, in that sense, exist in them. The One remains pure and transcendent while its attributes or properties "exist in" the creatures. The crucial point to understand is that the properties exist in the products in a manner wholly different than the way they exist in the One. The perfect being A emanates f-ness to B so that B participates in f-ness and f-ness is in B, but the f-ness in B is inferior to the f-ness in A. A has f perfectly; B has it imperfectly.

With this account of the causal relation between the supreme being and its creatures in hand, we are prepared to answer our third question, namely, how the transcendent One can be both the unity and multiplicity in the world. That the One is the multiplicity in the created world is fairly straightforward: when the One overflows its being and attributes, it necessarily produces a multiplicity. It exists in the multiplicity in the sense that it is immanent in its products. But they also necessarily participate in the One. In his discussion of the relation between individual souls and *Nous* or what is sometimes called the *world soul*, Plotinus is fairly explicit about how the unity of the former relates to the many. He writes:

How, then, is there one substance in many souls? Either the one is present as a whole in them all, or the many come from the whole and one while it abides [unchanged]. That soul, then, is one, but the many [go back] to it as one which gives itself to multiplicity and does not give itself; for it is adequate to supply itself to all and to remain one; for it has power extending to all things, and is not at all cut off from each individual thing; it is the same, therefore, in all.<sup>21</sup>

The more perfect being remains unchanged and transcendent despite the fact that all the less perfect and multiple beings acquire their unity and be-

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<sup>21</sup> IV.9.5.1-7. See also I.4.3.16-20. As these passages suggest, it is not obvious how Plotinus will be able to individuate among souls. For a recent discussion of this problem in Plotinus and references to other secondary literature, see Henry Blumenthal, "On Soul and Intellect" in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, ed. by Gerson, 82-104, esp. 84-85.

ing from it. According to Plotinus, each of us is a unity because the One emanates its oneness to us. The One is perfectly unified, each of us is imperfectly unified. But whatever unity each of us has is due to the continual emanation of the perfect oneness or unity. In this sense, each of us exists and is one because the One emanates its unity to us and each of us thereby participates in it.<sup>22</sup>

### *Platonism in Leipzig*

The works of the two most prominent professors at Leipzig in the middle of the seventeenth century, Johann Adam Scherzer (1628-83) and Jakob Thomasius (1622-84), show a thorough acquaintance with Platonism.<sup>23</sup> In the works of Scherzer, we find kabbalistic doctrines as well as Renaissance Platonism. For our purposes, suffice it to say that Scherzer accepts something very like the Plotinian account of the relation between God and creatures. He writes that God contains all things while remaining fundamentally simple; God acts constantly to conserve his creatures while “nothing in him is changed, nor is it depleted”;<sup>24</sup> that the emanation of God follows “naturally from a subject” as a result of its properties or modes;<sup>25</sup> that “a proper unity is nothing other than God”;<sup>26</sup> that God, as what is most simple and immutable is contrasted with accidents or creatures which are multiple and mutable;<sup>27</sup> that the unity of God is “effused” throughout the world;<sup>28</sup> and finally that God is “the reason of reasons, the fountain of all things, the uniform and omniform form, [...] the unity in the multitude”.<sup>29</sup>

It may come as a surprise to many scholars to discover that Jakob Thomasius, Leibniz’s mentor and a well-known Aristotelian, wrote a good deal about both Platonism and the kabbalistic tradition. Thomasius produced a number of books in which he refers to the whole range of Platonic philosophers, both pagan and Christian, early and late. Thomasius is firmly

<sup>22</sup> For more on multiplicity, see III.8.9.3; IV.9.4.7-8; V.4.1.5-15; V.6.3.19-22; VI.9.2.31-2.

<sup>23</sup> For the spring semester of 1663, Leibniz visited the University of Jena where he studied with Erhard Weigel whose works are also a mixture of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and other philosophies. Unlike Thomasius and Scherzer, Weigel’s Platonism has been noted in the secondary literature. See K. Moll, *Der junge Leibniz* (Frommann-Holzboog, 1978), Vol. I.

<sup>24</sup> *Vade mecum sive manuale philosophicum quadripartitum* (Leipzig: 1686), I, 52-53.

<sup>25</sup> *Vade mecum* ..., I, 66.

<sup>26</sup> *Trifolium orientale* ... (Leipzig: 1663), 123.

<sup>27</sup> *Collegii Anti-Sociniani* (3rd ed., 1702), 98.

<sup>28</sup> *Collegii Anti-Sociniani*, 131.

<sup>29</sup> *Vade mecum*, 53.

Aristotelian in his conception of substance, but thoroughly Platonic in his account of the relation between God and creatures.<sup>30</sup> According to Thomasiaus, God is “the fountain of features which flow into creatures”, but he insists that this flowing or emanation be understood in the right way, namely, as that which God wills.<sup>31</sup> He contrasts the divisibility of the mutable world with the unity and simplicity of God and notes that according to some Platonists “the essence of God permeates” everything<sup>32</sup>. Nor did Leibniz’s early exposure to Platonism end with his university studies. Most of his favorite authors during the 1660s were those who wrote extensively on the kabbalah and “the divine Plato”.<sup>33</sup>

### *Unity and Multiplicity in Early Leibniz*

With this background in place, I would like to turn to Leibniz’s early philosophy in order to discern his conception of the relation between God and the world and the role that unity and multiplicity play in that account. Between 1668 and 1676, during the time he was developing the core features of his metaphysics of substance, he was also enormously interested in the Platonic philosophy. When he began to work on the relation between God and the world, he turned to the Platonic model that he had learned as a student in Leipzig. As he wrote in 1671: Plato’s *Timaeus* is “a specimen of the most profound Platonic philosophy” because, with the *Parmenides*, “it admirably accounts for the one and Being, that is, God” (A, VI ii 475).

So, what did Leibniz learn from his teachers? How does he conceive the relation between God and creatures? In the very early works of the mid-1660s, Leibniz says almost nothing about the relation between God and the created world. In the texts written between 1663 and 1668, there is neither serious discussion of the relation between God and creatures nor extensive use of the Platonic metaphysics articulated above. Leibniz’s primary interest during the middle years of the 1660s was the wholesale restructuring of legal practice although he was also concerned to erect his own mechanical physics. Leibniz mentions the divine Ideas in passing in his university *Disputation* of 1663 (A, VI i 18), refers frequently to a variety of

<sup>30</sup> Although I only discuss Thomasiaus’ *Exercitatio de Stoica mundi exustione* here, several of his other works include long discussions of Platonism.

<sup>31</sup> *Exercitatio de Stoica mundi exustione* (Leipzig: 1676), 251-253.

<sup>32</sup> *Exercitatio de Stoica mundi exustione*, 189, 217f.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Leibniz often refers to the works of Athanasius Kircher and Johann Heinrich Alsted, both of whom he considers “most learned” (see e.g. A, VI ii 416, 420; A, VI i 74, 278), and both of whose works are full of discussions of Platonists and Platonism.

Platonists during the period, takes notes on Platonist texts, but makes minimal use of Platonic doctrines. We need not jump to conclusions however; the young man had not shed the Platonism of his teachers. In the well-known *Dissertation on the Combinatorial Art* of 1666, Leibniz briefly turns to the topic of the relation between God and creatures in a way that discloses his dormant Platonism. After the title page of the published text, Leibniz presents some "corollaries" which are supposed to follow from this combinatory art and which fall into four categories: logic, metaphysics, physics, and practical. One of the metaphysical corollaries is: "God is substance; creature is accident" (A, VI i 229; L 75). Throughout the 1660s, Leibniz uses the Latin term '*accidens*' in a fairly standard scholastic way: an accident is a non-essential property which can be said "to flow" from the essence of the thing of which it is a property. Micraelius, for example, writes in his *Lexicon Philosophicum* that an accidental property "flows from the essential principles" although it is not "part of the essential constituents".<sup>34</sup> Leibniz's use of this term in describing the relation between God and creatures is important. It implies that creatures both flow from God's nature and reflect that nature, but do not do so necessarily. In other words, the passage suggests that, during the time he was working on physical and legal topics, Leibniz accepted the Platonism of his teachers and simply had no reason to use it.

But he soon would. When Leibniz turns his attention to theological issues, his Platonism makes its grand entrance. It is in the *Catholic Demonstrations* of the late 1660s where Leibniz first confronts the sorts of theological problems that require a precise analysis of the relation between God and creatures. In developing his views about this relation, he turns to the Platonic model. The results are profound. It is in this context that Leibniz begins to construct his metaphysics of divinity and to articulate for the first time the notion of harmony at its core.

Prior to 1667, the only references to harmony that we find in Leibniz's papers appear either in legal and logical contexts (and have nothing to do with metaphysics) or in the notes which Leibniz took on Johann Bisterfeld's book.<sup>35</sup> In 1667, Leibniz asserts in a lengthy legal work that there is "an ele-

<sup>34</sup> For the various meanings of *accidens* in the period, see Micraelius' *Lexicon Philosophicum terminorum Philosophis unitatorum*, Jena, 1653 and Rudolph Goelenius's *Lexicon Philosophicum*, Frankfurt, 1613 (repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1980).

<sup>35</sup> For the former, see A, VI i 184, 212, 360; for the latter, A, VI i 153, 158. Donald Rutherford has rightly noted a similarity between Bisterfeld's conception of harmony and that of Leibniz, and has suggested there might have been a "direct influence" of Bisterfeld on Leibniz. It is highly improbable that Bisterfeld was a major source for Leibniz's own conception of harmony. There is

gance and harmony in the world that coincides with the divine will" (A, VI i 344), but he does not develop this provocative idea. In his essay *On Transubstantiation*, Leibniz presents for the very first time some of the details of his metaphysics of divinity. Concerning the general relation between God and creatures, he proclaims his account to be similar to "Plato in the *Timaeus* about the world soul", to "Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* and *Physics* about the agent Intellect", to the Stoics and others. Like these other philosophers, he maintains that God is "diffused through everything".<sup>36</sup> Leibniz is fairly clear about how this diffusion occurs: God chooses "among the infinitely really diverse Ideas" in his mind to create some so that "[t]he substance of each [non-human] thing is not so much mind as it is an Idea of a concurring mind" (511-12: L 118). For each non-human substance, there is a corresponding Idea in God's mind. As I argue elsewhere, these Ideas play an important metaphysical role in this essay.<sup>37</sup> What is important for us here is that Leibniz conceives of each Idea as a *product* of God. In some marginal notes, he refers to an Idea as "an act" of God (A, VI i 513) and writes:

Ideas are the same thing as the Substantial forms of things. Ideas are in God as an action is in an agent, as Creation is in God. If someone should ask: Is an Idea a created thing or not? It should be reponded: Is a creature a created thing or not? (A, VI i 510)

The relation between God and creatures articulated here conforms to the interpretation offered of the "metaphysical corollary" in *Dissertation on the the Combinatorial Art*. The substances of non-human things are products of God which flow from his nature and belong to that nature. The Ideas are

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no doubt that Leibniz thought well of Bisterfeld's book and that some of his ideas are quite like those of the Herborn philosopher. But there is very little reason to believe that Bisterfeld was as important as Thomasius, Scherzer, and Weigel in this regard. Leibniz hardly ever refers either to Bisterfeld or to his book after 1671 and he never includes Bisterfeld in any of the lists of philosophers who influenced him on these matters. See Rutherford's *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature* (New York: 1995) for a discussion of Bisterfeld (36-40) and of harmony in general (*passim*).

<sup>36</sup> Although part of the remainder of this provocative text is illegible, the gist of Leibniz's proposals seem clear. The relevant text in the Academy edition reads as follows (with the illegible bits in the text marked with dots by the editors): "Ipse Plato in *Timeo* animam mundi, Aristoteles in *Metaphysicis* et *Physicis* Intellectum agentem per omnia diffusum, Stoici Substantiam Mundi Deum statuentes, Averroes Aristotelis Intellectum ... propagans, Fracastorius et Fernelius Originem formarum ... in hoc consentiunt omnes: Substantiam, naturam, principium ..." See A, VI i 511. It is interesting that Thomasius compares these philosophical positions in his *Exercitatio de Stoica mundi exustione*, 215-216.

<sup>37</sup> I argue in chapter 6 of my forthcoming book that, among other things, these Ideas are the predecessors of Leibniz's notion of a complete concept.

distinct from one another, but they are all Ideas in God. In the *Confession of Nature Against the Atheists* Leibniz defines an action of substance as a variation of essence. In *On Transubstantiation*, each Idea is a variation of the essence of God and in that sense it “flows” from the divine nature. However, even at this early stage, Leibniz is careful to insist that the supreme being chooses which Ideas to create and that it do so among an infinite number of possibilities. But the underlying assumption here remains that God’s essence is diffused through every created thing in the world. It is this assumption that constitutes the fundamental idea in Leibniz’s original notion of harmony. In this essay, the diversity (or variety) among created substances arises from the fact that the Ideas are distinct; the unity (or identity) among them comes from the fact that they are all acts or emanations of the same thing.

Besides *On Transubstantiation*, the most important theological text that treats harmony is the *Conspicuous*, an outline of Leibniz’s *Catholic Demonstrations*, which includes a stunning array of theological and philosophical topics. When Leibniz turns to the possibility of the beatific vision in his outline, he writes: “the beatific vision or [seu] the intuition of God, face to face, is the contemplation of the universal Harmony of things because GOD or [seu] the Mind of the Universe is nothing other than the harmony of things, or [seu] the principle of beauty in them” (A, VI i 499). We need to proceed carefully here. Since the whole point of the *Catholic Demonstrations* was to avoid heresy and promote religious concord, we should not read this passage as an heretical harangue. Leibniz is here discussing the topic of beatific vision and how it is that human beings might come “face to face” with God. According to Leibniz here, the goal of human life is the recognition of harmony where that is the same thing as the intuition of God: when we “contemplate the universal Harmony of things”, we are face to face with the divine. In the writings of Plotinus, we find the idea that the beatific vision is something like an intuition of how all things are one. Leibniz suggests the same thing. The beauty or harmony in things just is the supreme being who has made itself present in the various manifestations of itself.

But we need to do some explaining at this point. It is one thing to say that God is diffused throughout the world, it is another to equate this divine emanation with beauty and harmony. The use of such aesthetic criteria is itself noteworthy. What does Leibniz have in mind? For an answer to this question, we need to turn to Leibniz’s other major project during the late 1660s. At the same time that he was developing the metaphysical theology of the *Catholic Demonstrations*, he was thinking about matters of jurisprudence. In a series of notes written between 1669 and late 1671 he in-

vestigates a wide range of theological, metaphysical, and ethical topics. These texts, entitled *Elements of Natural Law*, treat a number of related topics: human virtue and goodness, divine and human justice, and universal harmony. That Leibniz would discuss such heady metaphysical topics in a text about jurisprudence should not come as a surprise: in a published work of 1664 he is quite explicit about the fact that “the greatest mysteries” must be considered by the student of jurisprudence because unless such things are known before hand one cannot judge properly about the just and unjust. In this work of 1664, entitled *Example of Collected Philosophical Questions Concerning Law*, Leibniz proclaims that it is philosophy after all that sits “on the throne of wisdom” (A, VI i 73). It is not surprising therefore that the *Elements of Natural Law* contains brief solutions to some of the grand philosophical questions in an attempt to construct the proper basis for an analysis of legal matters. The text also offers clues to his original conception of harmony.

In the *Elements of Natural Law*, Leibniz describes the dominant feature of God’s world for the first time as universal harmony which he defines both as “diversity compensated by identity” (A, VI i 484) and as “identity compensated by diversity” (477). He offers some important clues about how he envisages the interrelation between the two parts of this notion. The basic intuition here is that there is a single thing which underlies all the diversity and to which it is all ultimately reducible. Leibniz writes: “There is greater harmony when there is greater diversity, which nonethess is reduced to identity. (For there cannot be grades in identity, but in variety)” (479). But it does not follow from this fact that harmony is a function of variety. Things must be various, but the unity underneath must be evident. He explains: “Variety delights but only when it is reduced to a unity”, it must be “elegant, conciliatory” (484). About variety, Leibniz proposes that “identical propositions” are not pleasing “because [...] they conform too much” to one another, as do rhythmic verses which return “to the same ending”. The right sort of variety consists in the juxtaposition of the same elements in different ways. For example, to make a pleasing song “it is sufficient for the last part of the ending to repeat with a changed beginning” and that the “dissonances” be “brought into harmony in the end” (485). There is an aesthetic criterion at work here where the beauty of an object is a function of how much the elements of the same thing can be made to vary in subtle ways while the unity or singleness of the thing remains evident. The basic point seems to be that the harmony of the world is a function of the variety of ways in which the same essence of God is diffused in the world while remaining recognizably the same thing. God is like an infinite melody played in infinitely complex ways.

A cette formule appartient la relation de réciprocité: «l'un et l'être sont des choses réciproques»; «ens et unum convertuntur». Mais dans cette réciprocité, on distingue un «notius», une priorité qui revient au terme relevant de l'un. Que ce soit la priorité grammaticale: «le pluriel suppose le singulier». Que ce soit la priorité arithmétique: «il ne saurait y avoir de nombre s'il n'y a des unités» (GP VII, 560). Que ce soit la priorité logique: «car être particulier ou universel ne fait rien à l'unité ou plutôt il serait plus aisé que l'unité soit dans le particulier» (GP VII, 558). Cette priorité est essentielle: «là où il n'y a pas un être, il y aura encore moins plusieurs êtres» (GP II, 97). Cette priorité est réelle: «Il n'y a nulle réalité sans une véritable unité» (GP II, 97); «parce qu'il ne tient sa réalité que de ceux dont il est composé» (GP II, 96). Cette priorité est enfin idéale. Car une telle distribution des relations de l'un et du multiple sur un même plan, celui de deux concepts relevant d'une architectonique moniste, est en fait biaisée. Car, architectoniquement, l'«unum per se» et l'«unum per agregationem» ne se trouvent pas projetés sur le même plan ontique, mais reposent sur un décalage entre le réel attribué à l'un et le mental dont relève l'agrégé. «J'ai donc cru qu'il me serait permis de distinguer les êtres d'agrégation des substances, puisque ces êtres n'ont leur unité que dans notre esprit, qui se fonde sur les rapports ou modes des véritables substances» (GP II, 97).

On retrouve ainsi sur ce problème de l'un et du multiple la pression constante de la disjonction architectonique. S'il y a des corps réels, alors l'agrégé est un multiple qui trouve sa source dans l'unité; mais on se trouve en ce cas sur un même plan orienté hylémorphiquement de l'intérieur. La multitude a sa source dans l'unité: le «per se» et l'agrégé sont en continuité positionnelle et ontologique. Par contre, si les corps ne sont que des phénomènes, alors les centres d'unité sont les seules réalités ontologiques et ces réalités confèrent axiologiquement leur réalité aux phénomènes. «C'est la substance animée qui est véritablement un être, et la matière prise pour la masse en elle-même n'est qu'un pur phénomène en apparence bien fondé, comme encore l'espace et le temps» (GP II, 118); «C'est un phénomène tout pur comme l'arc en-ciel [...] C'est une unité de phénomène qui ne suffit pas pour ce qu'il y a de réel dans les phénomènes» (GP II, 119). Ainsi, toutes les équivalences logiques proposées laissent place à un autre type d'expression:

Tout S est réel; aucun A n'est réel.

Quelle est l'explication de la priorité logique de l'un? A deux reprises les *Nouveaux Essais* comptabilisent l'un parmi «les notions que les sens ne sauraient donner».

Une première mention (NE II, I, § 2) est insérée dans la remarque de Théophile qui évince la «tabula rasa» considérée comme «une fiction que la

That this melody is recognizably the same, despite the diversity, is crucial to Leibniz's early proposals in ethics. He agrees with his Platonist predecessors that the perfection of God is diffused in the world and therefore that emanation or harmony plays an important moral function. According to Leibniz in the *Elements of Natural Law*, the process of becoming a good person is that of stripping away the chaos and "constant confusion of human affairs" and coming to grasp "the infinity" of God. For the good person, "the dissonance" of things will be compensated "through consonance". From the contemplation of harmony, we will be "lead away from all desire and sadness, and all other affections" until we eventually "increase our admiration" of God (485). According to Leibniz, "the Good is when harmony is understood thoroughly" (478); "once we elevate our eyes to universal harmony" it becomes "obvious that everything loves everything" (481). We can avoid the complications of the moral epistemology here and direct our attention to the implied metaphysical lessons. To oversimplify somewhat, in the *Elements of Natural Law*, the goal of life is to come to recognize that within all the enormous diversity everything is fundamentally an emanation of God and hence that everything is a proper object of love. In a letter to Antoine Arnauld of 1671, Leibniz summarizes his position: "I am planning to treat the *Elements of Natural Law* in a short book in which everything will be demonstrated from definitions alone. I define a good person [...] as one who loves all people [...]; harmony as diversity compensated by identity. For variety always delights us, once it is reduced to a unity... I show that it is the same thing to love others and to love God, the seat of universal harmony (A, II i 173-174: L 150).

At this point a summary is in order. In the late 1660s Leibniz was working on a number of interrelated projects which required that he articulate for the first time his conception of the relation between God and the world. For a model of that relation, the young man turned to the Platonism of his teachers according to which a single, unified supremely perfect being *chooses* to emanate its perfections into every part of the created world. Leibniz's original conception of harmony develops from that tradition. As the texts presented above make clear, in Leibniz's original conception of harmony, the supreme being emanates or diffuses its essence into its products. Because those products are emanations of its essence, its unity is in the world. In a note of 1671, Leibniz asserts that harmony "is the unity of many things, that is, it is unity compensated by variety. Moreover God is the one who is everything" (A, VI ii 283). In another text of the same year, Leibniz asserts that "the origin [*ratio*]" of things will be "in Mind, that is, in the one in the many. Therefore, [it will be] in Harmony, that is, in the

unity of many things, or [seu] diversity compensated by identity. Moreover God is the one among everything".<sup>38</sup>

Leibniz is explicit in the texts of 1668-71 that God is the unity in the world; he is less so about the fact that God is the multiplicity in things. As noted, he clearly maintains in his essay *On Transubstantiation* that it is an Idea of God that constitutes the substantial nature of a non-human substance and moreover that each Idea is different from every other.<sup>39</sup> It follows that the Ideas of God constitute the diversity among the non-human substances of the world. In other words, despite the scarcity of explicit textual support, it seems clear that Leibniz took God to be the multiplicity as well as the unity in the world. For someone as firmly rooted in the Platonic tradition as Leibniz was, there was no reason to make an issue of this aspect of the world. That the fullness of the being of God would make the world as full and diverse as possible is one of the most fundamental of Platonic tenets, as is the view that the resulting diversity is merely a manifestation or emanation of God.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, as we will see, it would not be long before Leibniz does become quite insistent about the fact that God is the multiplicity in the world. This happens when he begins to combine his metaphysics of divinity with his metaphysics of substance. He does this in 1676.

Soon after developing his account of the relation between God and creatures, Leibniz went to Paris. Between his arrival in 1672 and the autumn of 1675, Leibniz applied most of his enormous intellectual energies to

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<sup>38</sup> *Necesse est in cogitabilibus ipsis rationem esse cur sentiantur, id est cur existant, ea non est in singulorum cogitatione, erit ergo in pluribus. Ergo omnibus. Ergo in Mente, id est uno in multis. Ergo in Harmonia id est unitate plurimorum, seu diversitate identitate compensata. Deus autem est unus omnia (A, VI ii 283).*

<sup>39</sup> In fact, in the essay, Leibniz brags about the fact that the account of substance there articulated solves the problem of the individuation of substance. One of the most difficult questions facing the interpreter of Aristotle is how the substantial form is supposed to make an individual a thing distinct from all other individuals. Because Aristotle's texts are not clear on this issue and because the answer to this question is important to any account of Aristotle's most fundamental principles, the issue was hotly debated by the schoolmen. The latter differ on whether the form or the matter or the union of the two is responsible for the individuation among substances. According to Leibniz in *On Transubstantiation*, the Idea differentiates the matter. See A, VI i 518. For a thorough account of Leibniz on individuation, see Laurence C. McCullough, *Leibniz on Individuals and Individuation* (Dordrecht: 1996).

<sup>40</sup> Already at this early stage we glimpse (1) a version of the principle of plenitude, where the idea is that the world will be as full as possible, and perhaps (2) the principle of the identity of indiscernibles, where the idea is that no two manifestations of God's essence should be the same. In other words, the assumption that the world will be as full as possible is closely related to the view that no two things in the world will be identical. For more details, see Christia Mercer, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: its Origins and Development*, New York, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999, esp. chapters 6 and 10.

mathematics. One of the results of this intensive work was a break-through on the development of the calculus in the second half of 1675. It was in the spring of 1676 when Leibniz once again began to investigate seriously the metaphysical relation between God and creatures. He elaborates on his earlier account of God as unity and he develops more fully his conception of God as multiplicity. Leibniz asserts that things are to God as properties are to essence. He writes:

It can surely be said that all things are one, that all things are in God, in the same way the effect is contained in its full cause [causa sua plena] and a property of any subject [is contained] in the essence of that same subject. For it is certain that the existence of things is a consequence of the Nature of God, which brings it about that only the most perfect things can be chosen (A, VI iii 370).

In another text, Leibniz writes:

There is the same variety in any kind of world, and this is nothing other than the same essence related in various ways, as if you were to look at the same town from various places; or, if you relate the essence of the number 6 to the number 3, it will be  $3 \times 2$  or  $3 + 3$ , but if you relate it to the number 4 it will be  $6/4 = 3/2$ , or  $6 = 4 \times 3/2$ . So it is not surprising that the things produced are in a certain way different (A, VI iii 523: P 83).

The multiplicity in the world results from the fact that the essence of God is emanated or expressed in an infinity of ways. But he also maintains that all things share the same essence, namely, the essence of God. He writes:

The attributes of God are infinite, but none of them involves the whole essence of God, for the essence of God consists in the fact that he is the subject of all compatible attributes. But any property or affection of God involves his whole essence [...] But when all other attributes are related to any attribute, there result modifications in it. Hence it comes about that the same Essence of God is expressed wholly [expressa sit tota] in any kind of World, and so God manifests himself in an infinity of ways [in infinitis modis] (A, VI iii 514: P 69-71).

There is no tension between unity and multiplicity as good-making criteria. Unity is what God is as transcendent and perfect; multiplicity is what he is as immanent. The reason the world is so good is because the essence of the perfect One is expressed in the world in as many ways as possible.

Some of the passages quoted above and others like them in the papers of *De summa rerum* have suggested to some scholars that during the period of 1676-78 Leibniz was deeply influenced by Spinoza. The result of this in-

fluence is supposed to be that he became a pantheist. As Robert Adams puts it in his recent book, Leibniz denied "the ontological externality" of creatures.<sup>41</sup> But Leibniz is no more a pantheist than is Plotinus. That is, this is not pantheism, it is Platonism. He writes:

It seems to me that the origin of things from God is of the same kind as the origin of properties from an essence; just as  $6 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ , therefore  $6 = 3 + 3$ ,  $= 3 \times 2$ ,  $= 4 + 2$ , etc. Nor may one doubt that the one expression differs from the other, for in one way we think of the number 3 or the number 2 expressly [expresse], and in another way we do not; but it is certain that the number 3 is not thought of by someone who thinks of six units at the same time. It would be thought of, if the person were to impose a limit after three had been thought. Much less does someone who thinks of six units at the same time think of multiplication. *So just as these properties differ from each other and from essence, so do things differ from each other and from God* (A, VI iii 518 f: P 77; my emphasis).

The point here is that the attributes of the supreme being will be manifest in any of its products. Since possible worlds and possible individuals are products of God, each is an emanation of the divine essence. As Leibniz conceives the relation now, the divine attributes of God will be manifest in any of its products. But while the essence and being of the supreme being emanate to its products, each creature is an inferior image or expression of that essence and is *not* identical to it. Leibniz was not a pantheist during the period of 1676-77 and what sounds like pantheism is seventeenth-century Platonism.

We have arrived at Leibniz's original conception of harmony. But it is reasonable to ask at this point exactly what relevance this conception has for his later thought. There are two points to make. First, Leibniz's Platonic conception of the relation between God and creatures developed hand-in-hand with his Aristotelian conception of substance. I have argued elsewhere that there is a theory of substance in the texts of 1668-70. For example, in *On Transubstantiation*, Leibniz defines a substance as that which has its own principle of activity and as a being which subsists per se.<sup>42</sup> In Paris, Leibniz defines substance in exactly the same way, but he also makes acti-

<sup>41</sup> See Robert Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (Oxford: 1994), 128. Mark Kulstad has also argued that Leibniz is a pantheist in his "Did Leibniz Incline toward Monistic Pantheism in 1676?", *International Leibniz Congress* (1994), pp. 424-428.

<sup>42</sup> For a much more thorough discussion of the development of Leibniz's original conception of substance, see Christia Mercer, *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, cit., chapters 3 and 4. For a more thorough discussion of Leibniz's relation to pantheism, see my "Leibniz and Spinoza on Substance and Mode", *Rationalists*, ed. Derk Pereboom, Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming.

vity the source of harmony. In some essays written in 1672, he maintains that individual created minds are the source of the harmony in the world. As he emphasizes in the first few months of 1672, "nothing is more wonderful in all of philosophy" than that from the activity of mind "follows harmony, that is, diversity compensated by identity" (A, VI iii 57; also A, VI iii 67, 101). In an essay entitled *On the True Method in Philosophy and Theology* written in the middle of his Paris stay, he claims: "every substance is active and every active thing is called a substance" (A, VI iii 158). Not only does Leibniz continue to describe minds as fundamentally active, even during his so-called pantheistic period, he develops a version of what later becomes his principle of the identity of indiscernibles. In a text of 1 April 1676, entitled *Meditation on the Principle of the Individual*, Leibniz makes it clear that every finite thing has its own principle of activity or mind and that no two minds are the same. Or, as he writes at the end of a text quoted above: "So just as these properties differ from each other and from essence, so do things differ from each other and from God" (A, VI iii 518f). It follows that finite things differ from one another because each has its own unique mind and that each mind is itself a different expression of God's essence. Each mind has a principle of activity by means of which it can express that essence. God is transcendent from it and immanent in it.<sup>45</sup>

In short, according to my interpretation of Leibniz's philosophical development, beginning in the late 1660s and continuing throughout his career, Leibniz's most basic assumption about finite created substances was that they were causally autonomous from God. The reason God gave every substance its own principle of activity was so that it would be distinct. But this distinctness amounts to no more than that each substance is just another expression, among a multiplicity of expressions, of the oneness of God. It is this idea that stands at the center of the philosophy of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and Leibniz's later works. Leibniz does not use the same language in the latter texts, but he persists in believing that God is both the unity and multiplicity in the world. To cite only a couple of texts:

In *Discourse on Metaphysics* 14 he writes that "Now, first of all it is very evident that created substances depend upon God, who preserves them and who even produces them continually by a kind of emanation, just as we produce our thoughts. For God, so to speak, turns on all sides and in all ways the general system of phenomena which he finds it good to produce in

<sup>45</sup> For the details of how this is supposed to work, see my forthcoming book, esp. chapters 6, 9-10.

order to manifest his glory, and he views all the faces of the world in all ways possible ..." (AG 46).

In *Monadology*, 47 he explains that "God alone is the primitive unity or the original simple substance; all created or derivative monads are products, and are generated so to speak by continual fulgurations of the divinity [...], limited by the receptivity of the creature, to which it is essential to be limited" (AG 219).<sup>44</sup>

There remains much to be said about Leibniz's many remarks concerning unity and multiplicity in the world. I do not mean to suggest that the brief analysis offered here will solve all the interpretive problems that arise concerning such comments. It will not. But, by excavating Leibniz's original understanding of this two-part notion, I do hope to have placed such remarks in their proper philosophical context and to have offered a crucial clue to their deciphering. That God is the unity and multiplicity in the world is a fact about Leibniz's metaphysics that has gone unnoticed for too long.

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<sup>44</sup> As Professor Heinrich Schepers has pointed out to me, fulgurations and emanations are not exactly the same; but we can ignore the distinction here.