

Editoriale

Trajectories of a Multifaceted Mind

Leibniz and His Post-idealist Legacy

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The story concerning the edition of Leibniz's papers and letters renders the story of its reception and the methodology used to approach his ideas worth of particular attention and study. Leibniz did not publish extensively during his life, although some of his views circulated through his extensive network of correspondents. Privately, he was an intensive writer, whose approach to knowledge corresponds to what we would today call trans- and cross-disciplinary work. He followed the development of sciences at his time – from mathematics to history, from medicine to the study of languages –, but he was not just a spectator: he engaged himself with difficult issues and eventually provided brilliant ideas to progress in any of those disciplines. Most of his writings remained unavailable until the appearances of special editions that enabled a 're-discovery' of his genius and multifaceted mind. This issue offers some attempts of tracking the reception and transformation of Leibnizian ideas and concepts. Its intent is neither to provide an exhaustive picture, nor to adopt a single methodology of how to approach the story of Leibniz's reception. We begin by explaining the different approach to Leibniz's reception in light of the history of the edition of his writings. We therefore distinguish three different approaches that will constitute the sections of the present issues. In §1 we present the contributions, and in §2 we offer a short presentation of "lost pieces", i.e., stories of reception of Leibniz's ideas that remained uncovered by the present issue and that, according to us, need peculiar attention from scholars.

Introduction

G. W. Leibniz belongs to the western classical philosophical canon and his work has influenced other philosophers in a peculiar way. Most of his philosophical and scientific writings remained unpublished during his lifetime and were therefore unavailable to his contemporaries and direct successors. Only in the 19th century did various editions of his previously unpublished manuscripts

allow people to glimpse the many facets of his scientific production¹. Leibniz do not just make a contribution to philosophy. He also devoted his efforts to disciplines such as mathematics, physics, jurisprudence, and engineering in ways that we are only now beginning to fully understand.

The re-discovery of Leibniz's many facets depends on texts and letters made available to the scientific community; an enterprise decisively boosted by the systematic, critical edition produced by Akademie Ausgabe. Unlike previous editions of Leibniz's papers – based mostly on a selection of texts – the Academy undertook a complete edition of Leibniz's manuscripts found in the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek in Hannover and elsewhere. Papers and letters have been published in chronological order, organized thematically in eight series of 'der schwarzen Bänden'². The value of the Akademie Ausgabe work can hardly be underestimated: besides being an incredible effort to date and order Leibniz's papers and letters chronologically, so that we can now reconstruct the genealogy of Leibniz's ideas; the edition uncovered papers displaying some original and ground-breaking ideas by Leibniz, while their critical edition highlighted the sometimes tormented genesis of Leibniz's view: the critical apparatus, reporting Leibniz's and other's intervention on papers and letters, registers both his accurate search for terminology and his constant improvement of demonstrations.

This interweaving of scientific issues and editorial facts is known to the scientific community. It stays in the background of numerous volumes and essays that undertook an enquiry of Leibniz's ideas and their reception by later philosophers and scientists. Most studies engaged with the reception of Leibniz's ideas by other philosophers and rightly stressed the question about which sources

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¹ Among the 18th century editions of Leibniz's texts, the following are important: C. Kortholt's selection of Leibniz's correspondence in four volumes (1734-1742); *Oeuvres philosophiques latines et françoises*, edited by R. E. Raspe (1765), which included the first edition of *New Essays*; L. Dutens' *Opera omnia* (1768), in six volumes, which gathered all of the Leibnizian pieces available to his time. The edition of unpublished writings was resumed only in the second half of the 19th century, with J. E. Erdmann's *Opera philosophica quae extant Latina, Gallica*, two volumes (1839-40); A. Foucher de Careil's *Oeuvres de Leibniz*, seven volumes (1859-1875), and especially I. C. Gerhardt's seminal editions of Leibniz, *Die Mathematische Schriften* (seven volumes, 1849-60) and *Die Philosophischen Schriften* (seven volumes, 1875-1890), and of other pieces related to the discovery of calculus and the correspondence between Leibniz and Wolff (1860). For a general overview of Leibniz's editions, see S. Lorenz, 'Auferstehung eines Leibes dessen Glieder wunderbarlich herum zerstreuet sind'. *Leibniz-Renaissancen und ihre editorischen Reflexe*, in A. Sell (ed.), *Edititionen – Wandel und Wirkung*, Halle 2012, pp. 65-92.

² The critical edition of Leibniz's writings (*Akademie Ausgabe*) started in 1923. On the genesis and history of Leibniz's critical edition see the contributions in W. Li (ed.), *Komma und Kathedrale. Tradition, Bedeutung und Herausforderung der Leibniz-Edition*, Berlin 2012.

were available to Leibniz's followers³. The main aim of this approach was to measure the influence and impact of Leibniz's work.

A subclass of these studies engages with a peculiar – somehow related, though different – perspective. Within this latter stream of research, the new material at our disposal is used to reconstruct how advanced Leibniz's breaking down of ideas in mathematics, philosophy, or life-science, was to establish a fair *comparison* to later theories⁴. Although bracketing the historical question of the influence of Leibniz's ideas, this approach – combined with careful attention to what was and was not available to Leibniz's successors – permits the unveiling of an image of Leibniz that may be considered more accurate than previous representations or pictures of him. Through this operation, we can comprehend how far Leibniz came up with his theories, what he missed, or what he saw differently.

The picture that emerges from this enquiry may be described through the Leibnizian metaphor of the mirror⁵. Leibniz's work has been reflected on by philosophers and scientists as being like a mirror infinitely multiplying the many facets that characterized his work, eventually distorting/deforming its image⁶.

³ Outputs within this stream of research include, among others: F. Beiderbeck, W. Li, S. Waldhoff (eds.), *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Rezeption, Forschung, Ausblick*, Stuttgart 2019; V. Peckhaus, 'Leibniz's Influence on 19th Century Logic', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL= <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/leibniz-logic-influence/>>; A. Heinekamp (ed.), *Beiträge zur Wirkungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz* (Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa 26), Stuttgart 1986; Y. Belaval, *Études Leibniziennes. De Leibniz à Hegel*, second edition, Paris 1993; R. Kröner-Y. Chin-Drian (eds.), *New Essays on Leibniz's Reception in Science and Philosophy of Science 1800-2000*, Dordrecht 2012; W. Li-W. Schmidt-Biggemann (eds.), *300 Jahre 'Essais de Théodicée' – Rezeption und Transformation*, (Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa 36), Stuttgart 2013; M. Fichant and A. Pelletier (eds.), *Leibniz after 1716: How can one (not) be a Leibnizian?*, «Les études philosophiques», 119/4, 2016; W. Li (ed.), *300 Jahre Monadologie. Interpretation, Rezeption und Transformation* (Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa 39), Stuttgart 2017; J. Weckend-L. Strickland (eds.) *Leibniz. Legacy and Impact*, New York 2021.

⁴ Recent examples of this kind of approach include the essays collected in V. De Risi (ed.), *Leibniz and the Structure of Sciences. Modern Perspective on the History of Logic, Mathematics, Epistemology*. Dordrecht 2019. Essays by M. Malink, A. Vasudevan, *The Logic of Leibniz's Generales inquisitiones de analysi notionum et veritatum*, «Review of Symbolic Logic» 9/4 (2016), pp. 686-751; R. T. W. Arthur, *Leibniz's Syncategorematic Infinitesimals*, «Archive for the History of Exact Sciences», 67/5 (2013), pp. 553-593; D. Rabouin- R. T. W. Arthur, *Leibniz's Syncategorematic Infinitesimals II: their existence, their use and their role in the justification of the differential calculus*, «Archive for the History of Exact Sciences», 74/5 (2020), pp. 401-443.

⁵ On the notion of mirroring and, in general, on the relevance of metaphors in Leibniz's thought, see C. Marras, *Mirrors that mirror each other. Metaphor as a key tool for conceptualizing the 'unity-cum-plurality'*, in H. Breger, J. Herbst, S. Erdner (eds.), *Einheit in der Vielheit- VIII. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress, Vorträge, 1. Teil*, Hannover 2006, pp. 556-564. Cf. also A. M. Nunziante, *Leibniz's Mirror Thesis. Solipsism, Private Perspectives and Conceptual Holism*, «Facta Universitatis», 16/3 (2017), pp. 185-199.

⁶ On the notion of deformation, see C. E. Gadda, *Meditazione Milanese*, Torino 1974, e.g. pp. 57-65. The term 'deformation/distortion' is deployed without its negative dimension, simply referring to the act of putting something into a perspective, and therefore distorting it. Any act of knowledge, according to Gadda's reading of Leibniz, is an act of deformation. Thank you to Stephan Meier-Oeser for this remark.

With the present volume, our idea has been to capture the story of Leibniz's legacy from a different angle, eventually providing a different approach to the issue. 'Trajectories of a multifaceted mind' tries to express this intent. The vestiges of Leibniz, both in terms of writings and of ideas, can be represented as a multicoloured glass shattered on the floor. As shattered glass spreads its pieces apparently erratically and surprisingly far, so the volume's intention was to track down the trajectories of some of these pieces in the timespan between the end of German idealism and today. The idea, represented by the word 'trajectories', is to include both essays that deal with tracking down the intertwining of editorial facts and philosophical interest, and essays that deal with finding small pieces of glass surprisingly far from the point of collision. Especially within this last class of essays, Leibniz's ideas are merely inspirational, imaginative tools used to bring to light and shape a philosopher's or scientist's own ideas, and they thus appear either fascinatingly deformed or surprisingly general schemes of conceptual creation.

Through the image of a multifaceted mind – the colours of our glass – we wanted to capture the many interests and contributions of Leibniz, not limiting the search solely to his philosophy. In this way, we hoped to do justice to the variety and richness of issues and fields of research the philosopher of Leipzig engaged with during his lifetime. Likewise, we did not want to limit our search for glass pieces to philosophical investigation: we also opened the call to scholars 'outside' of Leibniz's studies, with the intent to have a turn back to materials that could be inspirational for further research, perhaps engaging with more accurate historical and philosophical reconstructions.

This is 'Trajectories of a multifaceted mind'. Its incompleteness is easily comprehensible: tracking down all pieces would have been impossible. The lack of attention paid to 'bigger pieces' – like Russell's or Cassirer's receptions of Leibniz – is comprehensible since numerous contributions have already been dedicated to this side of the story⁷. The essays collected in this volume have astonished us. We expected some of them and were surprised by others, especially in relation to the level of creative engagement and deformation of

⁷ For Russell's monograph on Leibniz (1900), see the special issue of the journal: «Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies» (New Series) 37/1, 2017. See also: N. Griffin, *Russell and Leibniz on the Classification of Propositions*, in *New Essays on Leibniz's Reception*, Springer 2012, cit., pp. 85-127; Id., *What Did Russell learn from Leibniz?*, «Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy», 2/1, 2013; R. T. W. Arthur, *The Hegelian Roots of Russell's Critique of Leibniz*, «The Leibniz Review», 28, 2018, pp. 9-42. On Couturat, see the contributions by M. Fichant (*Couturat, éditeur et interprète de Leibniz*) and J. P. Anfray (*Le Leibniz de Couturat et le Leibniz de Russell*), in M. Fichant-S. Roux (eds.), *Louis Couturat (1868-1914). Mathématiques, langage, philosophie*, Paris 2017, respectively pp. 135-159 and pp. 161-188. On Cassirer, see A. G. Ranea, *La réception de Leibniz et les difficultés de la reconstruction idéale de l'histoire de la science d'après Ernst Cassirer*, in A. Heinekamp (ed.), *Beiträge zur Wirkungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz* (Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa 26), 1986, pp. 301-315; J. Seidengart, *Cassirer, Reader, Publisher, and Interpreter of Leibniz's Philosophy*, in *New Essays on Leibniz's Reception*, cit. pp. 129-142; G. B. Moynahan, *Ernst Cassirer and the Critical Science of Germany (1899-1919)*, London 2013, pp. 85-120.

Leibniz's philosophy. We were optimistic about pieces we hoped people would have tracked down, but that at the end did not make it into this volume. In the rest of this introduction, we offer an overview of the contributions accepted (§ 1), and of possible trajectories that remain uncovered by the present issue (§ 2), with the hope to provide scholars with sufficient material to continue the discovery of Leibniz's multifaceted mind.

1. The Contributions

The essays composing this issue are ideally divided into the streams of research just highlighted. 1) *Leibniz Reflected* engages with the spread of Leibniz's ideas based on sources available to the authors engaging in a re-covering of Leibniz's thought. 2) *Leibniz in Comparison* considers developments of Leibnizian intuitions by more recent theories. 3) *Leibnizian Concepts Developed* collects original perspectives on ideas that were generally attributed to Leibniz, like the category of monad and the notion of expression.

Section 1 (*Leibniz Reflected*) features essays by Alessandro Poli («*Profondo inesplorabile mistero*». Marianna Florenzi Waddington, *Leibniz e la prima edizione della Monadologia (1856)*); Clara Silvia Roero and Erika Luciano (*Leibniz e Peano, macchina e diatica*); and Giovanna Varani (*La recezione ardigoiana di Leibniz nel contesto del positivismo italiano*). It also deals with Leibniz's reception in light of editorial questions.

Poli's essay on the original translation of Leibniz's *Monadology* by Marianna Florenzi Waddington sheds light on the reception of Leibniz in Italy as influenced by the spread of German idealism, and especially of Schelling's work, in Naples. Leibniz's *Monadology* presents a valuable link to reconnect German idealism to the Renaissance and the work of Giordano Bruno.

Roero and Luciano's paper lies at the intersection of a reception- and reconstruction-based account. They reconstruct Leibniz's general idea of dyadic – also based on unpublished sources – and compare Leibniz's to Giuseppe Peano's approach. Within this context, the question of how and to what extent Peano was influenced by Leibniz emerges.

Varani recovers Leibniz's reception by Roberto Ardigò, enriching it with a biographical comparison between the two philosophers. Within this context, Varani raises the question of 'which' Leibniz Ardigò met, considering that he did not have access to the Academy Edition.

Section 2 (*Leibniz in Comparison*) – featuring essays by Jürgen Jost, *Leibniz and Modern Physics*, and Sjoerd van Tuinen, *Intersubjectivity and Transindividuality: Leibniz, Husserl, Deleuze, and the Composition of Worlds (Animal Monadology)* – is closer to a comparative approach between Leibniz and later developed traditions.

Jost provides a theoretical discussion of how some theories established by modern physics could be found in the form of intuition in Leibniz's thought.

The aim of the paper is to recover some of Leibniz's intuition and situate them in fruitful dialogue with contemporary approaches.

Theoretically similar in shape, though addressing a different subject matter – the constitution of communities – van Tuinen's essay attempts a re-conceptualization of Leibniz's monadology via Edmund Husserl, Gilles Deleuze, and Antonio Negri, aimed at 'thinking contemporary issues with' Leibniz.

Van Tuinen's topic offers a link to Section 3 – *Leibnizian Concepts Developed*, featuring essays by Miriam Aiello, *Tarde, Adorno e Bourdieu. Tre modelli di impiego filosofico-sociale del concetto di monade*; Harrie Manders, *Why Deleuze is a Leibnizian*; Ronan Durán-Allimant, *Leibniz's Influence on Bergson's Notions of Image, Matter, and Memory. Bergson's Updated Monadology*; Javier Toscano, *Violence as Expression. The Impact of Leibniz and the Baroque on Walter Benjamin's Political Thought*; Fabio Corigliano, *Leibniz a Ventotene*; and Christopher P. Noble, *Hermeneutics, Synthesis, and the Fusion of Horizons*.

As an example of how heterogeneous the use of Leibnizian concepts is, Aiello surveys how Gabriel Tarde, Theodor W. Adorno, and Pierre Bourdieu deployed the concept of monad differently in their sociological work, to address different issues that eventually led to contrasting theories.

By intertwining methodological and philosophical issues, Mander's essay tracks the core idea of Deleuzian philosophical methodology – the creation of concepts – to its Leibnizian roots in the art of discovery. This perspective sheds new light on the question of whether (or perhaps why) Deleuze is a Leibnizian.

Durán Allimant returns to the reception of Leibniz's monadology, this time in the works of Henri Bergson. Through an analysis of Leibnizian concepts used by Bergson – perception, perspective, action, virtual – the author proposes to read the philosophy developed in *Matter and Image* as an updated Monadology.

Toscano's and Corigliano's works both engage with the reception of Leibniz's political thought. While Toscano focuses on the Leibnizian concept of expression and uses it to understand the political dimension of violence in the works of Walter Benjamin, Corigliano tracks Leibnizian influences, especially concerning the conception of 'federation', in the thoughts of Eugenio Colorni.

Part three concludes with a reflection on the philosophy of the history of philosophy by Chris Noble. Inspired by an interview by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Noble reconnects hermeneutic principles to Leibnizian eclecticism as a 'fusion of horizons'.

The issue continues with an interview with Massimo Mugnai, whose editorial and theoretical work on Leibniz's logic has promoted a reconstruction- and comparison-based account of research, inspiring later generations of scholars. Mugnai's approach intuitively grasps the theoretical relevance of editorial work, and combines it in an original way with philosophical inquiry.

The issue is enriched by reviews of two recent books on Leibniz's reception. F. Beiderbeck, W. Li, S. Waldhoff (eds.), *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Rezeption, Forschung, Ausblick*. Steiner Verlag (2019) is analysed by Hannes Amberger as an exemplar of a reception-based account, while V. De Risi (ed), *Leibniz and the*

Structure of Sciences. Modern Perspective on the History of Logic, Mathematics, Epistemology. Springer (2019) pursues, as presented by Monja Reinhart, a reconstruction- and comparison-based account.

2. Lost Pieces

The issue is also defined by what it is not about: pieces that have not been tracked down by scholars. As mentioned above, the aim of the issue was not to be exhaustive about the matter at stake, but rather to inspire further, more accurate and extensive study.

We present a general and disconnected overview of some of those pieces we could not track down fully.

2.1. Leibniz and Vienna at the end of the 19th century

Between 1847 and 1854, Robert Zimmermann published a series of papers on Leibniz. His first work, *Leibnitz' Monadologie. Deutsch – mit einer Abhandlung über Leibnitz' und Herbart's Theorien des wirklichen Geschehens* (Vienna 1847) resulted in a more extensive study of the relationship between Leibniz and Herbart (*Leibnitz und Herbart. Eine Vergleichung ihrer Monadologie* (Vienna 1849)), which (before its publication) in 1948 won the prize of the Danish Academy of Science in Copenhagen. In 1849 Robert Zimmermann, Bernard Bolzano's pupil in Prague⁸ – where he studied at the Gymnasium and had Bolzano as private teacher of mathematics and philosophy – wrote his *Habilitationsschrift* at the University of Vienna. In the same year, he moved to the University of Olmütz, then to the University of Prague (1852), eventually returning to the University of Vienna (1861), where he served as Professor, Dean, and, at the end of his career (1887), as Rector. He died in Prague in August 1888⁹. Even in those years abroad, his relationship with Vienna was vivid, as witnessed by three talks he gave at the Austrian Academy of Sciences: *Der Cardinal Nicolaus Cusanus als Vorläufer Leibnitzens* (Vienna, 1852); *Über Leibnitzens Conceptualismus* (Vienna 1854); and *Leibniz und Lessing (eine Studie)* (Vienna, 1855)¹⁰.

⁸ Bernard Bolzano (1781-1848) was a great admirer of Leibniz (to the point that he was considered a sort of 'Bohemian Leibniz' by his contemporaries) and, as he himself acknowledges in his *Wissenschaftslehre* (1837), he was deeply influenced by Leibnizian ideas about the ontology of logic, e.g. as far as the notion of 'proposition in itself', which he traced back to Leibniz's idea of *cogitatio possibilis*. Among his unpublished writings, there is also one called *Verschiedenheiten zwischen Leibnitzens und meinen Ansichten*, in which he praised Leibniz for having stated that truths and ideas are independent from will and human thought, but criticized his claim that truths and ideas are ultimately grounded in God's understanding. See M. Mugnai, *Bolzano e Leibniz*, «Discipline Filosofiche» 21/2, 2011, pp. 93-108. See also P. Simmons, *Bolzano's Monadology*, «British Journal for the History of Philosophy» 23/6, 2015, pp. 1074-1084.

⁹ For biographical information, see: <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/en/persons/robert-von-zimmermann-o-prof-dr-phil>.

¹⁰ All three talks were published in *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, VIII, 1852, p. 306; XII, 1854, p. 551; XVI, 1855, p. 326.

This information provides clues for the claim that a peculiar interpretation of Leibniz's philosophy – insisting on Leibniz's anti-idealist approach to logic and metaphysics, more in line with nominalist/conceptualist traditions¹¹ and reinvigorated by Herbart in his post-Kantian and anti-idealist rehabilitation of metaphysics¹² – crossed paths with a series of relevant thinkers of the time.

Between 1874 and 1880, Zimmermann was Franz Brentano's colleague at the University of Vienna, and he became the supervisor of one of Brentano's pupils, Kazimierz Twardowski, since Brentano resigned in 1880 from his position as Professor and was at the time *Privatdozent*. Zimmermann was influential in another peculiar way: in 1852, he wrote *Philosophische Propädeutik (für Obergymnasien)*, a textbook for philosophy largely adopted in Austrian Gymnasia, and Twardowski was one of those students who received Zimmermann's philosophical imprinting. The relation to Twardowski is intriguing, since this latter expands and corrects Brentanian philosophy of intentionality in his *Habilitationschrift: On the Content and Object of Presentations – A psychological Investigation* (Vienna, 1894). The study introduces the distinction between object and content of a presentation, a distinction that cleared the path to Meinong's theory of non-existent object and was criticised by Husserl, eventually leading him to his *Logical Investigations*. Recollecting non-idealist traits of metaphysics and logic present in this tradition to Leibniz and Herbart deserves a critical and historical analysis, considering that we are also at the crossroads of many further streams in philosophy, like Husserl's phenomenology, Meinong's theory of objects, and, indirectly, Russell's transition from idealism to analytic philosophy¹³. This latter, as is widely known, contributed, together with Couturat, to the rediscovery of Leibniz's logic.

2.2. Leibniz and Pragmatism

Leibniz's philosophy has been influential outside the continent as well¹⁴. If the seminal text of the pragmatist tradition by Charles S. Peirce – *How to make our ideas clear* (1878) – is an explicit reference to Leibniz's fundamental paper in epistemology – *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas* (1684) – , Peirce's unpublished manuscripts unveils that the American philosopher considered

respectively.

¹¹ For a discussion of Leibniz's conceptualism, see L. Oliveri, *Imaginative Animals. Leibniz's Logic of Imagination*, chap. 7, Stuttgart 2021.

¹² See Frederick Beiser, *Herbart's Monadology*. «British Journal for the History of Philosophy» 23/6, 2015, pp. 1056-1073.

¹³ Betti reports that Twardowski's *Content and Object* was reviewed anonymously on *Mind* and influenced Russell and Moore, see A. Betti, 'Kazimierz Twardowski', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2019 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/twardowski/>>; and Schaar, M. van der, *From analytic psychology to analytic philosophy: The reception of Twardowski's ideas in Cambridge*, «Axiomathes», 7/3 (1996), pp. 295-324.

¹⁴ See the two papers by N. Rescher, *Leibniz crosses the Atlantic*, and *Leibniz and American Philosophy* in Id., *On Leibniz. Expanded Edition*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013, pp. 289-312.

Leibniz's theory of symbolic cognition, as exposed in *Meditations*, a threshold of American pragmatism¹⁵.

[...] the Leibnizian sect [...] talked of thought as *often* being symbolical. [...] If the Leibnizians had surrendered themselves to their idea of symbolical thought, and have said at once that all thought, as thought, is symbolical they would have been at the threshold of the pragmatist theory. But instead of grasping their idea with their whole fist, they only dawdled with it with the tips of their fingers¹⁶.

In *Meditations*, Leibniz criticizes Descartes's criterion of truth as resting on an act of perception that is clear and distinct. If for Descartes a clear and distinct perception is an act by which the mind immediately sees an idea in a way that distinctions and parts composing the idea are grasped by the mind in a single act of intuition; Leibniz's criticism stresses that the more we know how signs are used to implement thought, the more we make our ideas clear. By identifying clear and distinct perception with symbolic cognition, Leibniz affirms the dependence of thought on signs and their use, although, in Peirce's words, he did not fully embrace this idea, since he limits thought to be 'plerumque' (often) symbolic.

This connection to Peirce reveals that Leibniz was present in the philosophical and cultural life at Harvard University in the second half of the 19th century. Peirce, along with other Harvard graduate students, like William James, funded in 1871 the Metaphysical Club, an informal gathering of members discussing philosophy. The birth of pragmatism can be traced back to these events. Some years later, a similar Club was instituted by Peirce at the John Hopkins University, where in 1879 a student of his exposed Leibniz's *Meditations*¹⁷. While teaching logic at John Hopkins, Peirce met John Dewey as one of his scholars, who later wrote *Leibniz's New Essays Concerning Human Understanding: A Critical Exposition* (1888).

Leibniz's philosophy became appealing overseas in a period when his manuscripts on logic and mathematics were published on the continent and in England. Gerhard's edition in Germany; Couturat's *Opuscules et fragmentes inédites de Leibniz* (1903) and *La logique de Leibniz* (1901), Russell's *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900), established the image of Leibniz as the great logician of the 17th century and made him an influential figure of early analytic philosophy.

Reinforced by the analytic tradition, Leibniz's influence continued concealed within the pragmatist tradition in the works of Wilfrid Sellars, Nicholas Rescher, and Robert Brandom.

¹⁵ See F. Bellucci, *Peirce, Leibniz and the Threshold of Pragmatism*, «Semiotica» 195, 2013, pp. 331-355, cited and commented in S. Meier-Oeser, *Erkenntnistheorie*, in F. Beiderbeck et al. (eds.), *Gottfried Wilhelms Leibniz. Rezeption, Forschung, Ausblick*, cit. p. 464.

¹⁶ MS 284, quoted in Bellucci, *Peirce, Leibniz and the Threshold of Pragmatism*, cit., p. 307 and Meier-Oeser, *Erkenntnistheorie*, cit., p. 464.

¹⁷ S. Meier-Oeser, *Erkenntnistheorie*, cit., p. 464.

United by their affiliation to the University of Pittsburgh at various stages of their careers, the three philosophers engaged with interpretations of Leibniz's thought, although this latter's influence is considered marginal when confronted to other historical figures, like Hegel and Kant (besides pragmatists like Peirce and James).

Rescher's engagement with Leibniz started with his doctoral dissertation at Princeton (1951) and remained constant during his productive academic life, especially at Pittsburgh: along with relevant studies on Leibniz's metaphysics, logic, and philosophy of nature¹⁸, Rescher wrote important introductions to Leibniz's philosophy¹⁹ and was president of the Leibniz Society of North America.

If the influences of German Idealism, broadly understood, and especially Kant, are more evident in the thought of Wilfried Sellars, recent studies on his philosophy shows his interest in Leibniz²⁰, especially regarding concepts like nature and nominalism²¹, an affinity perhaps more evident in the work of one of his pupils: Robert R. Brandom.

Brandom's intellectual relationship to Leibniz is significantly marked by a returned interest in the notion of clarity and distinction, a topic dear to Peirce, as pointed out previously. Brandom's paper, *Leibniz and Degrees of Perception*²², undertakes an explanation of Leibnizian notion of «distinction» in terms of «range of expressiveness». This exegetical piece of literature is interesting not simply for the interpretation of some of Leibniz's puzzling theories, like the relation between consciousness and intentionality/representability²³; it also deserves an accurate investigation in light of what Brandom says about the sources of inferentialism, i.e., that it begins with Leibniz's (and Spinoza's) modification of Descartes's «representation» by mean of «expression»²⁴, one of three Leibnizian master-ideas²⁵.

¹⁸ Some of them are collected in N. Rescher, *On Leibniz. Expanded Edition*, Pittsburgh 2013.

¹⁹ N. Rescher, *Leibniz: An Introduction to His Philosophy*, Maryland 1979.

²⁰ J.-B. Rauzy, *Sellars et Bergmann Lecteurs de Leibniz: La querelle des particuliers*, in J. M. Monnoyer, B. Langlet (eds), *Gustav Bergmann: Phenomenological Realism and Dialectical Ontology*, Heusenstamm 2009, pp. 87-102.

²¹ A. M. Nunziante, *The Lingua Franca of Nominalism. Sellars on Leibniz*, in L. Corti, A. N. Nunziante (eds.), *Sellars and the History of Modern Philosophy*, New York 2018.

²² *Leibniz and Degrees of Perception* («Journal of the History of Philosophy» 19/4 (1981): 447-79).

²³ See Z. M. Gartenberg, *Brandom's Leibniz*, «Pacific Philosophical Quarterly», 102, 2021, pp. 73-102.

²⁴ R. Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 93: «Rationalists such as Spinoza and Leibniz accept the central role of the concept of representation in explaining human cognitive activity, but they are not prepared to accept Descartes's strategy of treating the possession of representational content as an unexplained explainer. [...] Their idea is that the way in which representings point beyond themselves to something represented is to be understood in terms of inferential relations among representings. States and acts acquire content by being caught up in inferences, as premises and conclusions. Thus a big divide within Enlightenment epistemology concerns the relative explanatory priority accorded to the concepts of representation and inference».

²⁵ R. Brandom, *Reason, Expression and Perspective: Three Leibnizian Master-Ideas, then and now*. Intervention to the International Conference: «Theatrum Naturae et Artium: Leibniz und die

2.3. Leibniz, Modality, and Possible Worlds

Another relevant topic – not discussed by the contributors to this issue – is Leibniz's theory of modalities, especially his theory of possible worlds, compossibility, and the influence it has on the contemporary debate on modal metaphysics (taking into account the similarities and differences between Leibniz's modal metaphysics and the views of contemporary philosophers like Saul Kripke, David C. Lewis and Robert Stalnaker)²⁶.

It is worth noting that a renewed interest in Leibniz's views on essentialism, possible worlds, counterparts and semantics of proper names chronologically followed on (and, in some sense, was a consequence of) the revolution in modal thought inaugurated by the introduction of the 'possible worlds semantics' for modal logic by Saul Kripke (and others) in the 1960s²⁷. The introduction of a semantics based on the notion of 'possible worlds' immediately raised the question of the metaphysical or ontological interpretation of these 'worlds', which, within the context of Kripkean semantics, were just 'models' in a mathematical sense, thus leading to a wide range of possible options: from a quite deflationist account (defended, among others, by Kripke himself)²⁸, in which talking of 'possible worlds' is just a vivid way of expressing the idea of 'counterfactual situations', to a form of extreme realism (championed by David Lewis)²⁹, according to which the idea of 'possible worlds' has to be taken at face value: possible worlds are real worlds 'in flesh and bones', that is to say parallel universes, spatially and temporally disconnected from our own³⁰.

Though the relevance of modal issues had already been stressed in Leibniz scholarship, it cannot be denied that the introduction of possible worlds semantics (and philosophical discussions about its interpretation) impressed a completely different twist on the debate among Leibniz scholars³¹. The debate

Schauplätze der Aufklärung», Leipzig, 28-30 September 2016.

²⁶ A very accurate introduction to the principal aspects of Leibniz's modal metaphysics can be found in B. C. Look, 'Leibniz's Modal Metaphysics', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2013 Edition (<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/leibniz-modal/>). For a recent reassessment, see the contributions collected in G. Brown-Y. Chiek (eds.), *Leibniz on Compossibility and Possible Worlds*, Springer 2016.

²⁷ Kripke's main contributions were published between 1963 and 1965. On the history of modern modal logic, and the works of Kripke, Hintikka, Prior and Barcan Marcus, see R. Ballarín, 'Modern Origins of Modal Logic', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2021 Edition (<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/logic-modal-origins/>).

²⁸ Cf. S. A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge MA 1980 (orig. edition 1972).

²⁹ Cf. D. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, New Jersey 1986. Modal realism had been already introduced by Lewis in *Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic*, «The Journal of Philosophy» 65/5, 1968, pp. 113-126.

³⁰ For a general introduction to this debate, see M. J. Loux's introduction to: M. J. Loux (ed.), *The Possible and the Actual: Readings in the Metaphysics of Modality*, Ithaca, New York 1979, pp. 15-64. On the contraposition between realist and antirealist views of possible worlds, see J. Divers, *Possible Worlds*, New York 2003.

³¹ It is worth remembering that Hans Poser's book, *Zur Theorie der Modalbegriffe bei G. W. Leibniz*, Wiesbaden 1969, was a pioneering work in this field (and is still a very insightful book on this topic). Unfortunately, Poser's main references were to pre-Kripkean contributions

concerning Leibniz's views on these topics is usually dated back to the seminal contributions of people like Benson Mates³², Fabrizio Mondadori³³, and Robert Merrihew Adams³⁴, who were also involved in philosophical debates about the metaphysics of modality and related questions.

The most debated question concerned Leibniz's (alleged) commitment to a form of extreme essentialism, or 'superessentialism' – the view that all the properties of an individual are essential to that individual –, defended by authors like Mates, Mondadori and Rescher, and contested, among others, by Adams, Sleight and Cover and Hawthorne³⁵. Superessentialism is connected to the idea that each individual substance corresponds to a complete individual concept (and vice versa), with the latter (complete concept) working as an individual essence and as a principle of individuation of the corresponding individual substance. Nothing can be changed or even slightly modified within the notion of an individual substance without changing or modifying its very identity (and, via the universal connection of all things, also the world itself).

As a corollary, it follows that each individual is 'world-bound' and thus counterfactual identity (the identity of the individual through possible worlds) cannot be taken at face value, but only by resorting to a kind of theory of 'counterparts' based on the weaker notion of similarity. The rejection of counterfactual identity is in keeping with a realist account of possible worlds (like Lewis's) and in contrast with the anti-realist accounts (e.g. for Kripke, counterfactual identity is a kind of matter of fact which cannot be questioned). At the same time, however, Leibniz strongly rejected any realist conception of possible worlds as alternative universes³⁶, embracing a conceptualist view according to which possible worlds (and possible individuals) are just ideas in the mind of God, thus they are not worlds in the proper sense. In this sense he sides with those like Robert Stalnaker, who, in opposition to David Lewis, remarks

to modal logic (like those of C. I. Lewis and G. H. von Wright), which took into account the syntax more than the semantics of modal logics.

³² B. Mates, *Leibniz on Possible Worlds*, «Critica» 4/10, 1970, pp. 123-127; Id. *Individuals and Modality in the Philosophy of Leibniz*, «Studia Leibnitiana» 4, 1972, pp. 81-118.

³³ F. Mondadori, *Nomi propri e mondi possibili*, «Rivista di Filosofia», 62, 1972, pp. 354-390; Id. *Reference, Essentialism, and Modality in Leibniz's Metaphysics*, «Studia Leibnitiana», 5/1, 1973, pp. 74-101.

³⁴ R. M. Adams, *Theories of Actuality*, «Nous», 8/3, 1974, pp. 211-231; Id., *Leibniz's Theories of Contingency*, «Rice University Studies», 63/4, 1977 pp. 1-41.

³⁵ In addition to the papers quoted in the previous footnotes, cf. B. Mates, *The Philosophy of Leibniz. Metaphysics and Language*, Oxford 1986; R. M. Adams, *Leibniz. Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, Oxford 1994, esp. pp. 53-ff; J. A. Cover, J. O' Leary-Hawthorne, *Substance and Individuation in Leibniz*, Cambridge 1999, esp. pp. 87-142, where they also give an overview of the debates on Leibniz's essentialism.

³⁶ Cf. J. P. Anfray, *Autant de mondes sans connexion: Leibniz et Lewis sur la compossibilité et l'unité du monde*, «Les Études Philosophiques», 119/4, 2016 pp. 537-58. See also O. Ottaviani, *Leibniz's Argument against the Plurality of Worlds*, in W. Li (ed.), *Für unser Glück oder das Glück anderer. Vorträge des X. Internationalen Leibniz-Kongresses*, Hildesheim 2016, IV, pp. 399-413.

that possible worlds are just *ways* in which the world can be (or, according to Leibniz, could have been), not *worlds* in flesh and bones³⁷.

Another relevant issue, connected to those aforementioned, is Leibniz's approach to counterfactual conditionals in terms of possible worlds, which seems to anticipate the core intuition of the semantics of counterfactuals developed independently by Lewis and Stalnaker³⁸.

Ironically, both the idea that individuals are world-bounded (and possible worlds do not overlap) and the conceptualist foundation of possibilities in the mind of God are closely connected to Leibniz's project of theodicy, i.e. his justification of God from the charge of having introduced evil in the world. Possible worlds are just alternative plans for the creation of the world that God envisioned in Himself, having to choose the optimal one; at the same time, the fact that possible worlds do not overlap allows Leibniz to conclude that God could have refrained from creating this world (or from creating something at all), but, once He chose to create a particular world, he could not modify it at all. The irony lies in the fact that such a theodicean approach (as well as Leibniz's ultimate theological foundation of possibilities, relations and ideas in the mind of God) seems to be foreign to the typically secular approach followed by most of contemporary metaphysicians (with some remarkable exceptions, like Adams³⁹).

Finally, it is also worth noting that, in recent years, the classical approach to modal metaphysics in terms of possible worlds has lost part of its original appeal. Apart from the success of modal semantics, the main philosophical appeal for philosophers trained in a Quinean tradition (like Lewis himself) consisted in the possibility of providing a sort of 'extensionalization' of apparently irreducible intensional notions (like modalities), which represented a sort of *bête noire* for the Quinean approach (especially when concerning modalities *de re* and the

³⁷ R. Stalnaker, *Possible Worlds*, «Nous», 10/1, 1976, pp. 65-75. Stalnaker regards his own position as a form of moderate realism about possible worlds, insofar as he thinks that quantifying over 'possible worlds' involves a sort of ontological commitment to these entities, but he disagrees with Lewis about the ontological status of those entities: for Lewis, possible worlds are concrete entities, while for Stalnaker they are abstract objects (like properties, propositions, etc.), thus they do not exist in the same sense in which the world we live in exists. To be fair, Lewis believes that the very same distinction between abstract and concrete entities is a problematic one, thus he is reluctant to say that possible worlds are concrete entities for him. See Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, pp. 81-86. For Lewis's reply to moderate realism (which he calls 'Ersatzism') see *On the Plurality of Worlds*, pp. 136-ff.

³⁸ Cf. R. Stalnaker, *A Theory of Conditionals*, in N. Rescher (ed.), *Studies in Logical Theory*, New York 1968, pp. 98-112; D. Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1973; M. Tooley, *The Stalnaker-Lewis Approach to Counterfactuals* «The Journal of Philosophy» 100/ 7, 2003, pp. 371-377. On Leibniz's analysis of counterfactuals in terms of possible worlds, see F. Mondadori, *Leibniz and the Doctrine of Inter-World Identity*, «Studia Leibnitiana», 7/1, 1975, pp. 21-57; M. V. Griffin, *Leibniz on God's Knowledge of Counterfactuals*, «The Philosophical Review», 108/3, 1999, pp. 317-343. For a different approach, see J. B. Rauzy, *Leibniz: conditionnalité et actualité*, in F. Duchesneau, J. Griard (eds.), *Leibniz selon les 'Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain'*, Paris 2006, pp. 73-95.

³⁹ See the essays collected in R. M. Adams, *The Virtue of Faith. And Other Essays in Philosophical Theology*, Oxford 1987.

thorny question of essentialism)⁴⁰. Thanks to the new resources provided by modal semantics, talking of possibility (necessity) can be translated into talking about truth at some (all) possible worlds (given certain constraints about the relation of accessibility between worlds); in this way, the building blocks of the modal ontology are just individuals and sets of individuals (e.g. worlds), which are much more palatable to nominalistically minded philosophers. Difficulties intrinsic to this programme (like those connected with hyperintensional contexts, for example), have led more and more people to search for alternative approaches. After the contributions of Kit Fine⁴¹, for example, the original project of interpreting (or grounding or explaining) 'essence' in terms of 'modality' was reversed, and, following this suggestion, it is necessity that has to be interpreted in terms of essence and essential properties, or possibility that has to be grounded on dispositional properties, and so on⁴².

The philosophical debate on these questions is still open, but, as usual, changes in metaphysical trends have already had consequences in the field of Leibniz scholarship. First, Leibniz's commitment to possible worlds requires some form of clarification, especially about the question of whether or not Leibniz understood possible worlds (and possible individuals) as a kind of nominalistically palatable way of grounding the modal notions of possibility and necessity (i.e. whether for Leibniz the same definition of possibility and necessity had to be understood in terms of truth at possible worlds)⁴³. A negative answer seems to come from more recent authors who have worked on Leibniz's modal theory (Griffin, Bender)⁴⁴, who, following Fine's counter-revolution, proposed an interpretation of Leibniz's metaphysics of modalities in terms of a more primitive notion of essence.

Furthermore, other relevant aspects of Leibniz's metaphysics and formal ontology are now being approached following inputs from the most up to date works in logic and metaphysics: like his account of time and causality, his theory of conditions, ontological dependence and, especially, the study of the part-whole relation and the relevance of mereological considerations to a proper understanding of Leibniz's monadology and his theory of aggregates⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Divers, *De Re Modality in the Late Twentieth Century*, in M. Sinclair (ed.), *The Actual and the Possible. Modality and Metaphysics in Modern Philosophy*, Oxford 2017, pp. 217-35.

⁴¹ Kit Fine, *Essence and Modality*, «Philosophical Perspectives», 8, 1994, pp. 1-16.

⁴² The dispositional approach to modality, as an alternative approach to possible worlds, was originally defended, among others, by a great Leibnizian scholar like Fabrizio Mondadori. See F. Mondadori-A. Morton, *Modal Realism: The Poisoned Pawn*, «Philosophical Review», 85/1, 1976, pp. 3-20; F. Mondadori, *Kleist*, «Canadian Journal of Philosophy» (Supplementary Volume, 6), 1980, pp. 185-223.

⁴³ The question has been already raised by Margaret Wilson in her dissertation (1965), which has now finally been published: M. D. Wilson, *Leibniz's Doctrine of Necessary Truth*, London 2021.

⁴⁴ See M. V. Griffin, *Leibniz, God and Necessity*, Cambridge 2012; S. Bender, *Leibniz' Metaphysik der Modalität*, Berlin/New York 2016.

⁴⁵ On mereology, see also the interview with Massimo Mugnai in this issue.

2.4. Leibniz and Works of Fiction

Leibniz composed poems (occasional ones, in most cases)⁴⁶ and was interested in the novels of his times (he also had a correspondence with French novelist Madeleine de Scudéry). The same notion of ‘possible worlds’ is often interpreted by Leibniz in terms of ‘novels’ or books containing an alternative history of the universe (on his deathbed, he had a copy of John Barclay’s novel, *Argenis*, often quoted by him as an example of an alternative possible world)⁴⁷. Last but not least, Leibniz himself became a character in fictional works, as in Neal Stephenson’s trilogy of novels, *The Baroque Cycle* (2003-2004).

A line of research which has not yet been systematically developed concerns the influence of Leibnizian ideas on novelists and poets, or, more generally, on authors of works of fiction. It is likely that, to a contemporary reader, the most famous (though implicit) reference to Leibniz’s thought in a novel is still the parody of Leibnizian optimism in Voltaire’s *Candide*⁴⁸. It must be remembered, however, that, in the 18th century, the question was raised about the role of Leibniz in Alexander Pope’s views in the latter’s *Essay of Man* – it was also the topic of the Prize Essay promoted by the Academy of Sciences in Berlin in 1755. More recently, it must be remarked that some very important and philosophically-minded authors have been widely influenced by Leibniz, like Thomas Stearns Eliot⁴⁹, Carlo Emilio Gadda⁵⁰ and Jorge Luis Borges, to mention just three among the most relevant⁵¹. But many other examples could be added to this

⁴⁶ Cf. O. B. Hankins, *Leibniz as a Baroque Poet. An Interpretation of his German Epicidium on the Death of Queen Sophie Charlotte*, Frankfurt a. M. 1973.

⁴⁷ On the image of the book in Leibniz, see: H. Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*. Suhrkamp 1979, esp. chap. 10. See also S. Givone, *Il bibliotecario di Leibniz: Filosofia e romanzo*, Einaudi, 2005. On possible worlds as novels, see: S. Di Bella, *Tales of Destiny. Logic and Rhetoric in Leibniz’s Myths for Theodicy*, in M. Favaretti Camposampiero, M. Geretto, L. Perissinotto (eds.), *Theodicy and Reason. Logic, Metaphysics, and Theology in Leibniz’s Essais de Théodicée* (1710), Venezia 2016, pp. 17-44.

⁴⁸ On Voltaire’s reception of Leibniz, see the seminal work by W. H. Barber, *Leibniz in France. From Arnauld to Voltaire. A study in French reactions to Leibnizianism, 1670-1760*, Oxford 1955.

⁴⁹ Cf. T. S. Eliot, *The Development of Leibniz’s Monadism*, «The Monist» 26/4, 1916, pp. 534-556; Id. *Leibniz’s Monads and Bradley’s Finite Centres*, «The Monist», 26/4, 1916, pp. 566-76. Cf. H. J. Schüring, *Metaphysik und Dichtung. Ein Kommentar zur Dissertation von T. S. Eliot*, «Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung» 21/1, 1967, pp. 89-109, and 21/3, 1967, pp. 393-409. L. d’Easum, *T. S. Eliot’s Use of the Philosophy of Time in His Poetry*, PhD Thesis, The British Columbia 1969.

⁵⁰ On Gadda, see the seminal book by G. C. Roscioni, *La disarmonia prestabilita. Studio su Gadda*, Einaudi, 1995, as well as M. Porro’s entry ‘Leibniz’ in the *Pocket Gadda Encyclopedia*, edited by F. G. Pedriali for the ‘Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies’ (<https://www.gadda.ed.ac.uk/Pages/resources/walks/pge/leibnizporro.php>)

⁵¹ On Borges, see T. L. Cooksey, *The Labyrinth in the Monad: Possible Worlds in Borges and Leibniz*, «The Comparatist» 17, 1993, pp. 51-58; H. H. Knecht, *Leibniz le poète et Borges le philosophe. Pour une lecture fantastique de Leibniz* «Variaciones Borges», 9, 2000, pp. 104-145; R. Celada Ballanti, *Borges, Leibniz e i mondi possibili: contributo alla storia delle monadologie letterarie del XX secolo*, «Hermeneutica» 3, 2000, pp. 177-197.

list, and we predict that this aspect of Leibniz's reception will draw much more attention in the future⁵².

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⁵²Limited to the German speaking world, see for instance: R. Taylor, *Studies on Leibniz in German Thought and Literature. 1787-1835*, Berlin 2005; C. de Roche, *The poem and the monad: On the reception of Leibniz' Monadology in Paul Celan's poetics*, in S. Hüsch (ed.) *Philosophy and Literature and the Crisis of Metaphysics*, Würzburg 2011, pp. 124-129.