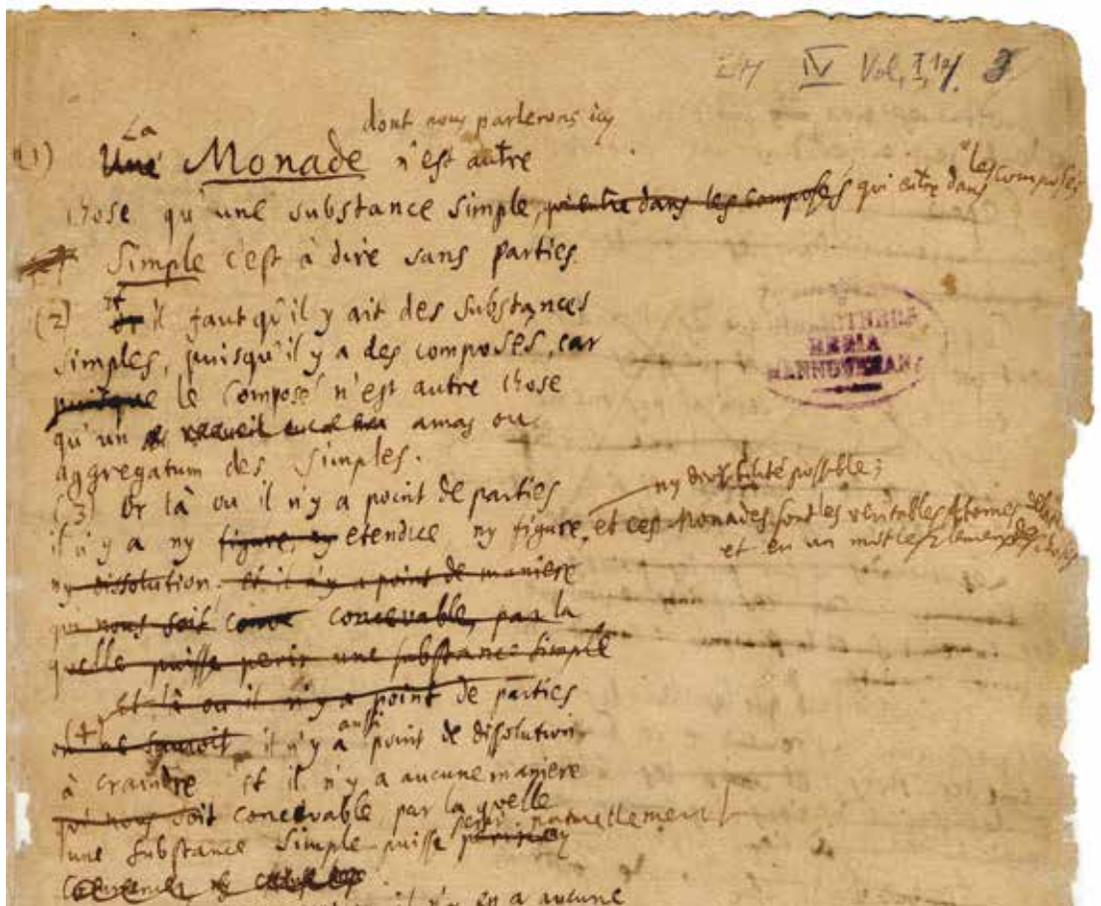


# Leibniz's *Monadology*

## A New Translation and Guide

Lloyd Strickland



Leibniz's  
*Monadology*  
A New Translation and Guide



LLOYD STRICKLAND

EDINBURGH  
University Press

*For Dan Cook and Vernon Pratt,  
for all of the help and support over the years: thank you*

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# Key

In the translation of the *Monadology* and the *Principles of Nature and Grace*, text enclosed within square brackets [ . . . ] was present in one or more of the earlier drafts, but subsequently deleted. I have not indicated all of Leibniz's deletions, only those likely to be of philosophical interest.

In the commentary, when referring to translated material contained within this volume, the following abbreviations are used:

- M = *Monadology* (for example, M35 = section 35 of the *Monadology*)
- PNG = *Principles of Nature and Grace* (for example, PNG4 = section 4 of *Principles of Nature and Grace*)
- T = *Theodicy* (for example, T189 = section 189 of the *Theodicy*)

References to the 'Appendix on Monads' are given simply by citing the relevant page number of this volume.

## *Abbreviations*

In the notes, commonly cited editions of Leibniz's writings are referred to using the following conventions:

- A = *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 8 series, each divided into multiple volumes (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–).
- DSR = *De summa rerum*, trans. and ed. G. H. R. Parkinson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
- G = *Die Philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1978).
- H = *Theodicy*, trans. E. M. Huggard (Chicago: Open Court, 1990).
- LDB = *The Leibniz-Des Bosses Correspondence*, trans. and ed. Brandon Look and Donald Rutherford (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
- LDV = *The Leibniz-de Volder Correspondence*, trans. and ed. Paul Lodge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
- LNS = *Leibniz's 'New System' and Associated Contemporary Texts*, trans. and ed. R. S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- LPW = *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Everyman, 1973).
- LTS = *Leibniz and the Two Sophies*, trans. and ed. Lloyd Strickland (Toronto: CRRS, 2011).
- NE = *New Essays on Human Understanding*, 2nd edn, trans. and ed. Jonathan Bennett and Peter Remnant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

### *Acknowledgements*

- MPE = *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays*, trans. and ed. Paul Schrecker and Anne Martin Schrecker (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965).
- MPW = *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Robert Latta (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898).
- PE = *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989).
- PPL = *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, trans. and ed. Leroy Loemker, 2nd edn (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969).
- SLT = *Shorter Leibniz Texts*, trans. and ed. Lloyd Strickland (London: Continuum, 2006).
- TI = *Textes inédits*, ed. Gaston Grua, 2 volumes with successive pagination (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).

## *Introduction*

Few works of philosophy can rival Leibniz's *Monadology* in terms of sweep: it begins with an account of the most basic substances, monads, and ends with God's intimate relation to the most exalted of these substances, namely minds, and in between it covers (among other things) the natures of perception, sensation, and thought, the principles of reasoning, the existence and nature of God, the creation of the best possible world, and the organic structure of bodies. In covering all of this ground, and more, not only does the *Monadology* seek to present many of the key elements of Leibniz's mature philosophy *and* mount a defence of them, it does so in the space of ninety short sections, amounting to approximately 6,000 words. It is difficult not to be struck by both its scope and its size, and in particular the apparent disparity between the two. In the entire history of philosophy there is little else like it. Great philosophers, as a rule, have sought to present their thought to the public through the medium of books, often ones of great length: think of Plato's *Republic*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Among the great philosophers Leibniz is the most notable exception to this rule, if not the only one; indeed, many of Leibniz's most enduring and well-known philosophical writings, such as the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), *New System* (1695), *Monadology* (1714), and *Principles of Nature and Grace* (1714) are about as long as an average journal article or book chapter. While Leibniz did write book-length works of philosophy, he was not a natural book writer, and preferred to capture and disseminate his thought via shorter writings. To understand why this should be, we need to acquaint ourselves with some of the details of Leibniz's life.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was born in Leipzig on 1 July 1646 to Catherine Schmuck and Frederick Leibniz, professor of moral philosophy

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at the University of Leipzig. Leibniz claimed to be largely self-taught, and his thirst for learning was such that he supplemented his formal schooling by withdrawing himself into his father's study to read the classical authors. These became so familiar to him that even in later life he was said to be able to recite the poems of Virgil from memory. He entered the University of Leipzig at the age of fifteen, and obtained the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy in 1663, at the age of seventeen, and a Masters degree a year later. Thereafter Leibniz engaged in several years of legal studies, his efforts eventually culminating in a dissertation, 'On difficult cases in the law', for which he was awarded a Doctorate in Law from the University of Altdorf in 1667.<sup>1</sup> After turning down the offer of a professorship at the University of Jena, Leibniz accepted a post working for the Elector of Mainz, working on legal reform. In 1672, in an attempt to divert war between France and the Netherlands, Leibniz wrote a lengthy memoir recommending that the King of France, Louis XIV, commit himself instead to an invasion of Egypt, presenting the plan as a seventeenth-century crusade against the Turks.<sup>2</sup> The Elector despatched Leibniz to Paris to promote the plan in person to the French court, but his efforts were unsuccessful. Due to the opportunities afforded by what was at the time the intellectual capital of Europe, Leibniz chose to remain in Paris for almost four years. There he met Antoine Arnauld and Nicolas Malebranche, two of Europe's greatest philosophers at the time, as well as mathematician-physicist Christiaan Huygens. Under Huygens' tutelage, Leibniz devoted himself to an intensive study of mathematics, which led him to the discovery of the infinitesimal calculus in 1675, though this was not made public until 1684. In late 1676 Leibniz accepted a post as Court Councillor at Hanover, the capital town of the principality of Brunswick-Lüneburg in northern Germany, which brought his time in France to an end. Leibniz's route back to Germany was not a straightforward one, however, and involved stops in England, to visit the Royal Society, which later elected him a fellow, and the Netherlands, where he sought out Spinoza, already well known as a philosopher, and Antony van Leeuwenhoek, one of the first microscopists.

In Hanover, Leibniz was initially appointed a Court Councillor, though his duties were various. He served as librarian, political advisor,

<sup>1</sup> An English translation of Leibniz's dissertation can be found in G. W. Leibniz, *Logico-Philosophical Puzzles in the Law*, trans. and ed. Alberto Artosi, Bernardo Pieri, and Giovanni Sartor (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> An English translation of parts of this document can be found in *A Summary Account of Leibniz's Memoir Addressed to Lewis the Fourteenth, Recommending to that Monarch, the Conquest of Egypt as Conducive to the Establishing a Supreme Authority Over the Governments of Europe* (London, 1803).

## Introduction

technical consultant, and even as unofficial diplomat. At his own suggestion, in 1686 he was given the task of writing a history of the House of Guelph (or Welf) in order to enhance his employer's dynastic ambitions. Leibniz initially hoped that the history could be completed relatively quickly, within a couple of years, but it soon got away from him: despite a great deal of research in various European archives, which enabled Leibniz to unearth and publish many volumes of ancient documents pertaining to the Guelph line, he was unable to complete the history itself in the remaining thirty years of his life. As the years wore on, the project became a millstone around Leibniz's neck, and he frequently complained that it kept him from other projects that were much closer to his heart. Yet he did still find time for such projects. He was tenacious in his efforts to facilitate a reunion between the Catholic and Protestant churches, and – later – a reunion of the various Protestant sects. He lobbied tirelessly for the establishment of scientific academies, and in 1700 was rewarded for his efforts with the foundation of the Berlin Academy of Sciences (of which Leibniz was subsequently made president for life). He created calculating machines, drew up plans for the development of a universal encyclopaedia that would contain everything that was so far known, wrote Latin poetry, funded alchemical research, and undertook studies on the origin of languages. That Leibniz managed to find the time for such an astonishing number and range of intellectual projects may in part be due to his not having the demands of family life (he never married, but was said – by some of his earliest biographers at least – to have fathered a son in his youth).<sup>3</sup> More importantly than that, however, was his own industry, which was legendary even in his own time. According to an early biographer, 'He frequently spent a great part of the night, as well as the day, in reading; and has been known to pass whole months in his study without allowing himself any unnecessary avocations.'<sup>4</sup> This devotion to research enabled Leibniz to become eminent in many fields of study: during his lifetime he made original contributions to physics, mathematics, logic, geology, law, politics, economics, and linguistics, as well as philosophy. The final years of Leibniz's life were mostly spent working on the never-to-be-completed history of the Guelph House, and attempting to popularise his philosophical views through papers circulated to well-placed acquaintances and 'popular' writings for the educated public, the most notable of which was the *Theodicy* (1710). Following a short illness, he died in Hanover on 14 November 1716 at the age of seventy.

<sup>3</sup> See Benjamin Martin, *Biographia philosophica* (London, 1764), p. 389.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Brucker, *The History of Philosophy*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1792), II, p. 560.

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As should be clear from this brief history, philosophy was never Leibniz's official profession. Consequently, his philosophising (along with his other intellectual endeavours) had to be carried out in his spare time, around his official duties. This no doubt goes some way towards explaining Leibniz's fondness for writing short papers: his work duties did not afford him the time to produce a whole suite of books. But pressures of time aside, by his own confession, he simply did not have the inclination to write a lengthy treatise that brought all the parts of his philosophical system together: the lengthy philosophical works that he did eventually find the time to write, namely the *New Essays on Human Understanding* (written 1703–5 though not published until 1765) and the aforementioned *Theodicy* (1710), were not expositions of his system as such, but rather detailed responses to the work of John Locke and Pierre Bayle respectively, and intended as correctives to what Leibniz considered to be the errors in their work.

Without the time or inclination to lay out his philosophy in books, Leibniz instead took full advantage of alternative means of circulating and publicising his ideas, in particular the letter and the journal article. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was common for thinkers to communicate their ideas to others via letters, which were at the time semi-public documents that were often copied and distributed to other scholars, or even published (with or without the writer's permission), and Leibniz often disseminated his philosophical ideas this way. To facilitate this, he built up a vast network of correspondents, which reads as a 'who's who' of early modern philosophy: Thomas Hobbes, Nicolas Malebranche, Antoine Arnauld, Christian Wolff, Pierre Bayle, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, and Samuel Clarke, to name just a few. Leibniz's philosophical correspondence fills many volumes, and is so rich in its content that no serious student of Leibniz can afford to ignore it.

In addition to letters, Leibniz also sought to promulgate his ideas through short articles in learned journals. That he was one of the first of the great philosophers to publish this way is not surprising, since the learned journal first emerged in Leibniz's lifetime, with the first two European journals, the *Journal des sçavans* of France, and the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* of England, both appearing in 1665, when Leibniz was still at university. This gave Leibniz the opportunity to disseminate his ideas in a way that had not been available to earlier philosophers. So keen was Leibniz on the very idea of the learned journal that he proposed the establishment of one in Germany. Although his own plans did not come to fruition, a German journal – entitled *Acta eruditorum* (Chronicles of the Learned) – was nevertheless established in 1682 by two of his university friends. Leibniz supported the journal by filling its pages with a number of important papers, including 'A new method for maxima

and minima',<sup>5</sup> which made public his discovery of infinitesimal calculus. Leibniz also put his weight behind another journal, the *Miscellanea Berolinensia* (Miscellaneous matters from Berlin), which was the journal of the Berlin Academy of Sciences: its first volume, published in 1710, contained no fewer than twelve articles authored by Leibniz. Over the course of his career Leibniz published well over a hundred articles, on a kaleidoscope of subjects: in addition to papers detailing his mathematical discoveries and philosophical views, he published articles about the accuracy of watches,<sup>6</sup> the separation of salt and water,<sup>7</sup> the health records of Paris,<sup>8</sup> the discovery of phosphorous,<sup>9</sup> the cause of the aurora borealis,<sup>10</sup> and many other topics besides. Leibniz fully embraced the format of the journal article: it suited his working patterns, and preference for short, punchy pieces rather than long, bloated ones. Such was Leibniz's fondness for the short paper that when he did eventually decide to write an account of his philosophical system, it was almost inevitable that he would choose to do so as a short paper rather than as a book. Despite the challenges presented by the restricted length, it was the format with which Leibniz was most comfortable.

### THE ORIGINS AND FATE OF THE MONADOLGY

Yet although the *Monadology* has the look and feel of a journal article, it was not written for a journal at all, but apparently for one of Leibniz's correspondents, Nicole Remond, councillor to the Duke of Orleans. It may have been intended simply to give Remond greater insight into Leibniz's philosophy, or it may have had a more exotic purpose, to serve as a framework for a Latin poem about Leibniz's philosophy that Abbé Fraguier, one of Remond's acquaintances in Paris, wished to write. These two possible aims are suggested by two apparently unrelated threads that run through some of Leibniz's correspondence in the first half of 1714, while he was stationed in Vienna. The beginnings of the first thread are to be found in

<sup>5</sup> G. W. Leibniz, 'Nova methodus pro maximis et minimis', *Acta eruditorum* 3 (1684), pp. 467–73.

<sup>6</sup> G. W. Leibniz, 'Extrait d'une lettre de Mr Leibniz à l'auteur du Journal, touchant le principe de justesse des horloges portatives de son invention', *Journal des sçavans* (1675), pp. 93–6.

<sup>7</sup> G. W. Leibniz, 'Meditatio de separatione salis & aqua dulcis, novoque separationum chymicarum genere', *Acta eruditorum* 1 (1682), pp. 386–8.

<sup>8</sup> G. W. Leibniz, 'Extrait d'une lettre de Mr Leibnitz', *Journal des sçavans* (1694), pp. 338–40.

<sup>9</sup> G. W. Leibniz, 'Historia inventionis phosphori', *Miscellanea Berolinensia* 1 (1710), pp. 91–8.

<sup>10</sup> G. W. Leibniz, 'Annotatio de luce quam quidam auroram borealem vocant', *Miscellanea Berolinensia* 1 (1710), pp. 137–8.

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Leibniz's letter to Remond of 10 January 1714. Leibniz there explains his approach to philosophy, and offers a very brief (and possibly apocryphal) account of his philosophical development:

I have tried to uncover and unite the truth buried and scattered in the opinions of different philosophical sects, and I believe I have added something of my own to take a few steps forward. The circumstances of my studies, from my earliest youth, have given me some facility in this. I learned Aristotle as a lad, and even the Scholastics did not put me off; I am not at all regretful of this even now. But at that time Plato too, and Plotinus, gave me some satisfaction, not to mention other ancient thinkers whom I consulted later. After leaving the trivial schools, I fell upon the moderns, and I remember at the age of fifteen taking a walk by myself in a grove on the outskirts of Leipzig, called the Rosental, in order to deliberate about whether I should retain substantial forms. Mechanism finally prevailed and led me to apply myself to mathematics. It is true that I did not enter into its depths until after I had conversed with Mr Huygens in Paris. But when I looked for the ultimate reasons for mechanism, and for the laws of motion themselves, I was very surprised to see that it was impossible to find them in mathematics, and that I should have to return to metaphysics. This is what led me back to entelechies, and from the material to the formal, and ultimately brought me to understand, after a number of corrections and improvements to my notions, that monads, or simple substances, are the only true substances, and that material things are only phenomena, albeit well-founded and well-connected.<sup>11</sup>

Remond's curiosity was piqued by Leibniz's talk of monads (at the time, references to monads in Leibniz's published works were few and far between),<sup>12</sup> and on 11 February 1714, Charles Hugony, a mutual acquaintance of both Leibniz and Remond, wrote to Leibniz explaining that Remond would like some clarification of Leibniz's doctrine of monads. In his (undated) response, Leibniz advised Hugony that he would need more detail about what exactly Remond wanted clarified, explaining that 'To provide clarifications on monads, I would need difficulties raised about them, in order not to speak aimlessly and to say anything other than what is asked for.'<sup>13</sup> In his reply to Leibniz of 17 April 1714, Hugony wrote: 'Before raising difficulties about monads, I would like to have a greater knowledge of your system. This is exercising Mr Remond.' Presumably with his tongue firmly in his cheek, Hugony then proceeded to spell out just how exercised Remond was by not having sufficient knowledge of Leibniz's system: 'You are endangering his health,

<sup>11</sup> PPL, pp. 654–5 (translation modified).

<sup>12</sup> For example, see PPL, p. 504; T396.

<sup>13</sup> G III, p. 682.

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which is poor.<sup>14</sup> Despite the apparent risk to Remond's health, Leibniz made no immediate attempt to produce the desired clarification or exposition of his system, and appears not to have made a start even by 11 July, when he wrote the following to Louis Bourguet:

Mr Remond, councillor of His Royal Highness the Duke of Orleans, thinks very highly of my *Theodicy*, and is asking me for clarifications. It would be easier for me to give them if difficulties, objections, comments or questions were raised about it, for without that passages are sometimes clarified in which others find no difficulties.<sup>15</sup>

The second thread to the *Monadology* begins on 17 February 1714: in a letter written to Leibniz on that date, Remond enclosed a Latin poem about Homer that had been composed by a friend, Abbé Fraguier. The poem evidently made an impact on Leibniz, who was inspired to compose one of his own, appending it to his letter to Remond of 14 March. Leibniz's poem consists of sixty hexameters, almost a third of which are devoted to summarising some of his key doctrines; the 'Leibnizian' part of the poem begins with God, the 'greatest author', who scatters his rays onto the Earth and into the stars, creating minds in his image, as well as all souls, which enclose all things. Leibniz then claims that monads alone subsist, and the harmony between them is a testimony to God's omnipotence; that the natural laws, fashioned in such a way that better ones cannot be imagined, are in harmony with final causes; and that atoms do not exist, and instead particles are divisible into ever smaller worlds, with nothing left empty. The Leibnizian part of the poem ends with the claim that God, the ruler of the best world, has arranged things in such a way that actions bring about their own punishments and rewards.<sup>16</sup> In his next letter, written almost two months later, on 7 May, Remond began by telling Leibniz that both he and Fraguier were delighted by Leibniz's Latin poem. It then became clear that he had discussed the possibility of Fraguier putting Leibniz's philosophy into verse himself. However, as Remond explained,

Abbé Fraguier said to me just yesterday that he was not in fact sufficiently instructed in your system to dare to speak about it, but that if he ever were to have a clearer idea of it, it would be a pleasure to treat a subject so uncommon and grand.

Remond continued to explain Fraguier's belief that poets had succeeded in treating 'sensible things' (that is, things of the senses), which were familiar

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Enrico Pasini, 'La monadologie: histoire de naissance', in *La Monadologie de Leibniz: genèse et contexte*, ed. Enrico Pasini (Paris: Mimesis, 2005), pp. 101–2.

<sup>15</sup> G III, pp. 571–2.

<sup>16</sup> G III, pp. 613–15.

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to almost everyone, by making them even more sensible, but that they had struggled with more sublime matters which were not encountered through the senses. According to Fraguier, in order to treat such matters successfully, it would be necessary for the poet to have a mastery of the sublime material that was so thorough that he would be able to present it in verse as clearly as he could sensible things. Remond then related to Leibniz Fraguier's view as to how a poet such as himself could acquire this mastery:

For that, he would have to have each proposition expressed with the utmost precision, without metaphor, and like the axioms of geometers; he would have to have the most immediate and most indirect consequences of these propositions, and he would have to use them to explain the passions and the natural effects. But I am some way from being in that position, and my mind furnishes me almost only with objections that I cannot resolve, because I do not yet know the points well enough. He [Fraguier] finally got me to agree that he had spoken fairly when he compared the knowledge we have of your system of monads to the knowledge that we would have of the sun just from single rays escaping from the clouds covering it.<sup>17</sup>

The two separate threads – Remond's request for 'clarification' of monads, and Fraguier's desire to have a systematic presentation of Leibniz's philosophy – were both discussed in Leibniz's next letter to Remond, written in July 1714. He began the letter with this apology:

I hoped to enclose with this letter some clarification on monads that you apparently requested, but it has grown under my hand, and many distractions have prevented me from finishing it already. And you know, Sir, that these sorts of considerations require contemplation.<sup>18</sup>

After discussing a variety of other matters, Leibniz ended the letter with a reference to Fraguier's plan to put his philosophy into verse:

As Abbé Fraguier gives some relief to thoughts as mediocre as mine through verses of exceptional beauty, what would he not do if he treated an important subject and lofty matters? If through some clarifications I could contribute to encouraging him to implement the fine plan he apparently has, to give substance and colour to thoughts about the most sublime philosophy, I would have rendered a great service to mankind.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> G III, p. 616. Fraguier had in fact made a different but presumably related request of Leibniz the previous year, again through a third party. On 7 May 1713, Pierre Coste wrote to Leibniz to say that Fraguier 'admires, as does his friend [Remond], everything that issues from your pen, and has charged me to implore you in his name to collect together in a single book all these loose pieces which have escaped from you at various times'. G III, p. 434.

<sup>18</sup> G III, p. 618.

<sup>19</sup> G III, p. 621.

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For his July 1714 letter to Remond, Leibniz had in fact composed a short appendix featuring a summary of his doctrine of monads (a full translation can be found in pp. 278–9 of this volume), but ultimately he did not enclose the appendix when sending the letter. Nevertheless, around this time Leibniz was crafting a much longer and more detailed ‘clarification’; this is the text we now know as the *Monadology*. Whether this was intended simply as the ‘clarification’ of the doctrine of monads that Remond had wanted, or as the basis for Fraguier’s projected poem, is unclear. Leibniz certainly seems to have conceived these as two distinct requests: the fact that he discussed one of them at the very start of his July 1714 letter to Remond, and the other at the very end, strongly suggests that he thought of them as unconnected. Nevertheless it is possible that the ‘clarification’ that he put together was designed to serve both ends, since it has a style and structure not dissimilar to that which Fraguier had wanted. Whatever Leibniz had in mind, from the extant manuscripts it is clear that he devoted a great deal of time and energy to the text, but ultimately, for reasons at which we can only speculate, he decided not to send it to Remond. Instead, on 26 August 1714 Leibniz sent him a different work, the *Principles of Nature and Grace*, which had been written for Prince Eugene of Savoy.<sup>20</sup> While Leibniz worked on both the *Principles of Nature and Grace* and the *Monadology* during the summer of 1714, the former was completed first, with the latter likely being completed only after Leibniz returned to Hanover, in mid-September of that year.<sup>21</sup> Despite the work he had put into the *Monadology*, which included the addition of copious cross-references to his *Theodicy* for the benefit of any reader looking for a greater explanation of certain doctrines, Leibniz did not send it to the person for whom it had apparently been written, Remond, nor did he seek to publish it. Whatever the reason for this might have been – and again, we can do little more than speculate – Leibniz appears not to have been so dissatisfied with the text as to keep it from everyone, as he allowed certain of his confidantes in Vienna to have access to early drafts of the text.

Unlike most of the 50,000 or so writings that comprise Leibniz’s Nachlass, the *Monadology* was published relatively quickly after Leibniz’s death, at least in translation: although Leibniz had composed the piece

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Garber has suggested that Leibniz’s unsent appendix to his July 1714 letter to Remond ‘was probably the common ancestor of what was to become two finished essays, the “Principes de la nature et de la grâce fondés en raison,” and the “Monadologie.”’ Daniel Garber, *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 353.

<sup>21</sup> See G. W. Leibniz, *Principes de la nature et de la grace fondés en raison – Principes de la philosophie ou Monadologie*, ed. André Robinet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), pp. 2, 12–13.

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in French (which by the dawn of the eighteenth century had overtaken Latin as the chief language of European scholarship), German and Latin translations appeared long before the original French was published. The *Monadology* was first published by Heinrich Köhler in 1720, in a German translation made not from Leibniz's final draft but from an earlier one that Köhler may have obtained from Leibniz in person in the summer of 1714.<sup>22</sup> The title 'Monadology' was coined by Köhler. Leibniz seems not to have given the piece a title, though on one of the surviving manuscripts a copyist wrote 'The principles of philosophy, by Mr Leibniz'; whether this title would have met with Leibniz's approval is difficult to say, though its appropriateness is beyond question. 'The principles of philosophy' was used as the title of the Latin translation of the text that appeared in 1721 in a supplement to the *Acta eruditorum* journal. The source used for this translation was a different early draft of the text, which is now lost.<sup>23</sup> The Latin translation from the *Acta eruditorum* appeared in several other publications throughout the eighteenth century, most notably in a six-volume anthology of Leibniz's writings edited by Ludovic Dutens in 1768.<sup>24</sup> Each time, the title used was 'The principles of philosophy'. The title by which we now know it, the *Monadology*, devised by Köhler in 1720, became popular only much later, following the first publication of the original French text in an anthology of Leibniz's writings edited by Johann Eduard Erdman in 1840.<sup>25</sup> For reasons that are not known, Erdman elected to use Köhler's title 'Monadology', and in so doing he relegated 'The principles of philosophy' to a mere subtitle. This decision caught the imagination of later editors of Leibniz's works, such as Jacques (1842),<sup>26</sup> Janet (1866),<sup>27</sup> and Gerhardt (1885),<sup>28</sup> each of whom not only elected to use the title of 'Monadology' for the text, but also deemed it sufficient in itself,

<sup>22</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Lehr-Sätze über die Monadologie: ingleichen von Gott und seiner Existenz, seinen Eigenschaften und von der Seele des Menschen* (1720). The copy of the *Monadology* from which Köhler made his translation is now lost. Evidently it consisted of ninety-two sections rather than the ninety found in all surviving manuscript copies of the text, but is otherwise very similar to one of the surviving early draft manuscripts.

<sup>23</sup> 'Principia philosophiæ, autore G. G. Leibnitio', *Acta eruditorum supplementa tomus VII* (1721), pp. 500–14. The copy of the *Monadology* used for this translation consisted of ninety-three sections, but is otherwise similar to one of the surviving early draft manuscripts.

<sup>24</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Opera omnia*, ed. L. Dutens, 6 vols (Geneva, 1768), vol. 2, pp. 20–31.

<sup>25</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Opera philosophica omnia*, ed. J. E. Erdman (Berlin, 1840), pp. 702–12.

<sup>26</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Oeuvres de Leibniz. Deuxième série*, ed. A. Jacques, new edn (Paris: Charpentier, 1842), pp. 391–404.

<sup>27</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Oeuvres philosophiques de Leibniz. Tome II*, ed. Paul Janet (Paris: Ladrance, 1866), pp. 594–608.

<sup>28</sup> G VI, pp. 607–22.

thus omitting ‘The principles of philosophy’ altogether. Since Erdman, the text has become a staple in anthologies of Leibniz’s works, whether in the original language or in translation to another language, and the title of ‘Monadology’ has stuck.

The *Monadology* was first translated into English in 1867 by Frederick Henry Hedge, who published his translation as an article in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*.<sup>29</sup> This made the *Monadology* one of the first of Leibniz’s philosophical works to be available in English translation (although English-language anthologies of Leibniz’s philosophical writings are commonplace today, they only started to appear in the last decade of the nineteenth century). Today the number of different English translations of the text is almost into double figures: a translation of it is included in most English-language anthologies of Leibniz’s philosophical writings.<sup>30</sup> This reflects the fact that of all of Leibniz’s numerous philosophical works, the *Monadology* is often considered to be of particular importance, due in no small part to the wide range of doctrines discussed therein.

But as important as the *Monadology* is for the student of Leibniz, it is also a very condensed piece, and accordingly has gained a reputation as being one of Leibniz’s most difficult works. To address this, this volume contains not just the *Monadology* itself, but also a detailed section-by-section commentary, designed to dispel the clouds of obscurity that hang over the text. The *Monadology* has long been seen as a work that benefits from a commentary: the first commentaries appeared in the nineteenth century,<sup>31</sup> and have since been joined by others.<sup>32</sup> As will become clear, in the commentary I have sought not just to clarify the claims Leibniz makes, but also identify his grounds and reasoning. This involves identifying his assumptions, detailing his arguments, and highlighting his inferences. In so doing, I remain neutral on the question of whether Leibniz wrote the *Monadology* for Fraguier, or according to the prescription laid down by Fraguier, which called for Leibniz to identify the axioms of his philosophy, to make apparent his conclusions and inferences, and so on. Nevertheless,

<sup>29</sup> F. H. Hedge, ‘The Monadology’, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 1:3 (1867), pp. 129–37.

<sup>30</sup> In addition to LPW, MPE, MPW, PPL, and PE, translations can be found in: *The Philosophical Works of Leibniz*, 2nd edn, trans. and ed. George Martin Duncan (The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1908); *Leibniz Selections*, trans. and ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Scribner, 1951); *Philosophical Texts*, trans. and ed. R. S. Woolhouse and Richard Francks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Th. Desdouits, *La Monadologie* (Paris: Delalain, 1880); Alexis Bertrand, *La Monadologie* (Paris: Belin, 1886); MPW.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Nicholas Rescher, *G. W. Leibniz’s Monadology: An Edition for Students* (London: Routledge, 1992).

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whether Leibniz wrote the *Monadology* with Fraguier in mind or not, the fact is that he did write it in a highly systematic way: ideas and doctrines are developed very precisely and explicitly connected together, and from them implications are drawn and inferences followed. The *Monadology* is not, to be sure, one long piece of deductive reasoning; while Leibniz does make many deductions, he also offers *a posteriori* arguments, makes appeals to the science of his day, and develops similes to make certain ideas easier to understand. Moreover, the *Monadology* is not written in the geometric manner, à la Spinoza's *Ethics*: aside from utilising arguments based on experience, it lacks the formal apparatus of definitions, axioms, postulates, and so on, as well as a suite of rigorous demonstrations flowing from these. Yet even though Leibniz does not make use of this formal apparatus, throughout the *Monadology* he nevertheless does put forward definitions, lay down axioms, make postulates, offer demonstrations, and so on. Moreover, long stretches of the *Monadology* consist of arguments and inferences, and Leibniz's choice of language (for example, we find numerous uses of phrases such as 'for this reason', 'it follows that . . .', 'from this we see', and so on) shows his systematic ambitions. The Structure of the *Monadology* (pp. 34–8 of this volume) shows the logical connection between sections and the flow of the argumentation across the text. It shows very clearly that in writing the *Monadology* Leibniz clearly wanted not just to summarise a number of his doctrines, but to make a case for them as well. In other words, he wanted the reader not just to understand what he believed, but also to be persuaded by it.<sup>33</sup> We honour his wishes if we read it with that in mind.

<sup>33</sup> This feature of the *Monadology* is sometimes overlooked, or played down. For example, Nicholas Jolley writes: 'Some of the most famous brief expositions of his [Leibniz's] thought, such as the *Monadology* and the *Principles of Nature and Grace* (1714), serve up his metaphysics in a "take it or leave it" manner; indeed, they even come close to dispensing with deductive argument altogether.' Nicholas Jolley, *Leibniz* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 9. And Franklin Perkins writes, in a similar vein: 'the *Monadology* and the *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason* . . . were written near the end of his life and represent his philosophy in its most mature form. These works, though, are more like outlines than full arguments or explanations.' Franklin Perkins, *Leibniz: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 7.

## *About the Text and Translation*

Even with the benefit of a commentary, the *Monadology* is a difficult text to read in isolation. Leibniz himself appears to have been aware of this, for on one of his handwritten drafts of the piece he inserted at the end of some of the ninety sections various references to particular sections or pages of his book *Theodicy* (1710), so that a reader desiring further illumination would know where to find it. All of the passages from the *Theodicy* to which Leibniz refers can be found in the appendix to this volume. For ease of use, each passage from the *Theodicy* is keyed to the particular section(s) of the *Monadology* in which Leibniz refers to it. In addition, the appendix contains two further texts which shed light on the *Monadology* and its doctrines, namely:

- The *Principles of Nature and Grace*, which was written for Prince Eugene of Savoy around the same time as the *Monadology*, but completed first. While very similar (but not identical) in terms of doctrine, the two texts have a very different style: the *Principles* is written in a ‘popular’ and accessible style, while the *Monadology* is more technical and formal, being aimed squarely at the ‘serious metaphysician’.<sup>1</sup>
- The ‘Appendix on Monads’, a brief clarification of his doctrine of monads that Leibniz wrote as a supplement to his letter to Nicole Remond of July 1714, but ultimately did not send.

The translations of the *Monadology* and of all of the texts in the appendix are my own. In translating the *Monadology* and the *Principles of Nature and Grace* I have used the text in André Robinet’s excellent edition, *Principes de la nature et de la grace fondés en raison – Principes de la philosophie ou Monadologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954).

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is from Garber, *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*, p. 353.