

## The Ontological Status of Bodies in Leibniz (Part I)\*

By

Shane Duarte (South Bend)

### Sommaire

On sait bien que Leibniz caractérise les corps de deux manières apparemment incompatibles. D'un côté, il affirme qu'un corps est un phénomène réel ou bien fondé. De l'autre, il soutient qu'un corps est un agrégat qui possède une réalité empruntée aux substances qu'il contient. Dans cet essai je tâche de défendre une explication du rapport qui existe, selon Leibniz, entre ces deux conceptions des corps, une explication qui montre que ces conceptions sont compatibles et, en fait, complémentaires. Dans la première partie de cet essai, je tente de montrer surtout que Robert Adams et Donald Rutherford ont tort de croire que l'une de ces conceptions peut se concilier avec l'autre en raison du fait que, selon Leibniz, toutes les deux peuvent s'appliquer à une même chose.

Leibniz's interpreters have observed that he seems to offer two incompatible accounts of what bodies are. In some texts, he characterizes bodies as real or well-founded phenomena—that is to say, as the representational contents of certain perceptions. Thus, in a letter of 30 June 1704 to Burchard De Volder, Leibniz writes that “matter and motion are not substances or things so much as they are the phenomena of perceivers, the reality of which is situated in the harmony of perceivers with themselves (at different times) and with other perceivers” (GP II, 270; LDV, 306<sup>1</sup>). In other texts, however, Leibniz claims that every body is an aggregate of substances, and that the reality of such an aggregate is derived entirely from its constituents. Thus, in a text of 1690, he states that a “body is not a substance but substances, or an aggregate of substances” (“*Communicata ex disputationibus cum Fardella*” (henceforth, “Fardella”), A VI, 4, 1670; AG, 105<sup>2</sup>), while in another text of 1686 he declares that an aggregate “has only as much reality as there is in its

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<sup>1</sup> LDV = *The Leibniz–De Volder Correspondence*, trans. P. Lodge, New Haven – London 2013.

<sup>2</sup> AG = *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Papers*, trans. by R. Ariew and D. Garber, Indianapolis – Cambridge 1989.

ingredients” (draft of Leibniz’s letter of 28 Nov./8 Dec. to Arnauld, A II, 2, 115; LA, 88<sup>3</sup>). In short, Leibniz seems to characterize a body both as the representational content of a perception and as a collection of substances. And these two accounts of body certainly seem, at least, to be inconsistent.

Although at least one of Leibniz’s interpreters has claimed that these two accounts of body are altogether irreconcilable, and that they belong, in fact, to two distinct and incompatible theories of body that were concurrently developed by Leibniz,<sup>4</sup> other interpreters have claimed that these accounts are consistent or at least (with some tinkering) complementary. Among these interpreters, some have favoured the well-founded phenomena account of body over the aggregate account, while yet finding some sort of place for the aggregate account within the same system or theory. More specifically, these scholars have argued that for Leibniz bodies are, strictly speaking, well-founded phenomena or the representational contents of perceptions; the kind of aggregate with which Leibniz (inaccurately) sometimes also identifies body is, by contrast, a collection of simple substances that serves as the extra-mental *object* of a perception which has a body as its representational content.<sup>5</sup> Motivating this view, in part, is the idea that Leibniz’s idealism, like Berkeley’s, makes it impossible for bodies to be anything other than representational contents; where Leibniz differs from Berkeley is in his insistence that the phenomena with which bodies

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<sup>3</sup> LA = *The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence*, trans. by H. T. Mason, intro. by G. H. R. Parkinson, Manchester 1967.

<sup>4</sup> See G. A. Hartz: *Leibniz’s Final System*, London – New York 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Proponents of this view include B. Russell: *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, London 1937, pp. 104-107, N. Rescher: *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, Ch. 7, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1967, Ch. 7, C. D. Broad: *Leibniz: An Introduction*, ed. C. Lewy, London 1975, pp. 90-92, S. Brown: *Leibniz*, Sussex 1984, pp. 139-43, and B. Mates: *The Philosophy of Leibniz: Metaphysics and Language*, New York – Oxford 1986, p. 41, pp. 204f. To this list, one might add N. Jolley: “Leibniz and Phenomenalism”, in: *Studia Leibnitiana* XVIII/1 (1986), pp. 38-51. Jolley, however, suggests that there is a distinction in Leibniz between (i) aggregates of substances and (ii) beings by aggregation that result from monads. On his interpretation, the latter, but not the former, are phenomena or perceptions, according to Leibniz. Depending, then, on whether Jolley holds that Leibniz normally has (ii) in mind when speaking of aggregates of substances, his position might be grouped with those of Robert Adams and Donald Rutherford (to be discussed next), inasmuch as he would, on this reading, hold, as they do, that one and the same thing can be called, according to Leibniz, both a phenomenon and an aggregate of substances.

are to be identified are *well-founded*: they are the representational contents of perceptions that have substantial things (sc. aggregates of substances) as their extra-mental objects.

Others, arguing for the consistency of Leibniz's two characterizations of bodies, have alleged that these characterizations apply equally to the same things. Prominent among such interpreters are Robert Adams and Donald Rutherford. According to Adams, both the aggregates and the phenomena with which Leibniz identifies bodies are representational contents.<sup>6</sup> That is, the aggregates with which Leibniz identifies bodies, and which are said by him to have a reality derived wholly from the substances that figure in them, exist objectively in the mind. This is so, according to Adams, because Leibniz holds: (1) that relations are ideal, (2) that an aggregate necessarily possesses some sort of unity, and (3) that the unity of an aggregate is based essentially on relations obtaining among the members of an aggregate. From this it follows, Adams claims, that (4) the unity of an aggregate exists only objectively in a mind that apprehends all the members of that aggregate. In addition, Adams argues that Leibniz's commitment to the principle that 'being' and 'one' are "equivalent" (*ens et unum convertuntur*) leads him to hold (5) that what has its unity only in the mind likewise has its being only in the mind. Thus, since (4) the unity of an aggregate exists only objectively in a mind, it follows (6) that aggregates themselves exist only objectively in the mind. And this is so, according to Adams, notwithstanding the fact that these aggregates are understood by Leibniz to be aggregates of real, perceiver-independent beings.<sup>7</sup> On Adams' interpretation, therefore, Leibniz's two accounts of body are not *merely* consistent; on his view, "Leibniz thought that bodies are only phenomena precisely *because* they are aggregates of substances."<sup>8</sup>

Although Rutherford, like Adams, holds that for Leibniz one and the same thing can be both a well-founded phenomenon and an aggregate of substances that possesses a reality derived

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<sup>6</sup> R. Adams: *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, Oxford 1994, Ch. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (see previous note), pp. 245-6. See especially p. 246: "Leibniz's claim is that aggregates have their unity, and therefore their being, only in the mind, and that this is true even of an aggregate of *real beings*" (my emphasis).

<sup>8</sup> Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (see note 6) p. 219.

wholly from its constituents, his view differs from that of Adams in important respects.<sup>9</sup> According to Rutherford, although Leibniz occasionally speaks like a phenomenalist, he more commonly uses the term ‘phenomenon’ to refer, not to a perception, or to the representational content of a perception, but to any sort of entity that depends for its existence on the perceiving activity of some mind. This is crucial to Rutherford’s account, for although he rejects Adams’s contention that Leibniz takes an aggregate of substances to be something that exists objectively in the mind, he still holds that for Leibniz an aggregate depends for its existence on the activity of some perceiver—among other things, on the simultaneous perception, by some mind, of all the substances that figure in the aggregate. This is so, Rutherford claims, because Leibniz understands an aggregate to be possessed essentially of an ideal or mind-manufactured unity that is itself based on, or constituted by, ideal relations obtaining among the members of the aggregate.<sup>10</sup> In other words, according to Rutherford, Leibniz understands an aggregate to be some sort of hybrid of real and ideal elements—a hybrid of substances, on the one hand, and ideal relations, on the other. Indeed, for this reason Rutherford denies that Leibnizian aggregates “are merely mental or imaginary things.”<sup>11</sup> They are, rather, “semi-mental.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, this conception of an aggregate is, according to Rutherford, the foundation of a distinction that Leibniz draws between bodies and the matter out of which they are composed: while a body is a collection of monads that possesses ideal unity, the matter of a body is *just* monads, monads together serving as “an inherently plural mass, from which bodies are composed.”<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Rutherford argues, although Leibniz (at

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<sup>9</sup> D. Rutherford: “Phenomenalism and the Reality of Body in Leibniz’s Later Philosophy,” in: *Studia Leibnitiana* XXII/1 (1990), pp. 11-28, idem: “Leibniz’s Analysis of Multitudes and Phenomena into Unities and Reality,” in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* XXVIII/4 (1990), pp. 525-552, idem: “Leibniz and the Problem of Monadic Aggregation,” in: *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* LXXVI/1 (1994), pp. 65-90, idem: *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*, Cambridge 1995, Ch. 8, idem: “Leibniz as Idealist,” in: *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* IV (2008), pp. 141-190.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, on Rutherford’s interpretation, all aggregates depend for their existence, according to Leibniz, on God. God’s apprehension of certain relations obtaining among monads is what determines the grouping of monads into aggregates. See Rutherford, “Leibniz and the Problem of Monadic Aggregation” (see previous note).

<sup>11</sup> Rutherford, “Leibniz and the Problem of Monadic Aggregation” (see note 9), p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> Rutherford, “Leibniz as Idealist” (see note 9) p. 176.

<sup>13</sup> Rutherford, “Leibniz as Idealist” (see note 9), p. 143.

least in his later years) is a “substance idealist” (i.e., holds that all substances are mind-like beings), he is also, at the same time, a “matter realist,” inasmuch as he holds that the matter out of which bodies are composed is real and exists independently of its being perceived.<sup>14</sup>

In Part I of this paper, I shall argue that Adams and Rutherford are wrong to think that for Leibniz one and the same thing can be *both* a phenomenon *and* an aggregate of substances that possesses a reality wholly derived from its constituents. That is, against Rutherford, I shall argue that when Leibniz goes from the claim that bodies are aggregates to the conclusion that bodies are phenomena, the phenomena he has in mind are representational contents, and not hybrids of real and ideal elements. Against Adams, I shall argue that when Leibniz characterizes a body as an aggregate possessed of a reality derived wholly from its ingredients,<sup>15</sup> he has in mind a perceiver-independent collection of substances that is nothing over and above those substances. In Part II of this paper, moreover, I shall propose and defend a different way of understanding the relation between Leibniz’s two, ostensibly inconsistent accounts of body. On my view, as on those of Rutherford and Adams, what primarily and immediately motivates Leibniz to claim that a body is a real or well-founded phenomenon is not a commitment to idealism, but rather a

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<sup>14</sup> Rutherford is not the only interpreter to adopt this basic strategy in trying to reconcile Leibniz’s apparently competing characterizations of body. For example, Daniel Garber endorses a view not unlike Rutherford’s. According to Garber, the phenomena with which Leibniz identifies bodies in the 1680s and 90s are aggregates of *corporeal* substances (rather than *simple* substances, as on Rutherford’s account), but not perceptions or representational contents. Like Rutherford, that is, Garber holds that a Leibnizian aggregate counts as a phenomenon *only* in the sense that it depends for its existence on someone’s conceiving of its constituent substances as together forming a single thing. See D. Garber: *Leibniz: Body, Substance, Monad*, Oxford 2009, pp. 292-96. Garber calls this view of aggregates as phenomena “aggregate phenomenalism.” Paul Lodge has also advanced an account of the relevant phenomena not unlike Rutherford’s. See P. Lodge: “Leibniz’s Notion of an Aggregate,” in: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* IX/3 (2001), pp. 467-86, as well as Section 9 of his introduction to LDV (see note 1), especially pp. lxvii-lxviii and lxxx-lxxxiv. Peter Loftson and Richard Arthur agree with Rutherford at least in holding that the real or well-founded phenomena with which Leibniz identifies bodies are not to be understood as the representational contents of perceptions. See P. Loftson and R. T. W. Arthur: “Leibniz’s Body Realism: Two Interpretations,” in: *The Leibniz Review* XVI (2006), pp. 1-41.

<sup>15</sup> The qualification ‘possessed of a reality derived wholly from their ingredients’ is important here, for I will show that Leibniz does sometimes use the term ‘aggregate’ and related expressions (e.g., ‘being by aggregation’) to refer to something that exists only objectively in the mind. I shall also argue, however, that an aggregate of this sort does not, according to Leibniz, possess a reality derived or borrowed from substances.

commitment to the principle that real or genuine unity is a necessary attribute of every real being, or that “what is not truly *one* being is not truly a *being*” (to Arnauld, 30 April 1687, A II, 2, 186; AG, 86). I part ways with Rutherford and Adams, however, when it comes to Leibniz’s understanding of the consequences of this principle. My claim is that for Leibniz it follows from this principle that if some being, *A*, exists objectively in a perceiver by virtue of being the representational content of a perception, but this perception does not after all have a single being as its extra-mental object—because it has instead a *plurality* of beings as its extra-mental object—then *A*, understood as a being (i.e., as a *single* thing), is not a *real* being, but a mere being of reason, perception, or imagination—i.e., what Leibniz calls a *real or well-founded phenomenon*. Otherwise put, *A* has only *esse objectivum*, and not *esse formale* or *reale*—i.e., only a mental existence, and not an extra-mental one. For when it comes to the perception that has *A* as its representational content, there is no single real being that this perception is a perception *of*, even if this perception is connected in a rule-governed way with other perceptions, within both the perceiver and all other perceivers, and also has some foundation in reality by virtue of the fact that it is, in the final analysis, the perception of a plurality of real beings. When, therefore, Leibniz claims that a body is an aggregate of substances and therefore a phenomenon, he means to say that what we call a body is not, in reality, a single being, but many beings, with the result that there is nothing more to the body, understood as a being (i.e., as a *single* thing), than a creature of the perceiving mind—something with a mental existence, to be sure, but not a real or extra-mental one.<sup>16</sup>

On this account, Leibniz does not think that one and the same thing can be *both* a phenomenon *and* an aggregate of substances that somehow borrows its reality from those substances. Leibniz’s willingness to characterize bodies *both* as aggregates *and* as phenomena is instead usefully understood by appeal to a long-established way of speaking common to his philosophical predecessors and contemporaries. After all, philosophers in the medieval and early modern periods

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<sup>16</sup> I know of only one scholar who has endorsed this understanding of the relation between Leibniz’s claim that bodies are aggregates and his further claim that bodies are well-founded phenomena. See D. L. M. Baxter: “Corporeal Substances and True Unities”, in: *Studia Leibnitiana* XXVII/2 (1995), pp. 157–84, especially pp. 162–66.

often draw a distinction between how a thing stands *quoad nos* (with respect to us) and how it stands *a parte rei* (as it is in itself or in reality). In fact, Leibniz himself explains in one text that an *unum per se* is “what is one *a parte rei*” (“De notionibus omnia quae cogitamus continentibus,” A VI, 4, 401 (1680-85?)). Accordingly, when he says, as he sometimes does, that a body is one only *per accidens* (see, e.g., “Antibarbarus physicus pro philosophia reali,” GP VII, 344; AG, 319 (1710-16?)), he is to be understood as claiming that a body is *not* one *a parte rei*, the clear implication being that the body is one only *quoad nos*. Much the same is true, I claim, when Leibniz asserts that a “body is not a substance, but substances or an aggregate of substances” (“Fardella”, A VI, 4 1670; AG, 105 (1690)).<sup>17</sup> His point, again, is that a body is not one *a parte rei*; it is, rather, a mere plurality of substances. And from this it follows, according to him, that a body, understood as a *being* (i.e., as *one* thing), is nothing more than an *imaginary* being—i.e., a phenomenon or being of perception, albeit one with a foundation in reality.

This understanding of what Leibniz means when he declares that bodies are aggregates and therefore phenomena has significant and far-reaching consequences. These consequences will be discussed at some length in Part II of this paper, where my concern will be to elaborate on my positive account and offer arguments in support of it. Here in Part I, my primary task will be simply to show that Adams and Rutherford are wrong to think that for Leibniz one and the same thing can be *both* a phenomenon *and* an aggregates of substances that possesses a reality derived from those substances. However, in order to accomplish this, I must briefly mention the two consequences of the account to be defended here.

First, it is well known that Leibniz sometimes claims that all substances are monads—i.e., simple or soul-like substances. In some texts, however, Leibniz seems to commit himself to the existence of corporeal substances—i.e., substances composed of body and soul. This apparent inconsistency in the Leibnizian doctrine has received much attention from Leibniz scholars. But

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<sup>17</sup> For Adams and Rutherford, by contrast, although the claim that a body is an aggregate of substance might be taken to *imply* that *a parte rei* a body is nothing over and above its constituent substances, it is not *itself* a claim about what a body is *a parte rei*. For on their understanding of Leibniz, aggregates do not have a perceiver-independent existence.

what is less frequently noted is that Leibniz himself equivocates in his use of the term ‘body’: sometimes Leibniz uses this term to refer to something that corporeal substances (assuming they exist) *have*, but not to something that corporeal substances *are*. In other words, Leibniz sometimes uses the term ‘body’ in a restricted sense according to which corporeal substances (assuming they exist) do *not* count as bodies. At other times, however, he uses the term ‘body’ in a more inclusive sense, according to which corporeal substances (assuming they exist) count as bodies.<sup>18</sup> This fact is important, for in the former sense, but not the latter, the claim that a body is an aggregate of substances is not at all surprising, since Leibniz is consistent in holding that the body of a corporeal substance is invariably an aggregate of substances.<sup>19</sup> In the narrower sense of ‘body,’ then, the conclusion that all bodies are well-founded phenomena does not by itself imply idealism or the rejection of corporeal substances. Indeed, it’s worth noting that Leibniz can be found claiming that the body of a corporeal substance is an aggregate of *corporeal* substances (see, e.g., Leibniz’s letter to Burnett, undated, GP III, 260; AG, 289).

Second, since, on the account presented here, Leibniz’s claim that a body is an aggregate of substances—more specifically, an aggregate whose reality is derived wholly from the substances which figure in it—is to be understood as a claim about what a body is *a parte rei* or in reality, for Leibniz such an aggregate can only be a collection of substances which is nothing over and above those same substances. For if a collection is to be something over and above its constituents, there must be relations among these constituents that give rise to some sort of unity of the collection. But for Leibniz all relations—excepting, presumably, those relations of dependence that each

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<sup>18</sup> See R. Sleigh, Jr.: *Leibniz and Arnauld: A Commentary on their Correspondence*, New Haven – London 1990, p. 103. For texts in which Leibniz uses the term ‘body’ in a broad sense, see his letter of 28 Nov./8 Dec. to Arnauld 1686, A II, 2, 121-2; AG, 80, his letter of 12 August 1711 to Bierling, GP VII, 501-2, and his letter of 24 January 1713 to Des Bosses, GP II, 473; LDB, 313. Texts in which Leibniz uses the term ‘body’ in the narrow sense are to be found in abundance in Leibniz’s philosophical writings—e.g., when he speaks of the union of body and soul in a corporeal substance.

<sup>19</sup> Although Leibniz holds that a corporeal substance (composed of a soul and an organic body) possesses genuine or *per se* unity, he also holds that the organic body of a corporeal substance does not, but is instead a mere aggregate of substances. See, for example, his letter of 4 November 1715 to Remond, GP III, 657: “*secondary matter* (for example, an organic body) is not a substance [...] but a collection [*amas*] of many substances, like a pond full of fish or a herd of sheep.”



creature bears directly to its creator—are ideal, which implies that there can be no relations that obtain *a parte rei* among the constituents of an aggregate. And so the aggregates which bodies are said to be *a parte rei* can possess no unity whatsoever, being instead collections that are nothing over and above their constituents.

### 1. Well-Founded Phenomena

In this section, I argue, against Donald Rutherford and others,<sup>20</sup> that when Leibniz goes from the claim that bodies are aggregates to the conclusion that bodies are real or well-founded phenomena, the phenomena he has in mind are invariably conceived by him to be the representational contents of perceptions that have aggregates of substances as their extra-mental objects.

When Leibniz claims that bodies are phenomena, he often makes it perfectly clear that he understands the phenomena at issue to be the representational contents of perceptions. Consider, first of all, some important passages from Leibniz's correspondence with Barthélémy Des Bosses. One of the more interesting questions that this correspondence raises is whether Leibniz's monadological metaphysics can accommodate corporeal substances and, if not, in what way it might be modified in order for it to do so. With respect to the first question, in the draft of his letter of 14 February 1706 to Des Bosses, Leibniz seems to confess that his system cannot account for the existence of corporeal substances because it lacks the resources to explain how infinitely many monads can be united in such a way as to form a single being, i.e., a composite or corporeal substance. As Leibniz puts it:

The union I find some difficulty explaining is that which joins the different simple substances or monads existing in our body with us, such that it makes one thing from them; nor is it sufficiently clear how, in addition to the existence of individual monads, there may arise a new existing thing, unless they are joined by the bond of a continuous thing that the phenomena display to us. (LDB, 23<sup>21</sup>)

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<sup>20</sup> See note 14 above.

<sup>21</sup> LDB = *The Leibniz–Des Bosses Correspondence*, trans. B. Look and D. Rutherford, New Haven – London, 2007.

It is possible to understand Leibniz's many remarks on soul-body union as addressing the question of how one thing, the human being's soul or dominant monad, combines with another thing, the human being's body, in order to form a third thing distinct from both. But notwithstanding the suggestion in many texts that the problem concerns the union of two things, the soul and the body, Leibniz makes it clear elsewhere that he considers a living thing's body to be a mere aggregate.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the union spoken of in the passage just quoted is (as Leibniz's talk of different monads existing in our body would in any case suggest) a union, not of two things, but of infinitely many things, i.e., of infinitely many substances. What Leibniz finds "some difficulty explaining" here, then, is how the dominant monad of a human being can come together with the infinitely many monads in that human being's body in order to form a single, new composite thing or being—i.e., a corporeal substance.

Although the quoted passage from the draft of his letter of 14 February 1706 to Des Bosses was deleted in the draft itself, the question of how infinitely many monads can be combined to form a genuine composite substance comes into focus later in the correspondence, on the occasion of Des Bosses's asking how Leibniz's metaphysical system can accommodate the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (GP II, 388; LDB, 149 (letter of 6 September 1709)). By way of reply, in his letter of 8 September 1709, Leibniz suggests that if Des Bosses wishes to hold that in the Eucharist the accidents of the bread remain without inhering in a substantial subject,<sup>23</sup> then one might suppose that, after the monads constituting the bread are replaced by monads constituting Christ's body, the derivative forces present in the bread before transubstantiation remain after transubstantiation, with the result that there is no change in the phenomena. Not surprisingly, this explanation is found wanting by Des Bosses, since Leibniz normally maintains that derivative forces are modifications of the primitive forces that belong to, and are present in, monads. As a result, it is difficult to see how derivative forces could possibly remain when the

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<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Leibniz's letter of 28 Nov./8 Dec. 1686 to Arnauld, A II, 2, 119; LA, 92-93.

<sup>23</sup> As Des Bosses notes in his reply of 18 January 1710 (GP II, 396; LDB, 159), that the accidents of the bread abide, after transubstantiation, without a substantial subject *is* something on which Roman Catholic theologians agreed.

relevant primitive forces are eliminated (GP II, 396; LDB, 159 (letter of 18 January 1710)). In a letter dated 2 May 1710, Leibniz seems implicitly to acknowledge the force of Des Bosses's objection by taking a new tack, suggesting that the monads of the bread can, after all, remain during transubstantiation, transubstantiation consisting not in the replacement of certain monads by others, but in the advent of a new union of abiding substances (GP II, 403; LDB, 167). Apparently elaborating on this very brief account, in his letter of 15 February 1712, Leibniz explains that if a corporeal substance is understood to be "something real beyond [*praeter*] monads" or simple substances, it will depend on a kind of union or unifying reality that is added to monads by God (GP II, 435; LDB, 225). The idea, it becomes clear, is that something absolute, and therefore substantial, must be added to a collection of monads, something that confers genuine unity on the collection and thereby gives rise to some new unity or being. Leibniz explains, moreover, that as a result of the addition of this unifying reality, the primary active and passive forces of the monads present in the collection will be unified in such a way as to give rise to the substantial form and primary matter of the new corporeal substance. He cautions, however, that anything which admits of being generated in this way will also be destroyed when the relevant union ceases, "unless it is miraculously preserved by God" (*ibid.*). He also observes that the substantial form which arises from the union of the monadic entelechies is not to be identified with the soul of the corporeal substance, which Leibniz seems to identify instead with the entelechy of the dominant monad in the collection.

What Leibniz says next is especially important for present purposes:

Thus, one of two things must be said: either bodies are mere phenomena, and so extension also will only be a phenomenon, and monads alone will be real, but with a union supplied by the operation of the perceiving soul on the phenomena; or, if faith drives us to corporeal substances, this substance depends [*consistere*] on that unifying reality, which adds *something absolute* (and therefore substantial), albeit impermanent, to the things to be unified. (GP II, 435; LDB, 225-27)

In this passage Leibniz presents two options: either (i) monads alone are real, or (ii) there are corporeal substances. And the suggestion is that, if (i) is the case, "bodies are mere phenomena," and the unity of a given collection of monads will be merely apparent, since it will be supplied by a

soul that perceives the collection.<sup>24</sup> If, on the other hand, (ii) there are corporeal substances, then bodies—or at least *some* bodies—will not be mere phenomena: some collections of monads will possess genuine unity, i.e., a unity not supplied by a perceiving soul, and will therefore count as true composite substances. But the most important question that presents itself here is this: what does Leibniz understand by ‘phenomena’ in this passage? Does he have in mind representational contents, i.e., things existing only objectively in the soul of one who apprehends an infinitely large collection of monads? Or does he have something else in mind? The answer becomes quite clear a little later in the letter, after Leibniz explains that “transubstantiation must be located in the change” of the unifying reality—i.e., in the addition of such a unifying reality to a mere aggregate of substances, or in the substitution of one such unifying reality for another. For, Leibniz goes on to say:

If that substantial bond of monads were absent, then all bodies with all their qualities would be only well-founded phenomena, like a rainbow or an image in the mirror—in a word, continuous dreams that agree perfectly with one another; and in this alone would consist the reality of those phenomena. (GP II, 435-36; LDB, 227)

Leibniz’s mention here of continuous dreams makes it abundantly clear that the phenomena with which all bodies are to be identified—in the event that substantial bonds and therefore corporeal substances do not exist—are representational contents, i.e., things existing objectively in perceivers. And his rationale is very plausibly understood in the way I claim it should be: without the existence of something that can confer genuine unity on a collection of monads, all bodies (in the more inclusive sense of ‘body’) will in reality or *a parte rei* be pluralities, in which case there will be nothing more to a body, understood as a being or single thing, than a phenomenon—i.e., an imaginary being or creature of perception. If, on the other hand, there are corporeal substances, *some* (though not *all*) perceptions that have extended things as their representational contents will have genuine unities (sc. unities constituted from monads), rather than pluralities, as their extra-

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<sup>24</sup> Notice that here Leibniz seems clearly to be using the term ‘body’ in the more inclusive of the two senses identified earlier.

mental objects.<sup>25</sup> And so not all bodies (in the more inclusive sense of ‘body’) will be mere phenomena.

Notice, moreover, that in his letter of 20 May 1712, Des Bosses considers Leibniz’s account of transubstantiation, which, of course, presupposes that there are corporeal substances and therefore substantial bonds as well. And he makes two points relevant to the present discussion. First, after noting the choice offered by Leibniz in his letter—either bodies are mere phenomena, or there are unifying realities that confer genuine unity on collections of monads—Des Bosses dismisses the view that bodies are mere phenomena and observes that “it remains for us to admit something absolute, on which the realization [*realizatio*] of the phenomena depends” (GP II, 442; LDB, 237).<sup>26</sup> He disagrees, however, with Leibniz’s view that this absolute thing must be a substance; he himself thinks that it should be considered an accident. Second, a little later in the letter, Des Bosses returns to, and criticizes, the view that bodies are phenomena. He says:

the common sense of men seems to understand something more in a sensible body than phenomena consisting in an operation of the perceiving soul [*in animae percipientis operatione consistentia*]. And, speaking naturally, there ought to be some object distinct from the perception itself that corresponds to the perception; otherwise there would be no harmony. (GP II, 442; LDB, 239)

For present purposes, the most important thing to observe about this passage is that Des Bosses here understands the phenomena with which Leibniz is prepared to identify bodies (if it turns out that there are no corporeal substances) to be things consisting in an operation of the perceiving soul. Indeed, as the second sentence of the quoted passage makes clear, Des Bosses takes Leibniz to be entertaining the possibility that any given body is merely an imaginary being, i.e., a

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<sup>25</sup> I say “though not all” here because *some* perceptions that have extended things as their representational contents will have *aggregates of corporeal substances* as their extra-mental objects—e.g., my perception of a heap of worms. According to Leibniz, if there are indeed corporeal substances, then everything that is not itself a living thing—e.g., a slab of marble—is a mere aggregate of living things (see the draft of Leibniz’s letter of 28 Nov./8 Dec. 1686 to Arnauld, A II, 2, 115; LA, 89).

<sup>26</sup> In his letter of 15 February 1712 to Des Bosses, Leibniz makes it clear that the realization of the phenomena mentioned here by Des Bosses would go beyond their mere “agreement” (“*realisatio phaenomenorum ultra congruentiam procedens*”) (GP II, 436; LDB, 227). In other words, bodies—or *some* bodies, at any rate—wouldn’t possess only a diminished sort of reality by virtue of a harmony obtaining among monads’ perceptions. Certain bodies, at least, would be real in the sense that they enjoyed a perceiver-independent existence.

representational content to which there corresponds no single, real being in the nature of things. This is important, for in Leibniz's reply, dated six days later (i.e., 26 May 1712), he nowhere corrects Des Bosses's understanding of the proposition that bodies are mere phenomena. And his silence here is naturally taken to suggest that the phenomena with which he is prepared to identify bodies, if it turns out that there are no substantial bonds, are indeed representational contents.

Nor is this the only important conclusion to draw from Leibniz's letter of 26 May 1712. For, with respect to Des Bosses's suggestion that the unifying reality added to monads should be regarded as an accident, Leibniz states:

If you deny that what is superadded to monads in order to make a union is substantial, then a body cannot be said to be a substance, for in that case it will be a mere aggregate of monads, and I fear that you will fall back on the mere phenomena of bodies [*et vereor ne in mera corporum phaenomena recidas*]. (GP II, 444; LDB, 241)

Note that in this passage Leibniz explicitly states that, absent a *substantial* bond, bodies will be mere aggregates of monads. He also explains that, without a substantial bond, Des Bosses must, he fears, "fall back on the mere phenomena of bodies." The claim here seems clearly to be that, absent a substantial bond, bodies are mere aggregates and therefore phenomena. But does Leibniz understand the phenomena at issue here to be representational contents, i.e., things that exist objectively in the soul? The fact that he does not correct Des Bosses's characterization of the proposition that all bodies are phenomena, which Des Bosses offers in a letter dated less than a week earlier, strongly suggests that he does. So also does the fact that, soon after the passage just quoted, Leibniz observes that monads "harmonize with each other through their phenomena, and not through any other intrinsic intercourse and connection" (GP II, 444; LDB, 243). By this he seems clearly to mean that monads harmonize with respect to the objective contents of their perceptions. Moreover, a little later, in response to Des Bosses's claim that harmony requires or presupposes "some object distinct from the perception itself that corresponds to the perception", Leibniz states that harmony cannot be appealed to in order to show that "there is anything other than phenomena in bodies," for, he says, "it is established on other grounds that the harmony of

*phenomena in souls* does not arise from an influx of bodies, but is pre-established" (GP II, 444; LDB, 243; my emphasis). The characterization of the harmonizing phenomena as present "*in souls*" here also rather clearly implies that the phenomena at issue are things existing objectively in monads.

In Part II of this paper I will take up the question of what Leibniz means when he says, as he does in one of the passages quoted above, that the phenomena with which he is prepared to identify bodies possess some sort of reality by virtue of being congruent or consistent with one another. For now, I merely note that such pronouncements are sometimes taken to show that Leibniz endorsed, or at least flirted with, a phenomenalism like Berkeley's, according to which bodies are phenomena or appearances that represent nothing substantial (such as an aggregate of substances) outside of perception. But as the texts discussed thus far make plain, at issue here, according to Leibniz, in the choice between a commitment to corporeal substances and the view that all bodies are phenomena, is the question of whether some new entity can be, or should be, introduced into his system, an entity that can confer genuine unity on a collection of infinitely many monads. And the implication is that, in the absence of such an entity, all bodies (in the more inclusive sense of 'body') will be aggregates of substances and therefore well-founded phenomena—i.e., well-founded phenomena to which there accrues some sort of reality by virtue of their agreement with one another. But talk of bodies as *aggregates of substances* here makes little sense on the supposition that Leibniz, in entertaining the possibility that bodies are mere phenomena, is flirting with a phenomenalism like Berkeley's. For there is no room in Berkeley's phenomenalism for the view that bodies are in some way aggregates of substances. In other words, the choice presented by Leibniz here is not a choice between corporeal substances, on the one hand, and a phenomenalism like Berkeley's, on the other. At issue, rather, is the question of whether any perception that has an extended body as its representational content has a genuine unity as its extra-mental object. If not, then every body, conceived as a being or single thing, will be a real or well-founded phenomenon, since *a parte rei* every body will in this case be many

beings, rather than a being<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, if *some* perceptions having extended things as their representational contents also have unities as their extra-mental objects—and this because certain collections of monads possess a real unity conferred on them by some sort of substantial bond—then not every body, conceived as a being or single thing, will be mere well-founded phenomena. Some bodies, so conceived, will be *real*.

In the remainder of his correspondence with Des Bosses, Leibniz suggests or entertains several conceptions of corporeal substance, all different, in some way, from the conception of corporeal substance presented in his letters of May 1712. What remains constant in the correspondence, however, and in various other documents connected with it, is Leibniz's insistence that, absent corporeal substances, all bodies will be no more than well-founded phenomena. Thus, in a study following some remarks on Des Bosses's letter of 12 December 1712, Leibniz states:

On the hypothesis that nothing exists except for monads, and that they are variously modified in ways that keep them in agreement with one another, it follows that all other beings which we conceive are only well-founded phenomena. Thus *all* bodies will no more be substances than the rainbow, and all corporeal qualities will be no more real than the colors of the rainbow. (GP, II 473; LDB, 313; my emphasis)

Here it is worth noting that in at least three documents Leibniz explicitly characterizes the rainbow as an imaginary being.<sup>28</sup> The import of this passage would seem to be, therefore, that if monads alone are substances, all bodies will be mental appearances or creatures of perception.

More significant yet for a proper understanding of the phenomena with which Leibniz is prepared to identify bodies (absent substantial bonds) is a passage that appears at the end of Leibniz's final letter to Des Bosses (29 May 1716). The passage is worth quoting in full:



I have sometimes thought about what would have to be said by one of your order who wanted to do away with all composite substance, or everything realizing the phenomena,

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<sup>27</sup> I here use the term 'body' in its more inclusive sense.

<sup>28</sup> See "Genera terminorum. Substantiae", A VI, 4, 566 (1683-86?), "Divisiones", A VI, 4, 576 (1683-86?) and "De mundo praesenti", A VI, 4, 1506; LOC, 283 (1684-86?). Note that in one text (see "Notationes generales", A VI, 4, 555 (1683-85 (?))) Leibniz characterizes the rainbow as an aggregate of drops. I take it that this is a claim about what the rainbow is *a parte rei* or in reality. It is, according to Leibniz, when the rainbow is considered as a being (i.e., as *one* thing) that it counts as an imaginary being. For more on imaginary beings, see the next section of this paper. LOC = G. W. Leibniz: *The Labyrinth of the Continuum: Writings on the Continuum Problem, 1672-1686*, trans. R. T. W. Arthur, New Haven – London, 2001.



as though superfluous. With this assumed, the substance of body itself would consist in constitutive phenomena, while accidents would consist in resulting phenomena, just as the nature of whiteness consists in bubbles, like foam or similarly textured things, the perception of which is in us unobserved [*cujus perceptio est in nobis inobservata*]. But the accident of whiteness would consist in that observed perception by which we recognize whiteness [*in perceptione illa observata, per quam album agnoscimus*]. Accordingly, if God wanted to substitute blackness for whiteness with the accidents of whiteness preserved, he would bring it about that *all perceivers* (for the truth of a phenomenon consists in the agreement of all perceivers) would retain the observed perception of whiteness and its effects, that is, the perception of that which results from the constitutive phenomena; but the unobserved perception would not be of foam or snowy mountains , that is, of the texture making whiteness, but of earthworks , or of the texture making blackness. And so all observable perceptions of the bread would remain, but in place of the constitutive phenomena (which also are perceived by us, though unobservably) there would be substituted a universal perception of the constitutive or unobservable phenomena of the flesh". (GP II, 520-21; LDB, 377-79)

There is no disputing that this long passage is to be read as offering an account of what transubstantiation consists in on the supposition that there are no corporeal substances—i.e., on the supposition that all bodies (in the more inclusive sense of ‘body’) are mere phenomena. The account is interesting for the insight it provides into Leibniz’s theory of perception, which I cannot discuss in detail here. It is also significant inasmuch as it implies that for Leibniz there is an important connection between perception and the thesis that all bodies are phenomena—which is just what one would expect, granted the view that the phenomena with which Leibniz commonly identifies bodies are representational contents. But for present purposes, the passage is especially important simply because it shows *that* the phenomena with which Leibniz identifies bodies are indeed representational contents.

Crucial to this passage’s account of what transubstantiation comes to, in the absence of corporeal substances, is Leibniz’s distinction between “constitutive” and “resulting” phenomena, which are identified with “unobserved” (or unnoticed) and “observed” (or noticed) perceptions, respectively. The key to understanding this distinction is Leibniz’s view that, underlying any confused and conscious perception there is a more complex subconscious perception from which it results. Thus, according to Leibniz, a confused perception, *A*, with representational content  $\gamma$ , results from a subconscious perception, *B*, with a more complex representational content  $\delta$ .

Moreover, Leibniz also holds that if perception *B* were brought to consciousness, it would more distinctly represent what perception *A* represents than perception *A* itself does. (Here, what *A* and *B* represent are not  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$ , but some third thing, of which  $\gamma$  and  $\delta$  are both appearances.) One of Leibniz's favourite examples of this relation involves the clear but utterly confused perception which he sometimes *identifies* with the colour green but sometimes also speaks of as the notion, appearance, or idea of green: on his view, this perception results from subconscious perceptions that Leibniz normally *identifies* with the colours yellow and blue but sometimes also characterizes as the notions, ideas, or appearances of yellow and blue.<sup>29</sup> According to Leibniz, the latter two colours, taken together, more distinctly represent what the colour green represents.<sup>30</sup> In addition to this, Leibniz also thinks that some of our colour-perceptions—the basic ones, i.e., the ones that do not result from other colour-perceptions—result, in turn, from yet other subconscious perceptions that he describes as perceptions of shapes and motions.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in his “*Meditationes de cognitione, veritate, et ideis*” (1684), Leibniz alleges that “when we perceive colours or smells, we certainly have no perception other than that of shapes and motions” (A VI, 4, 592; AG, 27). Likewise, in his “*Entretien de Philarète et d’Ariste*” (1712; rev. 1715), Leibniz asserts that “the

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<sup>29</sup> See *Nouveaux essais*, II, 2, §1, A VI, 6, 120; NE, 120, Leibniz's letter of 4 June 1710 to Wagner, GP VII, 529, Leibniz to Burnett (undated), GP III, 256, “*Physica scientia attributorum corporis*,” A VI, 4, 1982 (1678-81?), and *Nouveaux essais*, IV, 6, §7, A VI, 6, 403; NE, 403. NE = G. W. Leibniz: *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett, Cambridge 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Thus, while Leibniz commonly describes the colour green as a confused cognition of something, he says in a letter to Burnett that our notion of green (i.e., of the thing confusedly represented by the colour green) is distinct insofar as we have an analysis of green into yellow and blue (GP III, 256 (undated)). (Leibniz's primary concern in this letter to Burnett is to argue that distinctness comes in degrees. To this end, he speaks of the perception of yellow and blue as a distinct, though still somewhat confused, perception of green, even though his considered view is that there can be no distinct perception of a colour at all.)

<sup>31</sup> Of course, Leibniz characterizes shapes and motions as phenomena (“*Principia logic-metaphysica*,” A VI, 4, 1648; AG, 34 (1689?)), or as involving something imaginary (“*Discours de métaphysique*” §12, A VI, 4, 1545; AG, 44 (1686)), which suggests that he would be ready to call one and the same thing both a shape and a perception of shape, or a motion and a perception of motion. Indeed, in his “*Principia logico-metaphysica*,” A VI, 4, 1648; AG, 34, Leibniz asserts that “there are no shapes *a parte rei* [non dantur figurae a parte rei].” See also Leibniz's letter of 30 April 1687 to Arnauld, A II, 2, 178; LA, 115, and his letter of August 1686 to Foucher, A II, 2, 91.

whiteness of foam [...] comes from little bubbles which are hollow and polished like many little mirrors" (GP VI, 587; AG, 263).<sup>32</sup>

In the language employed by Leibniz in the long passage quoted above, the subconscious perceptions of shapes and motions from which conscious perceptions of colour result are "constitutive phenomena" or "unobserved perceptions." The confused conscious perceptions that result from subconscious ones are "resulting phenomena" or "observed perceptions." And Leibniz's proposal in this passage is that we ought to identify the nature of a thing with the subconscious perception which is the source of the conscious perception by which we normally recognize that thing. Thus, according to Leibniz, the nature of whiteness consists in the unconscious perception of shapes found in bubbles or concave mirrors, from which there results the appearance that the person on the street typically takes whiteness to consist in. With respect to the issue of transubstantiation, then, Leibniz's suggestion here in his final letter to Des Bosses is that, if there are no corporeal substances, transubstantiation should be understood as a change in which the unobserved phenomena constitutive of the bread employed in the sacrament are replaced in each perceiver by the unobserved phenomena constitutive of Christ's flesh, but without any corresponding change in perceivers' resulting phenomena. On this account, Leibniz seems to think, it is fair to say that the substance of the bread is replaced by the substance of Christ's flesh, for the substance or nature of a thing consists in the phenomena constitutive of it. It also makes some sense to say that the accidents of the bread remain after consecration, but without inhering in the substance of Christ's flesh, at least inasmuch as the observed phenomena that remain after the consecration do not in fact result from the phenomena constitutive of Christ's flesh. In fact, they seem, after consecration, no longer to result from anything, being preserved miraculously by God.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See S. Duarte: "Ideas and Confusion in Leibniz", in: *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* XVII/4 (2009), pp. 705-733, section 2. Cf. S. Puryear: "Leibniz's Alleged Ambivalence About Sensible Qualities", in: *Studia Leibnitiana* XLIV/2 (2012), pp. 229-45, note 18.

<sup>33</sup> See *Nowoeaux essais*, II, 27, §23, A VI, 6, 245; NE, 245, where, envisioning the possibility that God might exchange the conscious perceptions of two human beings, while yet preserving their unconscious perceptions, Leibniz says: "Nevertheless, it must be granted to me also that the divorce between the insensible and sensible worlds, i.e., between the insensible perceptions that would remain in the

This account of transubstantiation is certainly interesting, both in itself and for the light it casts on Leibniz's theory of perception, although one might reasonably doubt whether Des Bosses would have approved of it. In any case, for present purposes, the important thing to notice is that this account makes it abundantly clear that the phenomena with which Leibniz proposes to identify bodies, should there be no corporeal substances, are *perceptions* or, more accurately, their representational contents. The phenomena with which Leibniz commonly identifies bodies are, therefore, things existing objectively in perceivers.

The same conclusion is supported by a number of several passages from the correspondence with De Volder. To take but one example, in his letter of 20 June 1703, Leibniz writes:

I do not admit the action of individual substances on one another, since there appears to be no way by which a monad could influence a monad. But does anyone deny collision and impulse in the appearances of aggregates [*in apparentiis aggregatorum*], which are certainly nothing but phenomena (though founded and rule-governed)? (GP II, 251; LDV, 263)

In this passage, Leibniz speaks of appearances of aggregates, and he characterizes these appearances as founded and rule-governed phenomena (*phaenomena fundata ac regulata*). The suggestion, in other words, is that these appearances are none other than the well-founded phenomena with which he often identifies bodies. Notice, however, that since an aggregate cannot perceive, according to Leibniz,<sup>34</sup> the genitive '*aggregatorum*' in the expression '*in apparentiis aggregatorum*' must be an objective, rather than subjective, genitive. In other words, the passage is to be read as implying that bodies are the representational contents of perceptions that have aggregates of substances as their objects. What's more, the contrast in this passage seems to be a contrast between what is true of monads (i.e., genuine substance), and what is true of mental appearances or phenomena, and this seems clearly to point to the conclusion that the phenomena with which Leibniz

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same substances and the apperceptions that were exchanged, would be miraculous, as when we suppose that God makes the void. For I have said above why this is not in conformity with the natural order."

<sup>34</sup> For "*actiones sunt suppositorum*" ("Discours de métaphysique" §8, A VI, 4, 1540/AG, 40), according to Leibniz, and an aggregate is not a *suppositum*, but *supposita*.

identifies bodies are the representational contents of perceptions that have aggregates as their *extra-mental* objects.

In addition to all this, it is worth noting that, although Leibniz sometimes characterizes bodies simply as phenomena, he frequently characterizes them as “well-founded” phenomena (*phaenomena bene fundata*) in particular. What exactly he means by a well-founded phenomenon can be seen by considering his claim that “matter or extended mass is nothing but a phenomenon founded in things [*phaenomenon fundatur in rebus*],” and his further claim that “substantial unities are not parts, but the foundations of phenomena [*fundamenta phaenomenorum*]” (letter to De Volder, 30 June 1704, GP II, 268; LDV, 303). I take it that this is just another way of saying that matter or extended mass is a well-founded phenomenon. But if I am right about this, Leibniz’s talk of phenomena as founded in things, and his talk of substantial unities as the foundations of phenomena, make it clear that for him a well-founded phenomenon is a representational content to which there corresponds something in reality, or *in re*. For it is something of a scholastic commonplace that the content of a mental representation has a *fundamentum in re* or *in rebus* precisely insofar as there exists something outside the soul that answers to it. Thus, for Aquinas, the concept of a chimera has no *fundamentum in re*, while the concept of a human being does. Indeed, for Aquinas a conception of the soul need not even be a likeness (*similitudo*) of its *fundamentum in re*, as one’s conception of a human being is.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the concept of humanity has a *fundamentum in re*, according to Aquinas, even though there is in reality no such thing as humanity understood as something universal and common to all human beings: for this concept to have a *fundamentum in re*, on his view, it suffices that it result from the way the intellect understands things that do indeed exist outside the soul (i.e., individual human beings).<sup>36</sup> For Leibniz, then, a well-founded phenomenon would seem to be a phenomenon founded in things, and a phenomenon founded in

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Nouveaux essais*, II, 30, §1, A VI, 6, 263; NE, 263.

<sup>36</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Super I Sententiarum*, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3, resp., in: Thomas Aquinas: *Commento alle sentenze di Pietro Lombardo*, ed. Roberto Coggi, Bologna 1999), pp. 230-32. See also Giralduus Odonis, O.F.M.: *Opera Philosophica, vol. II: De Intentionibus, Critical Edition with a Study on the Medieval Intentionality Debate up to ca. 1350*, by L. M. De Rijk, Leiden 2005), pp. 120-24.

things is the objective content of a perception to which there corresponds something in reality, outside the soul. Of course, this something need not be a unity.

This account seems to be confirmed by the fact that in his “Animadversiones in partem generalem Principiorum Cartesianorum,” Leibniz claims that Descartes usefully did away with the “prejudice by which we look on heat, colours and other phenomena as certain things [*res*] outside us” (GP IV, 365; L, 390 (1692)<sup>37</sup>), and by the further fact that, in the original draft of this work, Leibniz goes on to add: “Nevertheless, we rightly say that colours and heat are in things [*in rebus*] when we understand them to be the foundations of these phenomena [*horum phaenomenorum fundamenta*]” (GP IV, 365, n. \*; L, 411, n. 14). Leibniz seems clearly to mean by this that if we understand colours and heat to be, not what the philosophically naïve take them to be, but those real and genuine features of bodies that are held by many philosophers to be causally responsible for sensations of colour and heat in us, then it is true to say that colours and heat are real or “in things.” This, too, shows that Leibniz understands the foundation of a phenomenon to be the extra-mental thing that corresponds to that phenomenon or mental appearance.

Granted, then, that a well-founded phenomenon is for Leibniz a phenomenon founded on things, all of this clearly establishes that when he speaks of a “well-founded” phenomenon (*phaenomenon bene fundatum*) he has in mind a representational content to which there corresponds something existing in reality outside the soul. That this is indeed what he has in mind seems also to be confirmed by the fact that in his own copy of a letter of 1705 to De Volder Leibniz speaks of the rainbow as a “real or well-founded phenomenon” (*phaenomenon reale seu bene fundatum*) (GP II, 276; LDV, 321). For this suggests that Leibniz understands a *real* phenomenon to be none other than a *well-founded* one. (A number of other passages suggest the same.<sup>38</sup>) And as Leibniz makes

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<sup>37</sup> L = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters*, trans. Leroy E. Loemker, Dordrecht – Boston – London, 1969.

<sup>38</sup> In an earlier letter to De Volder, moreover, Leibniz uses the term ‘real’ to qualify ‘phenomenon’ where we might reasonably have expected him to use ‘well-founded’ instead, ‘well-founded’ being the expression that he uses most commonly in the correspondences with Des Bosses and De Volder: “Bodies, which are commonly taken for substances, are nothing but real phenomena, and are no more substances than parhelia or rainbows, and this is not something that is overturned by touch any more

plain in his “De modo distinguendi phaenomena realia ab imaginariis” (A VI, 4, 1498-1504; L, 363-66 (1683-86?)), he understands a real phenomenon to be the representational content of a perception that has an extra-mental object. Indeed, the principal aim of this work is to identify criteria or signs (*indicia*) by which one can distinguish those perceptions which have extra-mental objects from those perceptions which do not. The former perceptions are called “real” phenomena, the latter “imaginary” phenomena.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, too, then, it seems clear that Leibniz understands a well-founded phenomenon to be the representational content of a perception that has an extra-mental object. Accordingly, when Leibniz declares that bodies are aggregates and therefore well-founded phenomena, the phenomena at issue are correctly understood as the representational contents of perceptions that have aggregates of substances as their extra-mental objects.

## 2. *Aggregates*

Even if it is granted that the real or well-founded phenomena with which Leibniz frequently identifies bodies are to be understood as the representational contents of perceptions, it remains for me to show that the aggregates with which he sometimes identifies bodies, and which are said by him to have a reality derived wholly from their ingredients, are collections of substances that are nothing over and above the genuine unities contained within them. Absent that, it might be argued that Adams is right to understand these aggregates as representational contents and

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than by sight. A monad alone is a substance; a body is substances, not a substance” (GP II, 262; LDV, 287 (21 January 1704)). See also Leibniz’s letter of 30 April 1709 to Des Bosses, in which he asserts that mass is a “real phenomenon” (GP II, 371; LDB, 127), *Nouveaux essais*, II, 21, §72, in which he asserts that “motion is only a real phenomenon because matter or mass, to which motion belongs, is not properly speaking a substance” (A VI, 6, 210; NE, 210), and Leibniz’s letter of 30 April 1687 to Arnauld, in which he states that motions are real phenomena rather than beings (A II, 2, 178; LA, 115). I would suggest that Leibniz’s apparent preference for ‘well-founded’ over ‘real’ has to do with the fact that calling phenomena “real” runs the risk of creating confusion between a phenomenon’s status as real, which accrues to it insofar as it is the appearance of something outside the soul, and its status as a possessor of reality, which accrues to it insofar as it harmonizes with other phenomena. Cf. P. Phemister: *Leibniz and the Natural World*, Dordrecht 2005, pp. 169-75.

<sup>39</sup> Leibniz distinguishes between imaginary *phenomena* and imaginary *beings*. An imaginary being can have a foundation *in re*—e.g., in a plurality of monads; by definition, an imaginary phenomenon cannot. Moreover, although the claim that some item is an imaginary phenomenon certainly implies that it is an imaginary being, according to Leibniz, the converse does not hold, since some imaginary beings are real or well-founded phenomena, rather than imaginary phenomena.

also right to think that these aggregates are none other than the real or well-founded phenomena with which Leibniz also identifies bodies.

I must grant at the outset that some of the things that Leibniz terms “aggregates” or “beings by aggregation” seem clearly to be representational contents or imaginary beings. I deny, however, that Leibniz conceives of aggregates, so understood, as things possessed of a reality that is wholly derived from genuine substances. On my view, in other words, Leibniz equivocates in his use of the term ‘aggregate’ and related expressions. Sometimes he uses this term to refer to a collection of substances that is nothing over and above those very substances, and sometimes he uses it to refer to a representational content or imaginary being. The first sense, according to which the reality of an aggregate is derived wholly from the substances contained within it, is the one at work when Leibniz asserts that a “body is not a substance, but substances or an aggregate of substances” (“Fardella”, A VI, 4, 1670; AG, 105). The second sense, according to which aggregates are phenomena or representational contents, is the one that Leibniz has in mind when he says that “aggregates themselves are nothing but phenomena, since besides the ingredient monads, everything else is added by perception alone” (to Des Bosses, 29 May 1716, GP II, 517; LDB, 370). In this latter sense, I claim, an aggregate is not many beings, nor is it something that derives its reality wholly from genuine substances; it is, rather, an *imaginary* being.

Given this equivocation in Leibniz, the fact that he sometimes uses the term ‘aggregate’ and related expressions to refer to something that exists only objectively in the mind is insufficient to support Adams’s contention that the problem of Leibniz’s ostensibly competing characterizations of body is to be solved by recognizing that for Leibniz an aggregate just *is* a phenomenon—i.e., just *is* something that exists objectively in perceivers. For, on the view to be argued for here, the kind of aggregate that is a phenomenon, unlike the kind of aggregate that is a mind-independent collection of substances, is not something that derives its reality from genuine substances. And in many texts the aggregates with which Leibniz identifies bodies are clearly conceived by him to possess a reality that is derived from the substances contained within them.



I will not go to great lengths to show that some of the things that Leibniz calls aggregates are conceived by him to exist only objectively in perceivers. That this is indeed the case is made abundantly clear, it seems to me, by the following passage from Leibniz's letter of 30 April 1687 to Arnauld:

I have already said in another letter that the composite made up of the diamonds of the Grand Duke and of the Great Mogul can be called a pair of diamonds, but this is only a being of reason [*un estre de raison*]. And when they are brought closer to one another, it will be a being of the imagination or perception, that is to say, a phenomenon [*un estre d'imagination ou perception, c'est à dire un phenomène*]. For contact, common motion, and participation in a common plan have no effect on substantial unity. (A II, 2, 185; LA, 121)

In a draft of the letter in which this passage appears, Leibniz explicitly refers to the pair composed of the diamonds of the Grand Duke and Great Mogul as a "being by aggregation" (A II, 2, 170). As one might in any case surmise, then, the composite of the two diamonds discussed in this passage is understood by Leibniz to be an aggregate. Now, in this passage Leibniz first supposes that the diamonds of the Grand Duke and Great Mogul are situated at a great distance from each other, and he claims that the pair composed from them will in that case be "only a being of reason." As traditionally understood, of course, a being of reason (*ens rationis*) is something that has only objective existence (*esse objectivum*), i.e., is something that exists only objectively in the mind.<sup>40</sup> Nor does Leibniz differ from the tradition on this score, as he makes clear in his "De

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<sup>40</sup> Indeed, many earlier philosophers held that, strictly speaking, a being of reason is not merely something that exists only objectively in the intellect, but also something that *cannot* exist in reality. On this view, privations, negations, and contradictory things count as beings of reason, but a golden mountain (say) does not. See Francisco Suárez: *Disputationes metaphysicae*, 54, 1, 6 in: F. Suárez: *Opera omnia*, vol. 26, ed. C. Berton, Paris 1856, p. 1016. (English translation: F. Suárez: *On Beings of Reason*, ed. J. P. Doyle, Milwaukee 1995, pp. 62-63.) However, Joachim Jungius, *Logica hamburgensis*, ed. Rudolf W. Meyer, Hamburg 1957 (first published 1638), simply claims that a being of reason is the object of a "notion to which nothing real outside the intellect corresponds" (pp. 54-55). Likewise, in Johannes Micraelius's *Lexicon philosophicum terminorum philosophis usitatorum*, Stetini 1662, a being of reason is defined simply as "what does not have true *esse*, except by a feigning of the mind; or, what has only objective *esse* in the intellect—i.e., in a concept representing a thing that nowhere exists—insofar as it is conceived by reason as a being" (p. 442). Further, in his *Institutiones metaphysicae in usum academicum*, Groningae 1764, Dionysius van de Wynpersse defines a being of reason as "whatever is only conceived, or what is not given outside a concept, such as Pegasus. It is also called a *non-being* by some, and to this class does every imaginary being belong [*et refer huc omne ens imaginarium*]" (p. 16). Finally, Joannes Hebenstreit, *Philosophia prima ad mentem veterum sapientium* [...], Jenae 1697, p. 83, explicitly distinguishes between two senses of 'being of reason': in the strict sense, a being of reason is something that

Abstracto et Concreto” (A VI, 4, 987-94 (1688?)). In this work, after pointing out that there are things that can truly be predicated of God at one time, but not at another (e.g., “creates Adam and Eve”), he observes that, if all change with respect to extrinsic denominations has some foundation in reality, and this in such a way that real beings serve as foundations for all predicates, it follows that certain things arise and perish in God. Noting that this consequence is absurd (God being immutable and altogether free of accidents), Leibniz concludes that all such things “should rather be said to be beings of reason, though having, of course, some foundation in reality” (A VI, 4, 991).<sup>41</sup> It seems clear, then, that in the passage from Leibniz’s letter of 30 April 1687, he is conceiving of a being by aggregation as something that has only *esse objectivum*.

In this same passage, moreover, Leibniz next supposes that the two diamonds “are brought closer to one another.” Under these conditions, he says, the “composite made up of the two diamonds” is “a being of the imagination or perception, that is to say, a phenomenon.” The clear implication is that, even when the two diamonds are brought closer together, the pair composed from them is still something that exists only objectively in perceivers: the proximity of the two diamonds does not make a single being or substance of them, so as to give the composite of them

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cannot exist in reality; in a looser sense, it is merely something that in fact exists only objectively in the intellect.

<sup>41</sup> See also Leibniz’s letter of 6 July 1699 to De Volder, GP II, 182; LDV, 105: “You say that the notion of substance is a concept of the mind, or, as they say, a being of reason. But, unless I am mistaken, the same can be said of every concept, which is why we say, not that concepts, *but that the objects of concepts, are either real or rational beings*” (my emphasis). Notice that Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, 54, 1, 5, recognizes a sense of ‘being of reason’ according to which perfections existing subjectively in the intellect (i.e., accidents inhering in the intellect) can be called beings of reason. But he dismisses this sense as irrelevant to a discussion of beings of reason, properly understood: for a being of reason, as normally understood, exists in the intellect not subjectively, but objectively, i.e., as an *object* of thought. Indeed, for Suárez, anything that exists subjectively in the intellect is a *real* being. See F. Suárez, *Opera omnia*, vol. 26 (see note 40), p. 1016. See also Rudolph Goclenius, *Lexicon philosophicum*, Francofurti 1613, p. 153: “Those things which are in the intellect as in a subject are real beings, whether you are thinking or not, for instance species, *νοηται*; the act of understanding; the habit of the intellect or Knowledge, which is an image of the thing cognized representing the thing as existing outside the soul.”

On Leibniz’s claim regarding predicates applicable to God at one time, but not at another, compare Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia, Q. 13, art. 7, resp., in: *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, vol. 4, Rome 1888, pp. 152-53. (English translation: Thomas Aquinas: *Treatise on the Divine Nature: Summa Theologiae I, 1-13*, ed. Brian Shanley, Indianapolis – Cambridge, pp. 139-40.)

a real existence outside the perceiver, in addition to the objective existence that it enjoys within the perceiver. Certainly, the expression ‘being of the imagination’ (*estre de l’imagination*) and closely related expressions—such as ‘imaginary being’ (*ens imaginarium*) or ‘imaginary thing’ (*res imaginaria*)—were very often used in Leibniz’s day to refer to something that exists only objectively in a perceiver.<sup>42</sup> Thus, in the second edition of his *Philosophia naturalis* (1654), Henricus Regius, Descartes’s erstwhile disciple, mentions the view that God would be a deceiver if the bodies perceived by us were merely imaginary things (*res imaginariae*).<sup>43</sup> For those at all familiar with Descartes’s Sixth Meditation, the sense here assigned to the expression ‘imaginary thing’ should be clear: to say of something that it is merely a *res imaginaria* is to say that it has no existence outside perception. Much the same goes for the expression ‘*ens imaginarium*’ when Michelangelo Fardella, one of Leibniz’s own correspondents, argues in his *Universae philosophiae systema* (1691) that God’s supreme veracity and ineffable goodness make it impossible for me to suppose that my body is an imaginary being (*ens imaginarium*).<sup>44</sup> Moreover, that Leibniz himself understands an imaginary being to be something that has no extra-mental reality is strongly suggested by the fact that in one text he claims that dreams are examples of imaginary beings (A VI, 4, 1506). Further, in a letter written near the end of his life, Leibniz tells Samuel Clarke that the “same reason which shows that extramundane space is imaginary proves that all empty space is an imaginary thing [*chose imaginaire*]” (GP VII, 372; LC, 23 (1716)<sup>45</sup>). And it is well known that one of Leibniz’s principal claims in the correspondence with Clarke is that space is ideal.<sup>46</sup>

That Leibniz sometimes uses the term ‘aggregate’ and related expressions to refer to something that exists only objectively in the mind explains, on my view, all those passage in which he

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<sup>42</sup> See the quotation from Dionysius van de Wynpersse in n. 40 above.

<sup>43</sup> Henricus Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, editio secunda, Amstelodami 1654, p. 349.

<sup>44</sup> Michaelangelo Fardella, *Universae philosophiae systema*, t. 1 Lugduni Battavorum, 1691, p. 525.

<sup>45</sup> LC = G. W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke: *Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew, Indianapolis – Cambridge, 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Note also that in a draft of Leibniz’s letter of 30 April 1687 to Arnauld, Leibniz states that the being by aggregation composed of the two diamonds is something “that we compose in our mind” (A II, 2, 170).

states or implies that aggregates are in some way dependent on the mind.<sup>47</sup> As I've claimed, however, Leibniz sometimes characterizes the aggregates with which he identifies bodies as things possessing a reality derived wholly from their constituents. And this is important, since (*pace Adams*) it is difficult to see how Leibniz could have held that an aggregate of substances, understood as something that exists only objectively in the mind, has a reality wholly borrowed from genuine substances. For starters, as we've just seen, Leibniz refers to aggregates, understood as things existing in perception, as imaginary beings and beings of reason, and it is unlikely, to say the least, that Leibniz would have attributed substantial reality to an imaginary being or being of reason. The fact that he himself contrasts real beings with imaginary ones certainly suggests that he would not.<sup>48</sup> In fact, part of what motivates the distinction between *esse reale* and *esse obiectivum* is the conviction that things which exist only objectively in the intellect *lack* the kind of reality belonging to things that enjoy a perceiver-independent existence. Indeed, it was virtually axiomatic for scholastic philosophers that a being of reason is not a real being. So it is difficult to believe that Leibniz held that an imaginary being or being of reason could possess, even derivatively, the formal reality of genuine substances.

Moreover, if the reality of an aggregate of substances, according to Leibniz, is wholly borrowed from the substances contained within it, this is because he holds that the reality of an aggregate simply *is* the reality of the substances present in it. Thus we find Leibniz saying that “the entire reality of a society or herd” —i.e., the entire reality of an aggregate composed of persons or

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, “Definitiones notionum metaphysicarum atque logicarum”, A VI, 4, 627; LOC, 271 (1685?), Leibniz’s letter of 30 April 1687 to Arnauld, A II, 2, 191; LA, 126-27 (1687), his letter of 6 July 1699 to De Volder, GP II, 184; LDV, 107-9, and his letter of 20 June 1703 to the same, GP II, 250; LDV, 261 (1703). In all of these passages Leibniz implies that an aggregate is in some way perceiver-dependent. But in some of them he does not make it perfectly clear that by this he means to say that an aggregate exists objectively in the mind. For this reason, some of these passages have been used by Rutherford and others to support their conception of Leibnizian aggregates as hybrids of real and ideal elements. I myself deny that Leibniz ever conceives of an aggregate in this way. In any case, I have already shown that the well-founded phenomena with which Leibniz often identifies bodies are not hybrids of the real and ideal, as Rutherford alleges, but the representational contents of perceptions.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, “De mundo praesenti”, A VI, 4, 1506/LOC, 283 (1684-86?).

sheep—“is only in the particular men or sheep” (Leibniz of 1702 to Sophie Charlotte, GP VI, 516; LTS, 274<sup>49</sup>). Thus also, immediately after declaring that “matter or extended mass is nothing but a phenomenon founded in things, like a rainbow or a parhelion”, Leibniz adds: “and all reality belongs only to unities” (letter of 30 June 1704 to De Volder, GP II, 268; LDV, 303).<sup>50</sup> It is, however, impossible to believe that Leibniz would ever claim that the reality of an imaginary being is *none other than* the reality of multiple real beings. To say this is to imply that the mode of being (*modus essendi*) enjoyed by genuine substances existing in reality is the same mode of being enjoyed by those substances insofar as they exist objectively within the mind. And this, if I am not mistaken, was universally taken to be false, not to say absurd. Thus, in recognition of the fact that the soul does not become hot when, in the process of cognition, the form of fire comes to exist within it, Aquinas distinguishes the natural being or existence (*esse naturale*) that fire has outside the soul from the spiritual being or existence (*esse spirituale*) that fire has within the soul.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Descartes concedes in the Third Meditation that the “mode of being” (*essendi modus*) by which a thing exists objectively in the intellect is “imperfect” (AT VII, 41<sup>52</sup>).

One might dismiss texts in which Leibniz claims or implies that the reality of an aggregate just *is* the reality of its constituent substances. And one might further insist that, even if an imaginary being cannot possess formal reality or *esse reale*, it can nonetheless possess objective reality

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<sup>49</sup> LTS = *Leibniz and the Two Sophies: The Philosophical Correspondence*, ed. & trans. Lloyd Strickland, Toronto 2011.

<sup>50</sup> See also Leibniz’s letter of 21 January 1704 to De Volder, GP II, 262/LDV, 285-7: “whatever things are aggregated from many are not one except by the mind, nor do they have any reality other than one that is borrowed, i.e., [other than the reality] that belongs to the things from which they are aggregated [*seu rerum ex quibus aggregantur*]. Therefore, *third*, things that can be divided into parts have no reality unless there are things in them that cannot be divided into parts. Indeed, they have no reality other than that which belongs to the unities that are in them [*nullam habent aliam realitatem quam eam quae est Unitatum quae insunt*].” Notice also that it is difficult to see how one thing (e.g., a substance) could lend its *very own* reality to another, distinct thing (e.g., a representational content). One might as well speak of Peter’s lending his very existence to Paul. Cf. S. Levey: “On Unity, Borrowed Reality and Multitude in Leibniz,” in: *The Leibniz Review* XXII (2012), pp. 97-134, at pp. 108-11.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, Ia, Q. 78, art. 3, corpus, in: *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, vol. 5, Rome 1889, p. 254. (English translation: Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature: Summa Theologiae Ia*, 75-89, ed. Robert Pasnau, Indianapolis – Cambridge 2002, p. 71.)

<sup>52</sup> AT = *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. C. Adam & P. Tannery, Paris, 1897-1913.

or *esse objectivum*. But there is a significant problem with the suggestion that, when Leibniz assigns reality to certain aggregates, what he has in mind is objective reality, rather than formal reality. For Leibniz never qualifies his attribution of reality to aggregates by specifying that the reality at issue is objective, and this he almost certainly would have done if this were the sort of reality he had in mind. This is not merely to say that Leibniz would surely have been animated, on at least one occasion, with a spirit of precision that led him to specify that it was objective reality, in particular, that he was concerned to assign to aggregates. Rather, it is to say that, if Leibniz had believed that aggregates possess merely objective reality, it is almost certain that he would have regarded it as *false* to assert without qualification that they possess reality, since an unqualified assignment of reality or *esse* to something is, on the standard view, an assignment of formal reality or real *esse* to that thing. This is precisely why Suárez, who takes beings of reason to possess *esse objectivum*, can nonetheless say that “a being of reason is such that *esse* cannot belong to it [*ens autem rationis tale est, ut ei repugnat esse*].”<sup>53</sup> As this pronouncement makes clear, to say of something without qualification that it has *esse* is to assert that it has real or formal *esse*. To be sure, scholastics may not have agreed on the question of how *esse objectivum* (or *esse spirituale* or *esse cognitum* or *esse repraesentatum* or *esse intelligibile*) was related to *esse reale*. But all were agreed that *esse objectivum* was diminished (*diminutum*) or imperfect (*imperfectum*) in comparison with *esse reale*.<sup>54</sup> Again, this is precisely what motivates Descartes to concede in the Third Meditation that the “mode of being” (*essendi modus*) by which a thing exists objectively in the intellect is “imperfect” (AT VII, 41). In any case, whatever differences of opinion may have existed, all scholastics were agreed that something which exists only objectively in the human soul can be said to have *esse* only *secundum quid*, and not *simpliciter*—i.e., in a qualified sense, and not absolutely speaking. What’s more, Leibniz himself seems to endorse the view that *esse objectivum* is imperfect. For in a draft of his letter of 30 April 1687 to Arnauld, Leibniz likens the pair composed of the diamonds

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<sup>53</sup> *Disputationes metaphysicae*, 54, 1, 10, in: Suárez: *Opera omnia*, vol. 26 (see note 40), p. 1018. (English translation: Suárez, *On Beings of Reason* (see note 40), pp. 65-66.)

<sup>54</sup> On this, see Armand Maurer: “*Ens diminutum*: A Note on its Origin and Meaning”, in: *Mediaeval Studies* XII (1950), pp. 216-22.

of the Grand Duke and the Great Mogul to various items (such as colours and parhelia) which, he says, have “a foundation in nature” but no “complete” (or “perfect”) “reality” —i.e., no “*réalité achevée*” (A II, 2, 170). Moreover, that Leibniz takes *esse objectivum* to be imperfect is also clearly implied by what he says in some notes on Descartes’s *Meditations*, where he finds fault with Descartes’s claim that, even if one were to suppose that what is contained objectively in an idea arises from another idea in which it is contained objectively, nevertheless, an infinite regress is impossible here (AT VII, 42). In particular, Leibniz asserts that Descartes needs to *prove* that such an infinite regress is impossible, and he suggests that one ought, perhaps, to appeal to the principle that what is imperfect must arise from a cause in which it exists eminently or perfectly. From this it follows, he says, “that objective *esse*, which is imperfect, arises from formal *esse*, which is perfect” (A VI, 4, 1787 (1678-81?)). Leibniz, then, seems clearly to endorse the view that objective *esse* or reality is imperfect. It seems quite likely, therefore, that he would have regarded as false the unqualified claim that imaginary beings have reality. It seems, therefore, to be a mistake to suppose that, when Leibniz assigns reality to aggregates, the reality he has in mind is objective reality.

It follows that the only way to make sense of the fact that in some texts Leibniz characterizes aggregates as imaginary beings, while in others he assigns reality to them, is to suppose that he is not altogether consistent in his use of the term ‘aggregate’ and related expressions. The sort of aggregate that Leibniz characterizes as an imaginary being cannot be the kind of aggregate whose reality is, on his view, wholly derived from, and indeed identical to, the reality of the substances which figure in it.<sup>55</sup>

How, then, does Leibniz conceive of this second sort of aggregate? The many texts in which Leibniz simply says that a body is not a being, but beings, or claims that a body is not a substance, but substances or an aggregate of substances, suggest that Leibniz often uses the term ‘aggregate’ to refer to a perceiver-independent collection of substances that is nothing over and

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<sup>55</sup> My impression is that Leibniz is more likely to use the expression ‘being by aggregation’ (note the singular ‘being’) to refer to the kind of aggregate that is an imaginary being. See the brief discussion of Jolley in note 5.

above those substances. For example, in one text Leibniz asserts that it is necessary to “distinguish between a substance and an aggregate of substances, between substance and substances [*inter substantiam et substantias*]” (LH 58). In another, he says that a “body is not a substance but substances, or an aggregate of substances” (“Fardella”, A VI, 4, 1670; AG, 105 (1690)). In yet another, he says: “Every body, since it is composed of parts, is not truly one being, but many beings” (A II, 2, 639; LTS, 100 (1693)). In a fourth he says: “Extension is an attribute, and the extended or matter is not a substance, but substances” (to De Volder, 6 July 1699, GP II, 183; LDV, 105 (1699)). In a fifth, he says: “A monad alone is a substance, a body is substances, not a substance” (to De Volder, 21 January 1704, GP II, 262; LDV, 287 (1704)). In a sixth, he remarks: “Secondary matter, i.e., mass, is not a substance, but substances” (to Bernoulli, 1 September 1698, GM III, 537; LDV, 9). In a seventh, he observes: “The human being is a substance, his body or matter substances” (to Bernoulli, 17 December 1698, GM III, 560). In an eighth, he states: “matter [...] is not a substance, but substances” (to Jacquelot, 22 March 1703, GP III, 457; WF, 200<sup>56</sup>). And in a ninth, he explains: “I suppose that what has no unity greater than the wood in a bundle or in a woodpile, or than bricks placed on top of one another, is not one being, but rather beings, although a single name is given to them all” (“An corpora sint mera phaenomena” (1682-83?), A VI, 4, 1464; LOC, 257).

Such passages, in which Leibniz simply claims that a body or aggregate is many beings, suggest a conception of aggregates as perceiver-independent pluralities, which, given Leibniz’s view that the relations among creatures are ideal, must, on his view, be collections that are nothing over and above the things contained within them. Indeed, the fact that Leibniz frequently states or implies that the reality of an aggregate is nothing other than the reality of its ingredients suggests that on his view such an aggregate is nothing *but* its ingredients.<sup>57</sup> Much the same conclusion is suggested by the following passage from Leibniz’s letter 19 January 1706 to De Volder:

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<sup>56</sup> WF = *Leibniz’s ‘New System’ and Associated Contemporary Texts*, trans. R. S. Woolhouse and R. Francks, Oxford 1997.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Paul Lodge’s introduction to LDV (see note 1), pp. lxxxiii-lxxxiv.



I am afraid that that force which is conceived in extension or bulk as outside of perceivers and their phenomena is of just this sort [i.e., utopian]. For there can be nothing real in nature but simple substances and the aggregates that result from them. However, in these simple substances, we know nothing other than perceptions or reasons for perceptions. (GP II, 281-2; LDV, 331-3)

Notice that the question at issue here is whether a particular sort of thing (the force which is conceived to exist in extension or mass) is to be found “outside of perceivers and their phenomena.” At issue, in other words, is whether this entity is a third thing aside from simple substances and the representational contents of monadic perceptions. Leibniz’s answer is quite obviously *no*. Moreover, he justifies this answer with the claim that “there can be nothing real in nature but simple substances and the aggregates that result from them.”<sup>58</sup> The clear implication is that the aggregates of simple substances that Leibniz has in mind here are *not* representational contents of monadic perceptions, unlike the pair of diamonds from the correspondence with Arnauld. Given this, and the description of aggregates as “real in nature,” the passage seems clearly to imply also that aggregates are here being conceived by Leibniz as perceiver-independent pluralities. Further, Leibniz’s characterization of aggregates in this passage as “results” of simple substances is significant, for although Leibniz seems to use the term ‘result’ in different, more or less technical senses, nevertheless, in one text he writes that a result is something “which is immediately understood [*intelligitur*] to be posited when those things from which it results have been posited” (“Definitiones: Aliquid, Nihil,” A VI, 4, 310 (1679?)). The idea here, I take it, is that nothing more is needed for the existence of a result than the existence of those things from which it results.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See also Leibniz to Remond, GP III, 622 (1714): “I believe that the entire universe of creatures consists only in simple substances, or monads, and their collections [*assemblages*]”.

<sup>59</sup> Rutherford takes the occurrence of the term ‘understood’ (*intelligitur*) in this explanation of a result to indicate that for Leibniz the understanding plays an essential role in the coming-to-be of results. I think this is a mistake, for Leibniz frequently uses the term ‘*intelligitur*’ and related expressions in definitions where there can be no question of such a role for the understanding. Thus, in a text of 1677, Leibniz characterizes contingent things as things “in which no necessity is understood [*intelligitur*]” (“De veritatis realitate”, A VI, 4, 18). But Leibniz, surely, doesn’t hold that a thing’s status as contingent depends on its being *understood* not to contain any necessity. Likewise, in a text thought to have been written in the first half of the 1680s, Leibniz explains that “*A* is prior, *B* posterior (sc. in the order of nature) if *A* is simpler to understand [*simplicius intellectu*] than *B* or when the possibility of *A* is more easily demonstrated than that of *B*” (“De notionibus omnia quae cogitamus continentibus”, A VI, 4, 402). But Leibniz, surely, isn’t suggesting here that the intellect’s manner of conceiving things is

Also relevant to the question of how we should understand the aggregates which are said by Leibniz to have a reality derived from their ingredients is a passage that appears in his *De mundo praesenti*, which was probably written sometime between the Spring of 1684 and the Winter of 1685/6:

Every being [*ens*] is either real or imaginary. A *real being* is what is outside [*citra*<sup>60</sup>] the mind's operation—for example the sun, about which we judge on the basis of an agreement among several perceptions. An *imaginary being*—for example a rainbow, a parhelion or a dream—is what is perceived after the manner of a real being according to one mode of perceiving, but is not perceived and does not bear examination according to other modes of perceiving, as it should if it were a real being. [...]

Every real being is either a *per se* unity or a being *per accidens*. A *being (unity) per se*—for example a human being; a *being (unity) per accidens*—for example a pile of wood or a machine, which is, of course, one only by aggregation [...]. (A VI, 4, 1506; LOC, 283)

Leibniz here distinguishes imaginary beings from real beings, implying that, unlike imaginary beings, real beings are outside, beyond, or apart from the mind's operations—i.e., have a perceiver-independent existence. What's more, Leibniz explicitly classifies aggregates (or beings *per accidens*) as real beings, which implies that aggregates, too, are outside, beyond, or apart from the mind's operations. Leibniz, in other words, must here be using the term 'aggregate' to refer to something that has a perceiver-independent existence, unlike the pair of diamonds from the correspondence with Arnauld. Moreover, aggregates are here contrasted with the rainbow and the parhelion, which are offered as examples of imaginary beings and, in addition, are often cited by Leibniz as examples of phenomena, very often in the immediate wake of a declaration to the

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*determinant* of the fact that one thing is prior in the order of nature to another. The explanation of the resulting relation at A VI, 4, 310 is therefore reasonably taken not to imply any necessary role for the understanding in the existence of a result.

<sup>60</sup> Although '*citra*' is commonly used to mean 'on this side of', and is so translated in LOC, the resulting English sentence either doesn't make great sense or implies something that Leibniz would undoubtedly regard as false. 'Beyond', 'outside', 'on the other side of', 'aside from' and 'apart from' are among the alternative meanings of *citra* listed in: A. Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A.D.*, Oxford 1949; A. Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs du moyen-âge*, Turnhout 1975; and L. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, Peabody, MA, 1995. Cf. Joannes Hebenstreit, *Philosophia prima* (see note 40), 79-80: "Nimirum Ens vulgo sic solet describi: quod est extra nihil, quod vere & realiter existit, quod *citra mentis operationem existit*, h. e. quod existit, licet nulla creatura cogitet, illud existere, quod actu est, quod habet veram & realem existentiam" (my emphasis).

effect that bodies are phenomena.<sup>61</sup> To be sure, we shouldn't understand Leibniz to be claiming in this passage that an aggregate is straightforwardly a real being. For a real being must, on his view, possess genuine or substantial unity, which is precisely what aggregates lack. But Leibniz's view that aggregates—or some of the things he calls aggregates—possess the reality of their constituents is in all likelihood why he here distinguishes aggregates from imaginary beings and places them alongside *per se* real beings. If this is right, it implies something that one would in any case naturally expect—namely, that for Leibniz imaginary beings *lack* the kind of reality that he often attributes to aggregates. Again, then, it seems that some of the things that Leibniz terms “aggregates” are conceived by him to be perceiver-independent pluralities.

Also relevant here is a text in which Leibniz is concerned to define that which is constitutive (*constitutivum*) of something. A *constitutivum*, he explains, is by nature prior to that of which it is constitutive, immediately introducing it or positing it without any intervening consequence. It is in this way, he adds, that an aggregate, for instance a body, is posited by its ingredients.<sup>62</sup> The implication here, once again, is that the existence of the things that figure in an aggregate—or at least in the sort of aggregate whose reality is nothing but the reality of its ingredients—is sufficient for the existence of that aggregate itself, which implies that such an aggregate is nothing more than the things which figure in it.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, that Leibniz understands the aggregates whose reality is just the reality of their ingredients to be *nothing but* those ingredients is also suggested by something that he says in his “Considerations sur la doctrine d'un esprit universel unique” (1702). At one point in this text, Leibniz considers the view that God is like an ocean composed of infinitely many drops that are

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<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., “Divisiones”, A VI, 4, 576 (1683-86?), Leibniz's letter of 21 January 1704 to De Volder, GP II, 262; LDV, 287, his letter of 30 June 1704 to De Volder, GP II, 268; LDV, 303, his letter of 8 September 1709 to Des Bosses, GP II, 390; LDB, 151-3, and his letter of 15 February 1712 to Des Bosses, GP II, 435-6; LDB, 227.

<sup>62</sup> “Constitutivum autem est quod aliquid sine interveniente consequentia, seu immediate inferens natura prius. Ita ingredientia ponunt aggregatum ut corpus” (LH IV, 7 B, Bl. 56v). Quoted in M. Mugnai: “Leibniz's Ontology of Relations: A Last Word?”, in: *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* VI (2012), pp. 171-208, at p. 195, n. 52.

<sup>63</sup> See Mugnai: “Leibniz's Ontology of Relations” (see note 62), p. 194.

periodically detached from the entire mass in order to animate organic bodies, but later reunited with this mass when those bodies fail. With respect to this view, Leibniz remarks that, since an ocean is a collection [*amas*] of drops, God would, on this conception of him, be an assemblage [*assemblage*] of all souls, in which case one “would have to say that he is nothing at all in himself, and that there is in nature only the particular souls of which he is the collection [*qu’il n’est rien du tout en soy, et qu’il n’y a dans la nature que les ames particulieres, dont il seroit l’amas*]” (GP VI, 536; L, 558). Now, Leibniz never uses the term ‘aggregate’ in this passage, but as every careful reader of him knows, he very often uses the French terms ‘*amas*’ and ‘*assemblage*’ as synonyms for ‘aggregate.’ (Indeed, some translators use ‘aggregate’ to render Leibniz’s ‘*amas*’ into English.<sup>64</sup>) His claim in this passage, then, is that on this conception of God, God turns out to be an aggregate of all particular souls, in which case God will be “nothing at all in himself” and there will be nothing in nature other than these particular souls of which God is the aggregate. The complete reduction of an aggregate to the things out of which it is aggregated, suggested here by the conclusion that in this case God would be “nothing at all in himself,” seems clearly to entail that the aggregate of all souls is identical with its members<sup>65</sup>. Much the same goes for the conclusion that in this case there would be “in nature only the particular souls of which [God] is the collection.” Notice also that there is no suggestion in this text that God, understood as an aggregate of all souls, would be a representational content or a hybrid of real and ideal elements.

A careful reading of relevant texts, then, shows that Leibniz uses the term ‘aggregate’ and related expressions equivocally. Some of the things that he terms ‘aggregates of substances’ or ‘beings by aggregation’ are representational contents, i.e., things that exist objectively in the mind. An aggregate, in this sense, is a real or well-founded phenomenon. To this extent, then,

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<sup>64</sup> Leroy Loemker, for example, renders every occurrence of the term ‘*amas*’ in this passage (GP VI, 535-36) as ‘aggregate’. See L 558.

<sup>65</sup> This is not to imply that one thing is identical to many. (Cf. Rutherford: “Leibniz as Idealist” (see note 9), p. 177.) To identify a Leibnizian aggregate with its members is to imply that one thing is identical to many only if a Leibnizian aggregate is one thing. But this is precisely what I’m concerned to deny when I claim that Leibniz sometimes uses the term ‘aggregate’ to refer to a collection that is nothing over and above the individuals that figure in it.

Leibniz's ostensibly competing characterizations of bodies—as aggregates, on the one hand, and as real or well-founded phenomena, on the other—can be reconciled: in *some* of the texts in which Leibniz describes bodies as aggregates, the aggregates he has in mind are none other than the real or well-founded phenomena with which he often identifies bodies. There are, however, other texts—texts in which Leibniz refers to bodies as aggregates—that cannot so easily be reconciled with the conception of bodies as phenomena. These include all those texts in which Leibniz both claims that a body is an aggregate and asserts that the reality of such an aggregate is wholly borrowed from the substances that figure in it. An aggregate of *this* sort is not a phenomenon, nor something that exists only objectively in the intellect, nor the representational content of a perception. Robert Adams's solution to the problem of Leibniz's inconsistent characterization of body is at best a partial solution, then. It leaves unanswered the question of how to understand the relation between Leibniz's claim that bodies are real or well-founded phenomena and his further claim that bodies are aggregates of substances that possess a reality derived from the unities contained within them. On the view that I've defended here, the latter claim serves as Leibniz's rationale for the former claim: a body (sc. conceived as a being or single thing) is a real or well-founded phenomenon because *a parte rei* or in reality a body is not a being, but many beings.

Before leaving the topic of Leibniz's use of the term 'aggregate,' it is worth noting that the fact that he sometimes uses this term to refer to the objective content of a perception, and sometimes also uses it to refer to a perceiver-independent plurality of substances, can help to explain why, in at least one text, he explicitly denies that matter is composed of substances. After all, although aggregates, understood as perceiver-independent pluralities, can certainly be composed of genuine substances, the well-founded phenomena or imaginary beings that Leibniz sometimes refers to as "beings by aggregation" cannot—or so I have argued. It is, therefore, natural to expect that, in a context in which Leibniz is clearly conceiving of body or matter as a real or well-founded phenomenon, he might *deny* that matter is composed of unities. And this is precisely what he does in a well-known passage from his letter of 30 June 1704 to De Volder:

Accurately speaking, however, matter is not composed of constitutive unities, but results from them, since matter or extended mass is nothing but a phenomenon founded in things, like a rainbow or parhelion, and all reality belongs only to unities. Phenomena, therefore, can always be divided into smaller phenomena which can appear to other more subtle animals, nor does one ever arrive at the smallest phenomena. Substantial unities are not parts, but the foundations of phenomena. (GP II, 268; LDV, 303)

In this passage Leibniz denies that matter is, “accurately speaking,” composed of unities; matter instead “results” from unities. (In this connection, it is important to remember that Leibniz does sometimes characterize phenomena or perceptions as “results.”<sup>66</sup>) Also important is Leibniz’s justification for this claim: “matter or extended mass is nothing but a phenomenon founded in things, like a rainbow or parhelion.” The suggestion seems clearly to be that, *pace* Adams, a real or well-founded phenomenon is not the sort of thing that can be composed of unities or substances, even if it can result from them. Indeed, in this passage Leibniz also explains that matter is like a rainbow or parhelion—both of which he elsewhere classifies as imaginary beings, as we have seen—and then adds that all reality belongs only to unities. The point, I take it, is that matter, as conceived here, is an imaginary being and therefore cannot be composed of unities—i.e., of things that have reality; if it were somehow composed of unities, it would not after all be imaginary, but real. In the second sentence of the passage, moreover, Leibniz adds that phenomena can always be divided into smaller phenomena that can serve as objects of perception for smaller animals. His point, it seems, is that in the division of matter one never arrives at unities, and this because matter, which is a phenomenon, is not after all composed of unities, but is related to them in some other way. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason, I would suggest, that in the final sentence of our passage, Leibniz states that substantial unities “are not parts, but the foundations of phenomena.” The claim is that substantial unities are not after all constituents of extended matter but serve instead as the extra-mental objects of those perceptions which have extended matter as

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<sup>66</sup> See, e.g., Leibniz’s letter of 4 June 1710 to Wagner, GP VII, 529, his letter of 9 October 1687 to Arnauld, A II, 2, 241, and his letter of 29 May 1716 to Des Bosses, GP II, 520-21; LDB, 377-79.

their representation content. They are what make the phenomenon of matter real or well-founded.<sup>67</sup>

When Leibniz denies that matter is composed of unities, then, he is conceiving of matter as a phenomenon. This is not to say, however, that *whenever* Leibniz conceives of matter as a phenomenon, he denies that it is composed of unities. For, as the qualification “accurately speaking” might naturally be taken to suggest, in several texts in which Leibniz conceives of matter as extended, and therefore phenomenal, he speaks (sc. *inaccurately*) in ways that make monads out to be present in, and constituents of, extended bodies, which is not after all something that his system permits. Thus, he is prepared to say that monads are “everywhere” in matter. And he is willing to speak in this way notwithstanding his view that, when one considers what pertains to the nature of the simple substances or real unities out of which bodies are composed—i.e., perception and its consequences—“one is transported, so to speak, into another world, that is to say, into an intelligible world of substances, whereas before one was only among the phenomena of the senses” (*Nouveaux essais*, IV, 3, §6, A VI, 6, 378; NE, 378).

It seems clear, then, that although Leibniz sometimes uses the term ‘aggregate’ and related expressions (e.g., ‘being by aggregation’) to refer to something that exists only objectively in perceivers, when Leibniz speaks of how a body is an aggregates possessed of a reality that is wholly derived from, and indeed identical with, the reality of the substances contained in it, he does not

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<sup>67</sup> Faced with this passage from Leibniz’s letter of 30 June 1704 to De Volder, Adams (whose position crucially depends on the view that for Leibniz a phenomenon or representational content can indeed be composed of monads) claims that Leibniz is not altogether consistent in his use of the term ‘composed.’ Specifically, after noting that Leibniz commonly speaks of bodies as composed of monads, Adams appeals to a passage from the so-called ‘Fardella Memo’ in which Leibniz claims that substances do not constitute a body as parts do, since a part must be homogeneous with its whole (“Fardella”, A VI, 4, 1671/AG, 105). And he argues that when Leibniz, in his letter to De Volder, denies that matter is composed of parts, he has in mind a conception of composition that involves this requirement of homogeneity. (Hence the claim that substances are not parts, but the foundations of phenomena.) See Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (see note 6), pp. 242-44. This account seems problematic, first, because Leibniz never says anything to De Volder to signal that such a conception of composition is at work in the relevant passage, and second, because the invocation of the homogeneity requirement in the Fardella Memo is very clearly a response tailored to a particular concern of Fardella’s (see A VI, 4, 1670/AG, 104).

have in mind something that exists only objectively in perceivers. He has in mind, rather, a perceiver-independent collection of substances, which, given his commitment to the ideality of relations, can only be a collection which is nothing over and above those substances themselves. It is for this reason that Leibniz can be found claiming that a body is not a being, but beings.

### 3. Conclusion

Against Donald Rutherford, I have argued in this paper that when Leibniz goes from the claim that a body is an aggregate to the conclusion that it is a phenomenon, the phenomena he has in mind are representational contents or things existing objectively in perceivers, and not hybrids of real and ideal elements. Indeed, it's worth noting that Rutherford never addresses or considers the question that immediately presents itself for his view: how can relations, which exist only objectively in the mind, according to Leibniz, combine with genuine substances, which have *esse reale* outside the mind, in such a way as to give rise to something that is mind-dependent *and* possessed of a reality that attaches to real beings independently of their being perceived? It is not unreasonable to doubt whether Leibniz would have countenanced such a thing.

This conclusion, when taken together with the conclusion of the last section, implies that the solution to the problem posed by Leibniz's apparently competing characterizations of body is not to be solved by supposing that one and the same thing can be, according to Leibniz, *both* a phenomenon *and* an aggregate of substances which possesses the reality of its constituents. The solution to this problem must therefore be found elsewhere. In Part II of this paper, I will present my own proposed solution, offer arguments for it, and consider its consequences.