

Conclusion

I started this book by presenting Leibniz's early presuppositions about the notion of possibility. I have shown that, from very early in his career, Leibniz was working with a rich and original approach to possibility, which is embedded in metaphysical and theological contexts. I also noted that Leibniz's preoccupation with the notion of possibility was partly motivated by moral and theological concerns and that it serves him as major resource in his effort to provide an alternative to a naturalized and necessitarian world view expressed in the philosophy of Spinoza.

I developed Leibniz's approach to possibility in some detail, arguing that it includes the following commitments: Possibilities are situated in a conceptual realm understood as consistent thoughts in God's understanding. Consistent thoughts are explicated in terms of complex concepts, whereas complex concepts consist of self-consistent simpler elements. Leibniz presupposes logical simples, indefinable and unanalyzable, which he identifies with God's simple attributes or forms. At the same time, Leibniz views God as an active mind whose primary activity is thinking and self-reflection. God's reflections on his simple attributes are seen as mental combinations of his simple forms that produce complex forms. Likewise, God's reflective operations are iterative, so that he reflects upon his reflections. God thinks the combinations among his simple forms and more complex concepts arise in his mind. In addition, God combines the simple forms in a natural order – from the simple to the complex – and, in this sense, Leibniz's system of possibility is both recursive and yields infinite concepts.

Taken together, these presuppositions characterize Leibniz's approach to possibility and provided the point of departure in this work. I have argued that Leibniz's view of possibility is closely linked to his projects of the universal language and the real *characteristica*, which can be seen as a human effort to model and comprehend the realm of divine ideas and concepts by means of symbols. In turn, the compositional structure of concepts and possibilities clarifies Leibniz's view of representation and symbolization in terms of one-to-one correspondence between the components of a concept and the components of the symbol representing it, as well as between their methods of production. Leibniz's view of

possibility also clarifies that the construction of various notation systems rather than a unique universal language is the adequate realization of his grand project. In turn, a variety of notation systems play a role not only in representing concepts but also in enabling our acquisition of new concepts that facilitate the discovery of new knowledge. Human knowledge requires language and notation as means of partially representing and improving our insights into the realm of pure concepts in God's mind as well as into its realization in the created world.

I have also pointed out that Leibniz's notion of truth as the inherence of a predicate term in the subject term is motivated by his views about concepts and possibilities. If possibility is understood as self-consistency among terms (so that it pertains to concepts rather than to things), and if concepts are formed by a unique combination of constituents, it is natural to understand predication, as well as the nature of propositions, (along its traditional form) as an ascription of a predicate term to the subject term. Such an ascription yields a true proposition just in case the predicate term is included in – i.e., is one the predicates making up – the concept of the subject; and it yields a false proposition in case it is not included therein.

On this basis, I attempted to provide an account of Leibniz's original notion of an individual concept that, roughly speaking, corresponds to his notion of a possible individual. Such a concept has been often identified with the individual's complete concept. I have argued that there is an important distinction between a basic or thin individual concept and a complete concept of an individual. Given that God's understanding is the proper locus of concepts and possibilities, I first addressed the question of how such an individual concept is formed in God's mind. I have argued for a three fold thesis concerning the formation of 'thin' individual concepts in God's understanding: (1) Leibniz sees an internal connection between composing simple concepts into complex ones and the individuation of concepts, so that the complexity of concepts contributes to their uniqueness and individuality. (2) An individual concept should not to be identified as a set of predicates but rather as a unique structure of predicates, in which the order of predicates plays an essential role. (3) An individual concept should not to be identified merely with a unique structure of predicates but also with the combinatorial rule that *generates* such a unique structure of predicates in God's understanding. Such a combinatorial rule orders and unifies various forms in a unique way. The production rule is considered as the principle of individuation and an individual concept is thus given a generative definition.

If Leibniz defines a possible world as consisting of compossible set of individuals, the notion of a world involves the notion of relations between individuals. Investigating the notion of a possible world and that of

relations has yielded some surprising results. It turns out that the notions of complete individual concept and that of a possible world are mutually constitutive. In other words, the notion of an individual concept is completed or becomes fully individuated within the context of a world. Complete individuation requires that the relations among all possible individuals would be considered. This view makes it clear that the insightful idea that worlds logically precede individuals captures only one side of the story. I have argued that relations are indispensable for completing the very individuation of complete concepts. At the same time, I pointed out that Leibniz's view of relations implies that they presuppose some non-relational foundation, in which the relata are grounded. This view complements the notion of the production rule as the principle of individuation in the sense that the production rule constitutes the basis (or non-relational predicates) for individuation. Complete individuation requires considering the relations between the various production rules or the basic individual concepts.

In light of this intrinsic connection between possible individuals and possible worlds, I suggested that Leibniz's notion of actualization is best understood as the realization of possible rules or programs of actions. By comparing Leibniz's notions of possible and actual individuals, I arrived at the conclusion that what a possible individual lacks to become actual is primitive power of activity or primitive force. The divine act of rendering the chosen set of possible programs of action active (and thus actual) is called creation. The unnatural moment of creation constitutes individual substances as inherently active agents. The rest of natural phenomena, aggregates, extension, motion, space, and time are explained by reference to these fundamental active units of being – i.e., units of active force. In other words, God only needs to actualize – i.e., give force of action – the basic individual rules of action and the rest emerges as a result of the relations between them. This accords with the fundamental role Leibniz ascribes to units of force and the derivative (or relational) character that he ascribes to extension, space, and time.

Against the background of Leibniz's view of actualization as the creation of individual agents, I approached the labyrinth of human freedom. This Leibnizian labyrinth is a familiar one: if each individual is defined and individuated by a complete program of action, such that each one of its predicates is constitutive of the individual's identity, how can Leibniz insist that the individual's actions are contingent and that rational agents may act freely? My approach to this question turns out to have two facets: (1) Leibniz's notion of a program of action that defines each individual can also be interpreted prescriptively (rather than only causally), that is, as

prescribing the reasons for the individual's course of action; (2) the notion of agency and especially rational agency stresses that an agent acts spontaneously, not as a mechanism which is causally determined or as if the actions are deductive consequences of the individual's concept; rather, a rational agent is acting for reasons, according to the principle of the apparent best. In this sense, the relation between the predicates of an individual's complete concept and his actions can be characterized not as one of logical necessity, such that there is no alternative action, but as one of moral necessity, such that the agent opts for the alternative that seems best from his unique (and necessarily limited) perspective.

In this sense, for Leibniz, the notions of rational agency and contingency (the denial of logical necessity) are intrinsically related. By contrast, for Spinoza, the notion of rational agency is intrinsically related to that of necessity. In order to shed some light on both Leibniz and Spinoza's views, I have attempted in chapter 7 a detailed comparison of their views on agency and necessity. I pointed out that, for both, generative definitions play a fundamental role and that its employment by Spinoza could make the relation between activity and necessity clearer. I also suggested that Leibniz's extensive use of generative definitions lends support to the central role agency plays in his view of individual substance as well as in the intrinsic relation he conceives between the notion of a possible individual and that of an actual one.

In chapter 8 we have seen that Leibniz's distinction between aggregates, which he sees as well founded phenomena, and individual substances, which he sees as true beings, turns on the intrinsic connection between Being and unity. A true being such as a soul is a true unity but an aggregate, which is composed of many individuals, is not. I attempted to clarify the subtle status of aggregates as semi-real and semi mental against this supposition. The unity of aggregates, to the extent that they have one, is relational, i.e., it derives from a mind perceiving the relations between them. At the same time, my main objective has been to examine the unity of Leibnizian true beings in light of this contrast. If Leibniz's considers an aggregate of many substances as lacking true unity, what makes him consider an organic unity, which also consists of many individuals, to be a true unity? This is the main question I addressed in the third part of the book. I have argued that Leibniz's notion of an actual individual implies a nested structure of infinitely many individuals, hierarchically and functionally organized, which he regards as essentially one. I suggested that Leibniz's notion of nested individuality helps clarifying the type of unity he has in mind – a unity of functional organization that derives from the individual program of action. Such a program of action is already defined as a possibility in God's

understanding. The notion of a program may be seen, on the one hand, as essentially one and, on the other, as nesting (and consisting of) infinitely many sub-programs. In this sense, Leibniz's view of possible individuals is shown to be intrinsically and, I think, illuminatingly related to his view of actual ones.

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