

REZENSIONEN

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Leibniz in Mainz. Europäische Dimensionen der Mainzer Wirkungsperiode (= Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Abteilung für Abendländische Religionsgeschichte. Beihefte 126)

Herausgegeben von Irene Dingel, Michael Kempe und Wenchao Li, unter Mitarbeit von Marion Bechtold-Mayer. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2019. 302 pp., illus. 65,00 €

This volume is the first ever devoted exclusively to Leibniz's years in Mainz (1669–1672). While aspects of Leibniz's thought during this period have been treated in the substantial literature about the early Leibniz, zooming in on these three years gives space to deepen the understanding of these aspects and to put them into the context of European political and intellectual history.

Heinz Duchhardt gives an overview of the political role of the Electorate of Mainz that helps to understand why Leibniz took the place to be a promising starting point to launch an international diplomatic career; Irene Dingel gives an overview of Leibniz's early plans for a reunion of churches. Hartmut Rudolph and Michael Kempe argue that prominent characteristics of Leibniz's later thought – such as his emphasis on utility, demonstrability and multi-perspectivity – can already be found in legal and political writings from the time in Mainz. Gábor Gángó presents a wealth of hitherto unknown historical documents concerning the election campaign of Philipp Wilhelm von Neuburg for Poland's crown, in which Leibniz participated; Udo Fink and Stephan Meder explore Leibniz's contribution to legal reform projects that were going on in Mainz during his stay; and Charlotte Wahl has brought to light extensive source material documenting Leibniz's contribution to a whole wave of initiatives to form academies. Stefan Lorenz gives an extremely close reading of Leibniz's early fragment on divine omnipotence and human freedom; and Peter Reifenberg traces Maurice Blondel's reception of Leibniz's *vinculum substantiale* theory, connected with the main theme of the volume through the assumption that the *vinculum substantiale* can be identified with the *pneuma* that Leibniz accepted in the *Hypothesis physica nova*.

Evidently, it is impossible to do justice to this rich material within the confines of a short review. Let me therefore focus on three articles that may be most interesting from a philosophical point of view: Hubertus Busche's study of Leibniz's proto-monadological philosophy of mind, Ursula Goldenbaum's study of Leibniz's reading of Hobbes's theory of *conatus*, and Matthias Armgardt's study of Leibniz's early philosophy of law. Some critical comments came to my mind.

Interpreting the view that the mind (*mens*) is the world comprised in a point (A II, 1, 265), Busche conjectures that Leibniz took this mental point to be a tiny sphere consisting of fluid matter of light (p. 250), whose center is a super-natural active being (p. 253). Is it plausible to ascribe to Leibniz the view that one of the constituents of the mind is a material entity? Leibniz's "flower of substance" doctrine suggests a negative answer. As Leibniz maintains, the soul inheres "in a firm and inseparable flower of substance, which is mobile in a subtle way in the center of animal spirits, and is united with it substantially, such that it is not separated from it even by death" (A VI, 1, 533).

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In Leibniz's view, palingenesis supports the possibility of the resurrection because it indicates that the "core of substance" in which the soul is implanted "is so subtle that it remains in the ashes of burnt things and is able, as it were, to contract itself into an invisible centre" (A II, 1, 175). The relation between mind and subtle matter thus seems to be one of inherence and animation, and mind and subtle matter together constitute a living being that keeps its identity over time. If so, then it seems implausible to assume that Leibniz believed that the mind itself is partly *constituted* by subtle matter, which would render the mind a complete living being of its own.

Goldenbaum argues persuasively that Leibniz's desire to understand Hobbes's theory of *conatus* was the initial impulse for Leibniz's exploration of mechanics, optics and mathematics. However, her view that Leibniz's early natural philosophy should be characterized as a "speculation" (p. 193) overlooks the role which the analysis of everyday concepts plays in Leibniz's assessment of philosophical hypotheses. Leibniz holds that "most dialectical and metaphysical topics [...] occur frequently in popular speeches, writings, and thoughts, and are used everywhere in normal life" (A VI, 2, 415). He applies this insight to exclude a wide range of hypotheses: "The human mind can in fact imagine nothing other than mind [...], space, matter, motion, and the things that result from the relations of these terms to each other" (A II, 1, 34). Accordingly, Leibniz holds that bodies are characterized only by *antitypia* – the observable tendency of material objects to resist other material objects – together with extension. As he argues, extension alone cannot be enough: "For whatever humans just sense to be extended or what they just see [...], they not immediately call a body, for they think that sometimes is a mere image and *phantasma*. But what they not only see but touch, that is, in what they find *antitypia*, this is what they call body, while what lacks *antitypia*, they deny that it is a body" (A VI, 2, 443). An analogous argument holds with respect to the distinction between body and space: "we perceive that we think of space as the same when bodies change, and what we perceive ourselves to be thinking or not thinking we perceive truly" (A VI, 2, 305). Consequently, Leibniz believes that experts and laypersons share the *same* – hence, non-speculative – concept of body (A VI, 2, 443).

According to Armgardt, Leibniz uses a logical concept of simplicity when analyzing the notion of presumption (p. 149). I agree that there is a logical side to Leibniz's understanding of the relation of being-easier-than; however, there is also an ontological side. Both sides derive from Leibniz's conception of possibility, which understands possibility not only as something that excludes contradictions (A VI, 1, 540) but also as something that allows for having degrees. As Leibniz explains, "[i]mpossible is either absolute, or relative to something: relative to something either with respect to a particular time" (A VI, 1, 398). He connects the idea that some circumstances make an event easier than other circumstances with the idea that possibility has degrees. Easiness, in turn, is explained in terms of the number of requisites: "*Easy* is what is quite possible, or what has few requisites. What is *easy* in things, is *probable* in the mind" (A VI, 2, 492). Leibniz thus holds that there are objective characteristics of reality, which make one combination of things easier than another one, in the sense that one combination has fewer requisites than another. And this ontological aspect of the conception of simplicity is relevant for how we form presumptions. For instance, we should form a presumption in favor of the possibility of a thing or event because "it comes about more easily that something is possible than that something is impossible. Since in order to be possible nothing else is required than that it is supposed; whereas in order to suppose something impossible also its opposite has to be supposed at the same time" (A VI, 1, 471).

Of course, these critical remarks do not in any way detract from the value of the present volume. The articles collected here shed light on many unknown facets of Leibniz's early thought and its context. And it is worth mentioning that all steps of book production – from copy editing, to typesetting, to printing and binding – have been carried out with remarkable care.

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Isaac La Peyrère

Praeadamitae – Systema theologicum (1655)

(= *Freidenker der europäischen Aufklärung. Abt. I, Bd. 3,1–2*)

Übersetzt und mit einer Einleitung hrsg. von Herbert Jaumann und Reimund B. Sdzuj unter Mitarbeit von Franziska Borkert. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog 2019. 2 Bde., zus. LXXXVIII, 1096 S., Abb. 198,00 €

Im Jahre 1655 erschienen in Amsterdam zwei Bücher, die allerdings weder diesen Druckort, noch den Drucker und auch nicht ihren Verfasser nannten. Der Schutz der Anonymität schien angebracht angesichts dessen, was die beiden Bücher mitzuteilen hatten, erklärten sie doch, dass Adam keineswegs der erste Mensch gewesen sei, sondern bloß der Stammvater der Juden, ja, dass die Bibel weniger vom Beginn der gesamten Menschheit berichte, sondern lediglich die (Vor-)Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes erzähle, dass die Sintflut entsprechend ein nur regionales Ereignis gewesen sei, dass Menschen schon vor Adam gelebt hätten, die unabhängig von ihm von Gott geschaffen worden wären. Damit erregte der Hugenotte Isaac La Peyrère, der Autor der beiden Werke, dessen Identität schnell aufgedeckt werden konnte, erhebliches Aufsehen.

Die Aufregung über seine Positionen spiegelt sich in den zahlreichen Gegenschriften wider. Auch Leibniz hat in der Vorstellung von Präadamiten einen gefährlichen Angriff auf das Christentum gesehen (A IV, 5, 604, Z. 15). Der Skandal kam allerdings auch der Verbreitung der Werke selbst zugute. Noch im Jahr der Erstausgabe erschienen vier weitere lateinische Drucke, im folgenden Jahr eine englische und 1661 eine niederländische Übersetzung. Dabei blieb es allerdings bis in die jüngste Zeit. Dieser Umstand wirkte sich nicht günstig auf die wissenschaftliche Rezeption des Werkes aus, wie Herbert Jaumann treffend in der Einleitung zur Ausgabe erklärt:

„Wie häufig bei sogenannten entlegenen Texten der Vergangenheit leidet auch die Kenntnis über die Präadamiten-These und die betreffenden Texte La Peyrères unter dem Mißverhältnis zwischen einer vagen Vorstellung von deren Inhalten und einer scheinbar gesicherten historischen Einordnung – und daß die *Präadamiten* dabei von den ersten öffentlichen Reaktionen an immer wieder zum Objekt skandalisierender Kolportage geworden sind, ist nur die extreme Folge so vieler Unklarheiten“ (S. XIII).