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# AN ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE LEIBNIZ' NOMINALISM[1]

## 1. Introduction

Many commentators and historians take it for granted that Leibniz's ontology is "nominalist." Leibniz himself, especially in his early texts, declared that he felt strong sympathies for that school of philosophy. The republication of Nizolius' *De veris pincipiis* in 1670, for example, was partially motivated by a desire to reinstate nominalism, about which Leibniz wrote at the time that it was "the best Scholastic school" and "the most neglected one among recent authors." Affirmations of this sort are frequently found in the earliest texts, as they are in certain fragments contemporary with the *Discourse on Metaphysics*. It seems to me, however, that the most these declarations allow us to say, from a historian's perspective, is:

(1)  At least during the first part of his intellectual career, Leibniz defended the philosophical school that was called the "nominalist" school at that time.

These declarations are, on the other hand, utterly inadequate to justify a thesis such as:

(2)  The ontology of Leibniz is nominalist.

Further, Leibniz carried out a very staunch critique of relativism, and that not only concerning the relativism he attributed to Hobbes, but more generally all the philosophies that made the substantial content of truth

depend on the assigning of names. We know that he affirmed at that point (in the preface to the 1670 publication) that Hobbes was a "super-nominalist," or, to be more precise, that he was "more than nominalist" ("*plusquam nominalis*").[2] This famous declaration has encouraged many commentators to reach the following conclusion:

(3)     The ontology of Leibniz is a moderate form of nominalism.

The move from (1) to (3) seems to be quite damaging. I shall attempt to explain why. In recent ontology, "moderate nominalism" has a very precise meaning. What is called "moderate" nominalism is the position according to which, in statements of the type *a is F* (where *F* is a property and *a* a particular), (i) the predicate *F* does entail an ontological commitment, but (ii) it stands for a particular. The first condition differentiates moderate nominalism from a more radical position (such as that of Quine), the second distinguishes it from an equally moderate but more realist position, according to which *F* is a shared entity, a "character" (Bergmann) or a "universal" (Armstrong). "Moderate nominalism" is then one name for ontological particularism. More precisely, "moderate nominalism" designates the type of ontological particularism that is defended in a state of metaphysics issuing both from the debate between Moore and Stout and from positions defended by Russell on universals. It seems altogether legitimate and important to ask whether Leibniz's ontology is particularist or, rather, universalist. On this point, the fact that the problem is not posed in exactly the same terms in the seventeenth century and today does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for the historian. On the other hand, it seems equally important to note that, in the texts concerning the criticism of Hobbes, the use of definitions and the status of characters, the problem of ontological particularism *is not precisely what is debated*. Accordingly, we must recognize that, when we use the expression "moderate nominalism" to qualify the philosophy of Leibniz (and when we have the phrase *plusquam nominalis* in mind), either we are misinterpreting the texts or we are taking "moderate nominalism" in a broad rather than a precise sense.

It seems to me that there is currently a flawed consensus among specialists of Leibniz. How did such a consensus concerning such a thorny problem arise? One reason might be linked with the recent history of

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[2] "[…] ut credam ipsum Ockamum non fuisse *Nominaliorem*, quam nunc est Thomas Hobbes, qui, ut verum fatear, mihi plusquam Nominalis videtur" (A VI ii 428).

commentary on Leibniz. In his 1986 book, Benson Mates devoted a whole chapter to Leibniz's nominalism. He emphasizes in this chapter the passages concerning rational grammar and the *lingua philosophica*, where Leibniz claims that philosophers should change their ordinary way of expressing themselves. It is undeniable that Leibniz attempts in this group of texts to promote use of a philosophical language that would respect as much as possible a strong principle of ontological economy. For example, one is not to say "the heat of x has been doubled," but rather "x is twice as hot as it was."[3] Likewise, one is to avoid using the term "*animalitas*" and is to use instead the unsaturated infinitival expression, "*to aliquid esse animal*." The linking of the texts concerning the *lingua philosophica* and the passages where Leibniz claims to be a nominalist creates a striking effect. One cannot help but think that, during the 1680s, Leibniz tried to carry out a reductionist program, the first outlines of which appeared in 1670, when he wrote concerning Nizolius: "The nominalists are those who think that, individual substances excepted, there are only mere names; consequently, they eliminate the reality of universals and abstracts."[4] I believe, however, that this view of Leibniz is erroneous.

The project of rationalizing grammar, like the program for reforming the philosophical language, cannot be reduced (and far from it) to the application of certain number of nominalist principles. The project in question is simultaneously more ambitious and more specific. Leibniz wanted to lay down his own version of rational grammar. This text was to stand alongside the *Grammaire de Port Royal*, the rigor and precision of which Leibniz would have imitated, and alongside Vossius' *Aristarchus*,[5] in which he admired the scholarly mix of *a priori* and empirical considerations and the light that the discussions of "natural" grammar (common to all languages) and "artificial" grammar (unique to each individual language) shed upon each other.[6] It is certainly true that Leibniz indicates, in the various versions of this text, that it is necessary to do without abstract terms and that it is even necessary to avoid distinguishing between adjectives and substantives. This means that there really was a project to eliminate abstracts and that this project was, of course, part of a broader endeavor to compose a grammar. That is insufficient, however, to

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[3] GP VII 403 (L105); Mates (1986), p. 174.

[4] "Nominales sunt, qui omnia putant esse nuda nomina praeter substantias singulares, abstractorum igitur et universalium realitatem prorsus tollunt" A VI ii 417.

[5] *Aristarchus sive de Arte Grammatica libri septem*. The book was published in Amsterdam in 1635. Leibniz worked on the second edition (1662).

[6] A VI iv n°. 146 (1685).

affirm that nominalism would have been the result (or the aim) of the completed grammar. Indeed, other equally important issues (the analysis of adverbs, of different verbal forms, of mass terms, etc.) were to be treated within the framework of this project.

## *2. Three Different Questions*

If we cannot identify the nominalism of Leibniz with his project for linguistic reform, we can still try to evaluate it. The difficulty that the historian faces in this undertaking does not reside solely in the assembling of a corpus of relevant texts. Above all, the difficulty consists in reconstructing the question to which each text aims to provide an answer. Not only has the nominalism/realism debate taken different historical forms, but it has also been motivated by different questions. A question-mistake is to the historian what a category-mistake is to the metaphysician: something that is often difficult to perceive and correct. I distinguish three questions that seem to be interesting in the specific case of Leibniz.

In its most common meaning (to which I have already alluded), nominalism is another name for ontological particularism. Knowing whether Leibniz is a nominalist in this sense means asking whether or not he recognizes shared entities that are dependant. Thus, it means asking what he puts on the right side of the "ontological square."

N 1      Nominalism 1 is the negative answer to the question: "do the shared names refer to shared entities?"

A more recent meaning of nominalism is that of the position defended by Nelson Goodman in order to justify his "calculus of individuals." Goodman's critique of classes does, in fact, meet a more general requirement according to which there must not be an inflationist source in the way in which entites are generated. Two entities having exactly the same constituents must also be the same entities. Some, such as Dummet, have claimed that this nominalism is typically post-Fregean, in that it could be expressed only in a certain (post-Fregean) state of logic[7]. Nevertheless, if we keep to the informal version of the requirement given above (two entities having exactly the same constituents must also be the same

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7    Dummett insists on the concept-object distinction. He claims that this distinction, inherited from Frege, doesn't in itself involve a determinate ontological position, but deeply modifies the questions to which the ontologist must answer. **Cf.** Dummett, M.(1981) p. 472-475.

entities), we immediately see that this requirement shares at least a family resemblance with Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles, or, at the very least, with at least one of Leibniz's interpretations of his principle.

N 2        Goodman-like nominalism is the negative answer to the question: "may two entities with the same constituents be different?

An easy way to see that this criterion is very different from the preceding one is to note that, by this (N 2) criterion of nominalism, a realist like Bergmann would be classified as a nominalist, since Bergmann takes it to be a "fundamental principle of ontology" that two complex entities must differ in a constituent in order to "be two." We note equally that, in the metaphysics of today, a positive or a negative attitude towards the mereology of Goodman does not at all imply a parallel attitude relative to the identity of indiscernibles. These two questions are taken as independent, all the more so in that the second (the position on indiscernibles) rests in part on a posteriori considerations. The bringing together of the two questions arises only from the point of view of the historian, in the framework of the intensional mereology of Leibniz.

Finally, the medievalist Calvin G. Normore has emphasized another kind of nominalism, what he calls "medieval nominalism." Let us grant for a moment that truth is a relationship between a truth-bearer and a truth-maker. This way of seeing things is currently confined to the circles in which ontology is practiced, and, even within such circles, it is often contested. It was much more widespread in medieval metaphysics and late Scholasticism. I believe to have demonstrated that it was still fully present in what I called the "Leibnizian doctrine of truth" and that, within this doctrine, Leibniz's *notions* play the role of truth-makers. If we allow that truth has such an ontological foundation, writes Normore, nominalism is the position according to which the set of truth-bearers is larger than the set of truth-makers, since there are more truths than truth-makers[8] and more

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[8] By Abaelard, as Normore notices, this position is linked to the relation between ontology and philosophy of language. "In his ontology, Abelard seems prepared to admit two kinds of things – individual substances and individual forms. But in his philosophy of language, he is prepared to talk about statuses, dicta and natures. Statuses, dicta and natures are not things, and there can be changes in the status a thing has without any change in the thing itself. […] Abaelard does not indicate exactly whitch differences in grammatical form reveal differences in dictum or status, but what he does say suggests that differences in consignification in general would not reveal such differences. Thus, changes of gender, like changes of tense, would leave

true sentences than truths[9]. "Medieval nominalism" thus concerns the mapping (one-to-one or many-to-one) of sentences onto the states of affairs they describe:

N 3     Medieval nominalism is the negative response to the question: "do two different truth-bearers necessarily have different truth-makers?

The most reliable way to evaluate the nominalism in Leibniz is to seek out texts that could provide an answer to each of these three questions. The idea that I aim to defend here is that the third of the questions relative to nominalism has been the most neglected, even though it is certainly the most important of the three.

### 3. Was Leibniz a Particularist?

It seems to me to be very difficult to affirm that Leibniz was a particularist in his conception of properties. It is true that certain aspects of his metaphysics lead to this conclusion, especially the fact that he often mentions individual accidents such as *the wisdom of Socrates*.[10] Conversely, however, we may note that there are also passages in which references to individual accidents do not appear, and yet these passages incontestably provide a version of the ontological square.[11] Furthermore, the mention of individual accidents is not a sufficient condition for making one a particularist. The particularist affirms that individual accidents exist and that universals do not exist, or that universals are comprised of individual accidents. We do not find anything of the sort in Leibniz. He recognizes individual accidents because doing so is altogether ordinary for a mind trained in Scholastic metaphysics. Let us add that, in his early

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the dictum or status unaffected. Distinct sentences can express the same dictum ; there are more true sentences than truths." Normore, C. G. (1987) p. 208.

9   "The claim that there are more truths than truth-makers is then the claim that distinct dicta can correspond to the same item in the ontology." (ibid.).

10 See, for example, *De abstracto et concreto*, A VI iv 992-993.

11 "ENS est possibile positivum, ut homo, sphaera, calor, magnitudo. REALE est phaenomenon congruum, ut iris. CONCRETUM est ens quod a se sustentatur seu quod in altero non est, tanquam in subjecto, ut calidum. ABSTRACTUM contra, ut calor. Substantia est concretum completum, ut homo aliquis, verbi gratia, Caesar. Accidens est abstractum incompletum. Abstractum completum est ipsa essentia substantiae, verbi gratia Lentuleitas ; concretum incompletum est ens aliquod Mathematicum quod instar substantiae concipimus, ut spatium, tempus" (A VI iv 400).

years Leibniz tended to defend universals, when they were strongly contested by the likes of Nizolius, for example.

A different, but more fruiful way of approaching this question would be to ask whether Leibniz might not have been a "hidden nominalist," in the sense in which Gustav Bergmann takes this expression. In a famous article published in 1958, Bergmann wrote that the profound difference between the nominalist and the realist concerns, above all, predication. The realist thinks that verbal form of predication reflects a veritable *nexus* between two equally unsaturated or equally satured kinds of entity (an individual and a "character")[12]; conversely, the nominalist tends to treat predication not as a *nexus* but as a mapping, in accordance with Frege's functional explanation of the nature of concepts.[13] Now, in section 138 of *Generales inquisitiones*, we have a whole passage attesting to the fact that Leibniz attempted to express predication in a quasi-functional manner. Let A and B be "terms" designating "notions":

(4)        A's being B ↔ the B-ness of A

This way of proceeding seemed preferable to him because it made it possible to provide a simple explanation for hypothetical propositions:

(5)        if A is B then C is D ↔ the B-ness of A is (contains) the D-ness of C

Finally, in cases where we have an "indefinite term" (Y) in the place of A, (a variable ranging over the set of "notions" of the sort that A and B were said to stand for), there can be an expression containing an argument-place:
>"In general, if it is said that something is B, then this 'something's being B' is simply 'B-ness'. Thus, 'something's

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12 "The two notions of an individual and of a character, containing or presupposing each other to exactly the same extent, are equally "satured" or "unsatured" (Bergmann, G. (1959) p. 211). Bergmann points out, in connection with the specific claims about Frege, that one could take names in a perspicuous language in the form "Φa" just as one can take predicates in the fregean form "Fx".

13 "Nominalism is a thesis about characters. […] Frege calls them *concepts*. What, then, does he have to say about concepts ? The realist construes functions in terms of characters (concepts). Frege, proceeding in the opposite direction, as it were, construes concepts as a kind of function. In this way, the nominalism I have shown to be implicit in any analysis that starts from mapping is spread to concepts (characters)." (Bergmann, G. (1959) p. 212).

being animal' is simply 'animality' whereas 'man's being an animal' is 'the animality of man' (*Logical Papers,* p. 78)

What Leibniz writes:

(6)     something's being B $\leftrightarrow$ the B-ness of Y (*GI* §139)

Leibniz probably did not invent this way of presenting syllogistics, but simply developed a suggestion in Hobbes' *De corpore*.[14]  Thus, he found his quasi-functional approach to predication in the work of the very thinker who was "more than nominalist."

There is a difficulty when one tries to evaluate the degree of Leibniz's functionalism starting from this passage and from others of the same type. This difficulty arises from the fact that we are in the prehistory of quantification.  Incontestably, the indefinite terms of Leibniz (Y) are variables.  But are they bound or free variables?  One is sometimes tempted to insert an existential quantifier, as here in the right-hand part of (6), and certain commentators do not hesitate to do this (see W. Lenzen 1982).  But it seems to me that this modernisation is not good; in part, because Leibniz himself, even in introducing these variables, continues to quantify over "terms" according to medieval practice; and, in part and most importantly, because in introducing an '∃' one introduces also something in relation to the distinction between concept and object, whereas it is precisely this distinction that is in question here.  We add that the passage cited from the *Generales Inquisitiones* was, in the mind of Leibniz, a sample of "characteristic" more than metaphysics:  it had to do with the possibilities of a system of notation for concepts, a system that he had invented using the language of algebra.  This system of notation no doubt answered a need for functional expressions which stemmed from his mathematical research.  But Leibniz was a metaphysican.  In general he himself drew the metaphysical conclusions that he viewed as consequences, in the metalanguage, of what Bergmann would have called his "ideal language" (and which was still something quite unstable for him).

The point does not have to do with the question of knowing whether Leibniz's ontology is Fregean, in whatever way one understands this, nor whether it is Fregean in the sense constructed by Bergmann in his article of 1957.  The question is rather this:  if there is in Leibniz's logic, as the passage cited from the *Generales Inquisitiones* attest, a functional expression (*the B-ness of …*) intervening in what is considered an

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14 A VI iv 400 and Hobbes *De corpore*:  I ch. 3, §3.

acceptable expression, and perhaps even preferable, of an atomic proposition (*the B-ness of A*), does this have metaphysical consequences and if it does, are these consequences analogous to those that Bergmann detects in Frege when he speaks of "hidden nominalism"? I must admit that I am not sure how to answer that. Despite the passages I have just cited, the response to this question that can be drawn from the texts is rather negative**.** Three arguments in fact go in the direction of a negative answer. 1) According to (4) and (6) it appears that, where something is B, we have a function (*B-ness of …*) that for an argument, (Y), yields a predicative element (*B-ness of Y*). So it is true that something is B if and only if there is such a predicative element. But this leaves entirely open the question of knowing whether this predicative element is constructed in functional terms, or whether, on the contrary, it is the functional dimension which is solely a derivative reality. (One is reminded that it is the direction of the analysis – from characters (concepts) to functions or, inversely, from functions to concepts – that is here philosophically pertinent.) Now Leibniz insists on the fact that this expression of propositions (A, E, I, O) of syllogistic logic must allow for the elimination of the "abstractions of the tradition" (B-itas) in favor of other abstractions, which seem to him to be metaphysically more innocent, and which he names "logical or conceptual" ("that something is B"). This latter expression (which recalls the ancient *dictum*) remains therefore the *terminus a quo* and the functional expression that which is aimed at or constructed.[15] 2) A characteristic trait of nominalism as Bergmann conceives it is that its defenders (hidden or overt) insist on "of-ness". [16] This of-ness receives from them a primitive and central role in predication. However, this is rather the inverse of what holds true for Leibniz. An important part of the grammar of logic for him is dedicated to the elimination of obliquity (*obliquitas*), not in the sense in which this refers to indirect discourse, but rather in view of a suppression, pure and simple, of the genitive and, in general, of the oblique cases. Now an oblique case is found by Leibniz *both* in the expression of the argument of a function ("Beitas *ipsi* A") and in the predication of abstractions ("The

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[15] If this line of argument is conclusive, it means that what allowed Leibniz to claim a form of "nominalism" is rather a form of realism, according to Bergmann's distinctions.

[16] "Quine is fond of the formula that while sentences are either true or false, a predicate is either true or false *of* something. For Frege, we remember, the predicative 'is' is merely a clumsily disguised 'of'. Ofness, if I may coin a word, thus plays a crucial role in both systems". Bergmann, G. (1959) p. 224.

wise person *possesses* wisdom").[17]. 3) Final point: this attempted *reductio* has resulted in failure. Leibniz ultimately preferred a very different procedure wherein syllogistic propositions are expressed through the terms *ens* or *res*.

Nevertheless, this functional mode of expression left traces in the metaphysics itself. It also entailed an extremely strong reductionism, resulting in a metaphysics from which would have been excluded not only universals, but also all types of accidents, including individual accidents. We find an expression of this metaphysical position in the following passage (from slightly after 1686):

> "I affirm, therefore, that the substance is changed, that is, that its attributes are different at different moments, for there is no doubt about this. [...] There is no need to raise the issue of whether there are various realities in a substance that are the fundaments of its various predicates (though, indeed, if it is raised, adjunction is difficult). It suffices to posit that only substances are real things (tamquam res) and to assert truths about these" (A VI iv 996, Grua 547).

I consider this passage very important. In some respects, the metaphysics of monads is simply an extension of it. There is, in this view, a very strong tendency to reism — to speak like Bergmann once again — and this tendency does not fit well with the factualist interpretation which I myself have undertaken. For the time-being, let me simply express my perplexity, but I will come back to this point later.

### 4. Was Leibniz Goodman-type nominalist?

As concerns the consequences of applying the principle of the identity of indiscernibles to ontology, things do not seem as clear-cut to me. It was around 1676 to 1677 that Leibniz recognized the validity of the identity of indiscernibles and declared that, henceforth, "*summa similitudo*" was identity in the strict sense. Already at this point in time, he grants that the identity of indiscernibles makes for a more rigorous metaphysics, but he is also forced to recognize that it leads to a less parsimonious ontology. Indeed, the principle entails that any numerical diversity must correspond to qualitative diversity, whether apparent or hidden. That is why, for example, in cases where we are dealing with two concrete figures that are exactly alike, we must attribute a memory or a "mind" (*mens*) to them in

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17 Once more, what Benson Mates considered a thesis in favour of nominalim goes, in Bergmann's framework, in the opposite direction.

order to be able to distinguish them intrisically.[18]   The identity of indiscernibles is, thus, an ambivalent principle:  on the one hand, it guarantees a certain economy in the *construction* of entitites, but, on the other, it tends toward another form of ontological prodigality.

We can observe an evolution, concerning the scope of the identity of indiscernibles, from the period of the *Parisian notes* to that of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*.  This evolution, which has not (as far as I know) been the object of much commentary, can be designated as the shift from an ontology of *requisita* to an ontology of *notiones*.  I would like briefly to describe this shift.

In the texts from the Parisian period, Leibniz provides an explanation of reason in God through analysis.  The reason of a thing is the existence of "all of its requirements."  The will of God has certain requirements in God and others in the idea of the object.  In God, the requirements of the will are omniscience; in the idea of the object, they are "goodness, that is, the aptitude for the ends proposed by God."  He concludes that the will of God can be analyzed into three different concepts and is, therefore, not *ens per se*.  And he goes on to say:

> "I do not see where the difficulty resides in this opinion.  For, I confess that God always chooses what is most perfect, when there is something more perfect in that which may be chosen, and when he does so *salva sua libertate*. We affirm, therefore, that one cannot find two things that are equally remarkable by comparison with other things, but that one is always more perfect than the others.  This hypothesis is not at all impossible or absurd.  It is even quite probable, since the essences of things are like numbers, and there are no two equal numbers" (A VI iv 1389).

If two things are different, they are not equally remarkable.  If two things are different, they are likewise different *as reasons*.  That is the hypothesis that is deemed probable here.  It is easy to notice that this hypothesis is supported in this passage by the underlying ambiguity of the notion of "requirement".  The requirements of a thing are simultaneously that in which (the notion of) the thing can be analyzed, that which determines its existence – like "*esse extra causas*," to take the expression of Suarez – and that by virtue of which the thing can potentially please a mind and finally be chosen.  So long as the reason is conceived as the "sum of the requirements,"[19] Leibniz accordingly finds himself forced to accept

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[18] *Meditatio de principio individui* A VI iii 490-491 and Rauzy 2001, pp. 303-308.

[19] A VI iii 515.

or reject the identity of indiscernibles and has no means to formulate a more nuanced position.   In this respect, the *notiones* represent a considerable advance.   Notions are, in God, that in which consists His understanding.   They are also, for us, that which is designated by the *termini* of logic.   But the relationship of notions to existence requires a special analysis, an analysis on which Leibniz has his sights set when he indicates in the *Generales Inquisitiones* what "pleases a mind":

> "So, if there are several things, *A*, *B*, *C* and *D*, and one of these is to be chosen, and if *B*, *C* and *D* are alike in all respects (*per omnia similia*), *A* alone being distinguished from the rest in some way, then *A* will please any mind which understands this" (GI §73, *Logical Papers*, p. 65).

*A*, *B*, *C* and *D* are terms expressing notions.   How can *B*, *C* and *D* be "alike in all respects" to *A* if, according to the identity of indiscernibles, terms that are exactly alike express the same notion?   In this case, *B*, *C* and *D* should be considered as identical to *A*, and, if they are identical, it is hard to see what the basis could be for the mind in question to choose *A*.   The passage is much clearer if we suppose that *B*, *C* and *D* are not the same, but that there is nothing distinguishing them from the standpoint of the situation of choice.   If it is a question of choosing among possible worlds, for example, *B*, *C* and *D* will designate equally perfect worlds:   they are not identical, but none of their differences is *interesting* for making the choice.   In other words, *B*, *C* and *D* belong to a single class of equivalence, but this shared membership does not render them, for that, utterly identical. In some certain respect (*quatenus*), different entities are not distinguished from each other in the order of reasons.   But that does not mean that every difference among *B*, *C* and *D* can be left out of account.   Indeed, it remains important that a numerical difference can be identified among them, even if we do not know what qualitative difference founds or extends this numerical difference.   For, the mind must know that there are three notions on one side and a single one on the other in order to make its choice.   If the mind had to situate itself exclusively at the abstract level of interesting differences, it could not choose according to the procedure suggested here, namely by establishing an order among classes of equivalences and privileging the most remarkable classes (the class that is a singleton).   It is this flexibility that characterizes the ontology of *notiones* and makes it possible to distinguish more clearly an order of reasons and an order of things.   In the 1680s, the identity of indiscernibles is rather a principle set in the background, against which appear various pragmatic situations that are so many exceptions to this principle.

*5. Conclusion: Leibniz Was a "Medieval Nominalist"*

I have not been able to provide a clear cut answer to any of the questions considered here. Leibniz seems simultaneously particularist and universalist, functionalist and realist. The consequences of his principle of the identity of indiscernibles likewise seem to lead towards realism in some instances, towards nominalism in others. It is, perhaps, to this ambivalence that we are awkwardly pointing when we speak of "moderate nominalism." According to Normore's criterion ("medieval nominalism"), on the other hand, the situation is much clearer. To see how clear the situation is in this case, however, we must grant one of the theses[20]: (i) Leibniz's doctrine of truth is a correspondentist doctrine, (ii) correspondence itself is guaranteed by the relation of expression, (iii) concepts or notions are truth-makers. With this three points in mind, let us return to the difficult passage of Grua 547. It is in this passage that Leibniz likewise specifies that he is a nominalist *saltem per provisionem*.

This is a typical case of a text that is linked with the wrong question. In his nominalist program, Leibiniz indicates that he is going to get rid of all abstracts, or, better still, replace all "metaphysical" abstracts with "logical" abstracts, which seem ontologically harmless to him. One question is whether or not he managed to carry out this replacement completely (I think that he did not manage to do so). But there is another question, one that is probably more important, concerning the metaphysical meaning of this replacement. Given that the abstracts in the tradition (wisdom, heat) generally designate shared entities (universals), it was natural to take this nominalism *per provisionem* to be a form of particularism. Accordingly, the conclusion has been drawn that the passage at Grua 547 provided the answer to the question that I have called Nominalism 1.

Let us summarize the passage in its entirety. In this fragment Leibniz analyzes several manners of conceiving the reality of accidents and for each he explains why there is a difficulty. If one assumes real accidents, then either the reality is a part of that of the substance, or it adds a new reality to the substance. If they are a part of the substance, then, strictly, the substance loses its identity at each change, even if, for external reasons, it keeps its denomination. If one prefers to distinguish between an immutable and a changeable part in the substance, then the whole is itself changing and one encounters the same difficulties as if one takes the accident as an addition. If, finally, one assumes that the substance perishes

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[20] This theses are defended in Rauzy (2001).

and is reborn with each change, it is exactly as if one suppressed the substance itself, because there are in nature minute changes – change is as divisible as time – and one falls into the error of those who, like Spinoza, reduce created substance to the status of a mode.

Several arguments against the interpretation in terms of "nominalism 1" can be adduced. (1) The larger passage as a whole does actually concern the reality of accidents, but accidents do not appear as universal entities. It is altogether possible to read this text with the supposition that accidents are particulars. Accidents are entities that we need, so it seems, in order to explain the *mutatio*, the change. It is this that is the object of the question. (2) Leibniz thinks that, if he can do without abstracts in predication, he can also forego accidents in ontology. "It suffices to posit that substances alone are real things and to assert truths about these" means: we do not need the reality of accidents to account for the truth of statements, including when what is stated is a *mutatio*. Explicated in this way, the Grua 547 passage clearly tends toward medieval nominalism. We have things that are substances. The notions of these substances are sufficient to account for a very great variety of truths concerning them. We do not need to add to the ontology an entity for each new truth (an accident). A notion, in the sense in which Leibniz uses it, is the truth-maker common to a whole series of truths. It is also a sufficient truth-maker. Between truths and notions, there is, indeed, a relationship of many-to-one. This is, it seems to me, the purest kind of medieval nominalism.

It seems that this "medieval nominalism," contrary to appearances, is more factualist than reist. The argument is as follows. Consider a sort of entities, $M$, such that an entity $m$ of this sort is sufficient to be the ground of truth for truths expressed by "m is $\Phi$", as well as for more complex truths which express a relation or a change. For Leibniz, the entities that satisfied this condition were, successively, "notions" and then "monads." If the $m$'s are things (res), it is quite clear that this necessary condition is not satisfied. One who takes the *thin* object, or substance, and not the substance together with something else (the unity of different states, a 'law of development,' etc.) to be the ground of truth for the truth expressed by "m is $\Phi$" will need different truth-makers. It is this demand for economy that guided Leibniz in the construction of his ontology and not a possible position in the famous debate over universals.

To appreciate the significance that a position of this type can have for us, let us close by emphasizing the coherence of the metaphysical theses defended by Leibniz. Concerning the identity of indiscernibles, the point

is that qualitative identity and non-qualititative identity are not separable. It is not a question of asserting that the one is superior to the other or more significant or even prior to the other. The *notions* and, later, the *monads*, are entities that are constructed in such a way that one cannot separate their *haecceitas* and *quidditas*. It is the same entity that is described now by means of the one, now by the other – often also by means of both at once, as for example in moral judgments. The intuition is that we must have *one* type of entity in our ontology that supports this and that is sufficient. It is this intuition which, according to the thesis of the present paper, is profoundly nominalist. An analogous remark applies as well to the usage of the intensional mereology and possible functionalism of Leibniz. The algebra of concepts furnished *one* type of unique and differentiated entity. The distinction of complete and incomplete seemed very important to him because it allowed him to distinguish two types of notions while nonetheless affirming: (i) that complete and incomplete notions are equally *notions*, and (ii) that, in "metaphysical rigor," only that which is complete exists. This nominalism should rather therefore be designated as a form of monism. This is why the reference to Spinoza, even if negative, has remained very important.

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