

Plastic Surgery for the *Monadology*

Leibniz via Heidegger

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Leibniz's *Monadology* and Heidegger's 'The Thing' are surely among the two greatest short works of philosophy ever written. Along with their equal brevity, they share a number of strengths and defects. As its very title suggests, the *Monadology* considers the reality of *unified* objects (*monas* = unit), and the means by which they relate or fail to relate to other objects. Likewise, Heidegger's 'The Thing' describes a jug as an inner reality that exceeds both the representations we have of it and the history by which it was produced. Moreover, both authors realise that individual things are not bland stumps of featureless unity. Leibniz calls his monad a living mirror, while Heidegger's thing is likewise described as a mirror-play of the cryptic fourfold.

There is also a shared prejudice found in these authors, since both allow for only two separate levels in the cosmos. For Leibniz there is an absolute distinction between unified monads and accidental aggregates; any entity that exists can only be one or the other. For Heidegger, what lies behind present-at-hand entities is the being of those entities: no further levels lie 'beneath' that being, or 'above' presence-at-hand. In other words, there is no continued regress of objects and their parts in

either Leibniz or Heidegger. Instead, there is simply one plane of self-contained realities, which can then be aggregated or unveiled in a second plane of relations. There are no levels of the world, no endless descent of objects wrapped in objects such as found today in the writings of Bruno Latour (*Pandora's Hope*) or Alphonso Lingis (*The Imperative*).

Finally, and perhaps most controversially, the philosophies of Leibniz and Heidegger both entail some form of *indirect* causation. For both philosophers, one individual thing can never touch another directly. This is proverbial in the case of Leibniz and his windowless monads, which communicate only through God. But it becomes equally clear in Heidegger's case if we submit him to a mildly irreverent reading. For consider the following: Heidegger's 'thing,' just like his earlier equipment or tool-being, withdraws from all human representation. No perception or concept of the hammer ever fully exhausts its silent underground reality; perfect representation is always obstructed by a hidden surplus in entities. But contrary to the usual interpretation of Heidegger, this surplus cannot possibly come from an unconscious praxis lying beneath perception, since praxis can be surprised every bit as much as perception and theory can. Hammers shatter in our hands and startle us; trains topple from viaducts, killing dozens; construction workers plummet from broken scaffolding into the sea. The former practical use of all these tools was apparently blind to a creeping internal rot in the objects upon which they relied. From this we see that both theory and praxis are equally distant from the autonomous life of Heidegger's tools. The thing is equally resistant to theoretical *and* practical efforts to probe its depths, since it withdraws from all relations with human beings. Heidegger's tool-analysis is not an account of the praxis lying before all theory, but demonstrates instead that the reality of tool-beings lies prior to praxis, theory, and anything else that humans might accomplish. All of this should have been clear several decades ago, but was obscured by the recent fashion for pragmatism, which falsely salutes Heidegger's tool-analysis for merely repeating the earlier insights of John Dewey.

Second, things or objects (we should reject Heidegger's pedantic critical distinction between these terms) do not just withdraw from their relations with theoretical and practical humans. Instead, objects withdraw *from each other* as well. A snowflake, for instance, must be viewed as a private subterranean reality never

exhausted by human efforts to probe it. But rather than withdrawing only from humans, the snowflake also recedes from its causal interaction with any glass window, raven's beak, tree branch, wind, or flame. All of these entities fail to exhaust the reality of the snowflake every bit as much as humans do. In this sense, Heidegger's tool-analysis holds good for even the most stupefied forms of inanimate causation. But this means that the linguistic turn and all other forms of the philosophy of human access are shattered by Heidegger in a single blow. The relation between humans and the world is now merely a subset of the general relations between one withdrawn object and another. Philosophy becomes object-oriented philosophy.

And this is why Heidegger, who has never been called an occasionalist by anyone until now, ultimately needs to account for some form of *indirect* causation, insofar as he eliminates all possibility of direct contact between snowflake, window, and flame. Historically speaking, the most famous kind of indirect causality is occasional causation. For occasionalism, if two substances cannot touch each other directly, then only God makes their contact possible. This idea is now widely mocked as an asylum for ignorance—and rightly so, given that occasionalism tells us nothing about the mechanism through which God brings about causality. But even if hasty appeals to God are the last refuge of cheaters, the problem of indirect causation remains real. I would go even further, and maintain that indirect causation (which I prefer to call *vicarious* causation) is the central problem of metaphysics today. After all, it would be uncontroversial (if not universally convincing) to suggest that Heidegger remains the philosophical horizon of our time. And we have seen that Heidegger's philosophy entails that things withdraw from all relations with one another. Yet things obviously do still relate to one another, since that is what we find in the world: objects and their interactions. We need to know how objects can simultaneously be both utterly autonomous things and partners in causal influence. This is enough to make vicarious causation a central metaphysical problem for us. And that entails that the old corpse known as 'occasionalism' only needs a bit of plastic surgery to become presentable once again.

The phrase 'occasionalism' sometimes refers broadly to all philosophies in which objects have no direct interaction. At other times it refers more narrowly only to theories of continuous creation, in which one moment of time is disconnected from any other. Because of this discrepancy, conflicts sometimes occur over which philosophers should be classified as occasionalists, frequently resulting in hair-splitting distinctions. For our purposes it is useful to adopt the broadest possible definition of the theory, and define occasionalism as any theory in which no substance (other than God) touches other substances directly. In this sense we can identify three golden ages of indirect causation: the Islamic occasionalism of Medieval Iraq, European occasionalism from Descartes through Berkeley, and the slow and quiet resurgence of occasionalism in contemporary thought.

Occasionalism is the single greatest contribution of Islamic philosophy to the thought of the West. But its origins lie in theology. For certain strands of Islam, the unity and power of Allah are so overwhelming that not only is the power of *creation* denied to entities other than God, but any causal power whatsoever is denied. As a result, God alone is left as the sole cause of everything that happens. Islamic occasionalism as an explicit doctrine can be traced to the views of Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari, who publicly defected from the liberal Mu'tazilite school at the age of forty, and died in 935 AD. His followers, an intensely conservative group known as Ash'arites, flourished first in Basra and later in Baghdad, and defended *both* of the central theses usually associated with occasionalism. First, they saw it as impossible that any causal relations exist between any two objects without the intervention of God. Second, they defended a theory of continuous creation, since neither substantial atoms nor their accidents can endure for two successive moments and must constantly be recreated from scratch. In the West, the best-known member of the Ash'arite current is al-Ghazali (1058–1111), author of the celebrated polemical work *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, with its violent assault on the Islamic Neo-Platonism of al-Farabi and Avicenna. This book includes the famous claim, ostensibly backed up by a verse from the *Qur'an*, that fire does not burn cotton—only *God* burns cotton.

Meanwhile, there seem to be no Medieval European or Christian philosophers who are occasionalists in the strict sense found among the Arabs.

Nicholas of Autrecourt (c. 1298–1369) may come closest to fitting the bill, but there are good reasons why he is often called ‘the medieval Hume’ but never ‘the medieval Malebranche’. Indirect causation first appears in Europe for very different reasons from in the Islamic world. This happens in the philosophy of Descartes, for whom thinking and extended substance are so radically different as to be mutually *incommunicado*. Meanwhile, God’s role as the third kind of substance (the only infinite kind) ensures that a theory of continuous creation is also needed: bodies and souls are too frail to endure for more than an instant. But while Descartes holds that communication between mind and body or mind and mind require the causal intervention of God, the same is not true of the collision between bodies. There is no ‘body-body problem’ for Descartes, as there was for the most radical Muslims. Since all physical objects are part of the same extended substance, there is no philosophical or even theological problem when fire burns cotton, only a scientific one. With this step, Descartes is able to fend off miracles from any direct role in scientific explanation. But physical individuals soon return to the stage in the writings of Géraud de Cordemoy (1626–1684) and Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) and this rebirth of individual physical substances belatedly brings Europe to face the more global predicament of the Ash’arite theologians. Occasional cause will once again play a role in the physical interaction between objects. Physics becomes metaphysics once more.

Here I will retain the term ‘occasionalism’ even for those philosophies that ignore the radical theory of continuous creation; our concern here is not with subtle distinctions between various related positions, but with the weightier philosophical issue of whether individual objects are granted sovereign power. In Spinoza the utter immanence of God ensures not only that attributes such as mind and body cannot communicate, but also that any causation among modes or individual entities would be a mere surface, a sound-and-light show dominated by the deeper omnipresence of the one Substance-God. For Spinoza, fire burning cotton can mean *nothing but* God burning cotton, since there is nothing but God in the first place. As for Leibniz, the need for indirect causation arises from the absolute difference between simple monads and composite aggregates; since every relation could at best be a composite, Leibniz needs to compress each thing’s relations into its interior in order to submit them to the monad’s own simplicity. And for Berkeley

each perception floats alone, with nothing linking it to other perceptions in any way. This means that God is needed to coordinate the various perceptions, and again there is a theological motive for this—to give humans an artificial sense of stable laws of nature, all the better to bewitch us with surprising miracles later on, thereby recruiting us into the true faith. In fact, of all the great philosophers of the seventeenth century only John Locke escapes the shadow of indirect causation, which I would nominate as the central concept of all modern philosophy. Communication first becomes a problem in Europe due to the vast difference in kind between thought and matter. But this soon expands to include the incommunicability of atoms with one another (as in the French successors of Descartes) and the missing link between one perception and another (as in Berkeley). Pushing forward in history, Berkeley's views on the purely external or indirect connection between events and their lack of a substantial underpinning provides the initial spark for the theories of Hume, which in turn were only answered by Kant's famous Copernican Revolution in the 1780s. In this sense, seventeenth-century philosophy is still with us even now. Occasionalism is indirectly responsible for the paralysing Kantian impasse of contemporary philosophy, with its endless critical manoeuvring around the supposedly unique gap between humans and world, whether this gap be expressed in analytic or continental terminology.

But there is even clearer evidence for the role of occasional or indirect causation in present-day philosophy. Occasionalism as I have defined it includes one necessary thesis, as well as a second 'luxury thesis' not found in all members of this school. The *sine qua non* of any occasionalist theory is the impossibility of direct communication between two distinct objects. The luxury thesis is the impossibility of communication between different instants of time. And even in the twentieth century we find good examples of both standpoints. The lack of direct communication between objects, with their secret underground linkage in a deeper unity, is found most recently in Deleuze's puzzling book *The Logic of Sense*. If singularities have one side pointing toward the rumbling, electrified union of the virtual, these entities themselves remain simulacra, and as such they are sterile surface effects rather than autonomous objects with a private inner life. At most, the simulacra 'resonate' with each other rather than causing anything to happen. Not

surprisingly, the case of Deleuze is similar to that of Spinoza, since the immanence of the virtual relieves the simulacra of any direct causal duties. Yet the 'luxury thesis' is missing in Deleuze; he has no theory of continuous creation. Since everything is in becoming for Deleuze no less than for Bergson, there is never any isolated static instant that would need bridges to touch any other instant. But we *can* find Luxury Occasionalism in the early writings of Emmanuel Levinas, who defines substance as an individual thing that takes a foothold amidst anonymous being and is closed off from contact with everything else. Moreover, the substance is a hypostasis, and occurs *only in a single instant*. Unlike Deleuze (who is known to have read Malebranche intensely in his youth) Levinas openly cites the French occasionalists as his ancestors. Since each instant is utterly closed off in itself, there is no Bergsonian flux of becoming to explain the passage between instants. Instead, there is only the sudden rupture of the instant through the Other. Time *is* the Other for Levinas, a step entirely unnecessary for Deleuze, whose world is saturated with difference from the start.

This brings us back to Heidegger. My thesis, admittedly unusual, is that Heidegger's philosophy makes sense only if extended into a full-blown theory of indirect causation. Although it may seem surprising, Heidegger's books entail *both* major theses of occasionalism. On the one hand, Heidegger meets the basic qualification by allowing for no direct contact between humans and things, since we encounter things only as present at hand, never precisely in their being. As we have seen above, this is true for both theoretical and practical behavior. The fact that Dasein is always characterised by being-in-the-world does not change the fact that the world is forever veiled from sight, at least in part. Heidegger simply should have pushed the situation a step further, à la Cordemoy, Malebranche and the Ash'arite Muslims, and seen that there is a world-world (or body-body) problem no less than a Dasein-world problem. Without reviving the body-body problem in contemporary philosophy, we will remain stranded in a self-constructed ghetto of linguistic turns, hermeneutic horizons, and power plays; as long as we remain absent from the real world, the natural sciences will continue to feast upon its delicacies without our being able to share in them. The secret insight at the heart of Heidegger's philosophy is solely this: the being of a thing is always distinct from its relations; the reality of cotton is never exhausted by the landscape artist who paints it, the textile worker

who uses it, or the fire that burns it. And, nonetheless, all of these entities still must interact even as they withdraw infinitely from one another. This obviously requires some sort of indirect causation. Instead of lazily invoking some God or virtuality as the cause of all while failing to explain the mechanisms of this cause, we must develop a notion of vicarious causation in which objects relate to one another by means of more secular messengers, intermediaries, deputies, or other peripheral stooges. The central problem of post-Heideggerian metaphysics is that of the vicarious causation between individual substances. This is why Leibniz is so important for us today, even if his solutions must be rejected, since the reasons needed to reject them will lead us closer to the true path.

But as Levinas saw, the luxury version of occasionalism is also implicit in Heidegger's system: for there is no real concept of becoming in Heidegger, no real connection between instants of time. Unfortunately, there is a lingering tendency to conflate Heidegger with Bergson on the issue of time. Since Heidegger criticises the concept of time as a sequence of now-points, it is often held that there can be no isolated 'now' for Heidegger, and that somehow the moments of time must flow into one another. But this is false. It is certainly true that time always has a threefold structure for Heidegger based on the ambiguous structure of 'thrown projection.' But the 'past' of thrownness and the 'future' of projection have nothing to do with a *real* past or future. If we could stop the flow of time in a single frame of presence, Heidegger's theory of temporality would still work perfectly well, since this single 'now' would still have the threefold structure of thrown projection. The same cannot be said of Bergson (and by implication, Deleuze) for whom there is truly no such thing as an instant. For Bergson, there is no way we can even *imagine* the thought experiment of freezing time in a single instant. Levinas saw this difference between Bergson and Heidegger with absolute clarity. His mournful sense that the Heideggerian 'now' is a stagnant, insular present led Levinas to risk everything on the famous dice-throw of 'the Other': the ever-surprising alterity that ruptures the instant and injects novelty from the outside.

Let this serve as a brief history of occasionalism, and of the evolving fate of indirect cause in our own day. Leibniz can serve as a useful guide in reconstructing metaphysics for three reasons. First, he realises that individual objects exceed any composite or aggregate into which they might fall, as we also learn from Heidegger's

tool-analysis. Second, he takes account of the mirroring relations between one object and another, as also described in Heidegger's essay 'The Thing'. But finally, and most importantly, Leibniz reminds us that an ontology of the individual thing should also pave the way for a full-blown speculative metaphysics of space and time, the soul, divinity, and the moral order of the world, all of it based on supreme confidence in the power of speculative reason. Here we have something that cannot be learned from Heidegger, or indeed from any contemporary thinker, since all this traditional metaphysics is utterly unfashionable and seemingly unsalvageable. But what if the cautious, dithering, critical, methodological, textual, linguistic methods of philosophy today look as dated in the year 2050 as Leibnizian metaphysics seemed to look in 1999? What if a surprising new turn in philosophy suddenly makes Kant's revolution look hopelessly dated, to such an extent that we in the younger generation will barely be able to communicate with our former dissertation advisors? I am not only saying that this could happen—I am saying that it *should*. All of our energy should be devoted to making this happen in our own lifetimes. One good definition of philosophy is this: try to determine the dominant ideas of today that bore you the most, and then discover a way to make them obsolete. The philosophy of human access ought to bore everyone by now; by the same token, the philosophy of objects ought to inspire us all. Leibniz can help us arrive at our destination.

—MONADS AND COMPOSITES

The *Monadology* consists of ninety brief and lucid paragraphs—a short enough work that I am sometimes tempted to learn it by heart. Since the work is not arranged into subsections, our first order of business should be to identify its structure. It seems easiest to split the work into four parts. Part One (1–37) gives a general ontology of substance and relation, and develops the structure of the monad in some detail. Part Two (38–60) turns toward a speculative theology. Part Three (61–83) discusses the relation of body and soul. The tiny Part Four (84–90) considers the governance and moral order of the world, and concludes the work.

As a general rule, parts two through four are avoided by present-day readers as if they were a toxic waste dump. In our time only the most antiquated philosophers would make confident, rationalistic deductions about the nature of

God and the moral world order. Most readers will feel that all of this belongs at best to the realm of faith, and that to bring it into philosophy would be the height of naiveté. There are good reasons for this prejudice, which cannot be challenged directly without lapsing into a badly outdated, even fossilised metaphysics. It is somewhat different with the opening part, from paragraphs 1–37. After all, many features of the monad are surprisingly compatible with contemporary thought, especially if we cross Leibniz with Heidegger, as I propose. Any metaphysics of God and the moral order still seems hopelessly distant from philosophy in the year 2011. But perhaps by simply refining the concept of the monad, the outlines of a new metaphysical continent will begin to come into view; if a five-year plan for the rebirth of monadology seems too optimistic, a twenty-year plan seems more realistic. The ultimate goal is as follows: we need a type of philosophy that can withstand all the various critiques of presence and ontotheology, while also outflanking the countless stale doctrines that privilege human access to the world over the structure of the world in its own right.

Let's begin with a quick overview of *Monadology* 1–37, pausing along the way to assess its strengths and weaknesses, with Heidegger as our frequent guide. Everything starts with the first six paragraphs. Here we find the root of Leibniz's entire philosophy: the distinction between substance and aggregate, simple and composite. Anything formed of components is an aggregate; the ultimate pieces of all composite things must be simple, not further reducible, under pain of infinite regress. And since composite things are formed of parts, they come to be and pass away in time according to the (indirect) interaction of these simple parts—the monads. Insofar as monads have no parts, they neither change nor decay, since there is no way for them to arise or pass away. For this reason they must be created and annihilated all at once, by a single almighty agent whose name is too obvious to mention.

Although several key deductions in these early paragraphs are unconvincing, the basic metaphysical insight is solid, and deserves to be defended even now. Heidegger paid great attention to the distinction between beings and their being, generally known as the 'ontological difference'. Lying behind any chisel or melon as objects of perception, there are the chisel and melon as unnoticed objects of use. But even behind any use of these objects lie the dark crystals of chisel-being and melon-

being, which withdraw from praxis every bit as much as from the labours of theory. Hence we can describe a universal opposition between the *being* of objects as inscrutable withdrawn energies, and their *presence* as the manner in which they become accessible to perception or use. Perception and theoretical comportment are two obvious ways in which things become present, but practical handling is another, even if largely an unconscious one. For if we imagine an apocalyptic scenario in which all sentient creatures have been destroyed, and then imagine further an old rusty chisel toppling from a shelf to strike a rotting melon, it is by no means the case that chisel-being and melon-being would come directly into contact. It is not merely the presence of a human being in the vicinity that causes the withdrawal of being behind beings. Humans do not have a unique power of distortion that changes entities into present-at-hand caricatures of themselves. Even sheer physical causation is still a form of presence-at-hand, since it is relational, and relations do not exhaust their terms. Score a point here for Leibniz, whose swashbuckling precritical style allows him to see the problem of indirect causation between inanimate beings such as cotton and fire. Heidegger, obsessed with human Dasein's moody attachment to world, overlooks the problem completely.

This brings us to a crucial point that has been missed by others. Notice that all forms of presence-at-hand are types of *relation*. Perception, cognition, practical handling, and brute causality all involve relations of separate terms—terms never adequately deployed in their current relations, or in any possible relations for that matter. The components of any such aggregate always lie outside of it, absent rather than present. In this sense, Leibniz is clearly right to say that all aggregates are made of components. Where he goes wrong, like most philosophers, is with his assertion that the components must be simple. I nominate this assertion as the central disaster of Leibnizian philosophy, since it commits him to two untenable positions, both of them centerpieces of his system:

(1) By opposing simple monads to composite aggregates, Leibniz remains trapped in a two-layered universe. The bottom floor of reality is made up of simple substances, while the upper storey is formed of complex aggregates. Any point in reality can belong only to one or the other. A diamond (substance) or pair of diamonds (aggregate) must either be substance or aggregate, and can never display both aspects at the same time. Heidegger is trapped in the same difficulty, since for

him the being of the hammer does not have a further being lying behind it. The regress stops at the level of withdrawal; this gives us a single, permanently fixed layer of silent subterranean tool-being, painted over by a shimmering but equally fixed facade of present-at-hand surface effects. To oppose this two-world theory, we need a doctrine of the *levels* of the world. Such a theory can already be found implicitly in Locke, who observed against Leibniz that one soldier is no more inherently simple than an entire army, insofar as any soldier is made up of a vast armada of eyes, arms, hair, and blood cells. Unfortunately, Locke secures this victory at too high a cost—namely, he sacrifices everything autonomous and real in a substance by treating it as merely the product of an arbitrary human concept. A similar trade-off of victory and defeat can be found today in the set-theory ontology of Alain Badiou, for whom a thing is one only when *counted* as one by some external agent (and this generally seems to be the *human* subject for Badiou). Here is one of the first metaphysical conclusions we are forced to reach in this article. In order to save the levels of the world, we are forced to embrace the horrific *infinite regress*: ‘oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and Crime—of Agony and of Death!’¹ Unfortunately, the only two alternatives are immeasurably worse than this supposed engine of philosophical misery: either a finite regress, or no regress at all. And for various reasons not worth developing here, both of these alternatives are undercut completely by Heidegger’s chief insights.

(2) By asserting that monads are simple, Leibniz is faced with the crucial problem of how they can differ from each other at all, since if they were all merely unities then there would be nothing to distinguish them. Individuating features are needed. As everyone knows, Leibniz distinguishes the monads by means of their perceptions—but purely *internal* perceptions, placed there by God in pre-established harmony. In short, the dogma that monads must be simple is what paints Leibniz into a corner from which only God can rescue him. While indirect causation is required by any radical theory of substance, divine occasional causation is not. Occasionalism must be remodelled as vicarious causation—a local bridge between otherwise unbridgeable objects in their dark underground pulsation. But if substance is not simple, it also need not be eternal, nor must all substances be created or ended all at once at the dawn of the cosmos.

Yet these are merely negative statements, and it is a cheap manoeuvre always to be satisfied with critique; philosophy should not really be a form of 'critical thinking', since any rabbit or monkey can easily be trained to knock dishes from tables and shatter them. Philosophy should actually be a superior form of *gullibility*, entailing a maximum commitment to sharply proposed concepts that elude the polished, bland and evasive positions of any given era, no matter how 'critical' these positions may seem at the time. And already we are forced to be gullible and raise two additional old-fashioned metaphysical problems that cannot yet be answered. First, we saw that the disappearance of simple monads ends the implication that they must begin or end all at once. Now it needs to be asked whether this implies an infinite regress of time no less than of objects and their elements. Second, given that simplicity is no longer the principle of endurance, and given that substances are defined by their withdrawal from relations rather than by lasting a good long while on the clock or calendar, it needs to be asked where the root of all durability lies.

We now turn to paragraphs 7–11 of the *Monadology*, that famous portion of the work where we learn that monads have no windows. For Leibniz, what strips monads of their windows is less their substantiality than their simplicity. Monads need to be different from one another, and if this difference were directed toward the outside it would implicate the monad in composites, which by definition is impossible. That is why the qualities of the monad are compressed into its interior. These qualities are nothing more than *relations* to other monads, and the relations are altogether internal, placed there by the sole and supreme cause. A similar problem arises with Heidegger if we push him far enough, since any theory in which objects radically withdraw will tend automatically toward occasionalism. Given that Heidegger is still the philosophical horizon of our time, this means that indirect causation probably lies very much in our future. But Heidegger also never addresses this issue explicitly, and hence risks nothing, whereas Leibniz does address it and risks much. Yet we must also reject the Leibnizian account of windowlessness, which he links with the supposed simplicity of the monad. For an object not to have windows really means that it recedes from full participation in any composites, and is never truly exhausted by them; it *does not* mean that the object is simple. What neither Heidegger nor Leibniz ever accepted was that an object is neither inherently

substance nor aggregate, but simultaneously *both*: the jug is substance insofar as it stands in itself and withdraws from all possible contexts, but aggregate insofar as it is formed of pieces. The interwoven ambiguity of part and whole is thus the place where vicarious causation must be sought. To begin with a rigid, fixed distinction between simple and composite merely ensures that no communication can ever take place across the great divide, and God must then be called in for even the smallest of odd jobs.

Turning to *Monadology* 12–17, we find additional remarks on the inner life of the monad. Perception in monads is not the same as full apperception, which only certain monads have. Furthermore, all monads are driven forward by *appetition*. And here, Leibniz trumps Heidegger on both counts. Despite Heidegger's feeble attempts in the 1929–30 lectures on animal life to give us a clearer demarcation between humans, animals and stones, he basically remains trapped in a position where everything is either human Dasein or mere present-at-hand slag, as is clearly seen from his avoidance of the theme of *plants*. Leibniz, like Whitehead after him, turns the differences between kinds of monads into mere differences of degree. This has the helpful effect of stripping human consciousness of its status as an all-important, pampered dimension of the universe, and allows for all objects to be incorporated into a single theory on equal footing. In this respect Heidegger's position is a relapse behind Leibniz's no less than Kant's. A similar relapse can be felt in the respective positions of Leibniz and Heidegger on body and soul. Although Heidegger gives us the obligatory twentieth-century sneers at the separation of mind and body, it is not a problem that he effectively solves. No one has less to say about the human body than Heidegger—let alone such entities as rocks, dirt, atoms, gravel and sludge. Heidegger simply abandons physical interactions to natural science, and does nothing to establish philosophy's right to continue employment outside the ghetto of human experience.

As for appetition, Heidegger takes no account of it. Contrary to popular belief, there is no concept of 'becoming' anywhere in Heidegger's philosophy, and we need one for our own use if we are to avoid lapsing into a theory of completely isolated instants, and thus into the need for some sort of continuous creation theory (as Levinas correctly discerns). For as stated earlier, Heidegger's threefold structure of ecstatic temporality is instantaneous, and has no connection with any real past or

future. It is a temporality of the present—halting time in its tracks by means of witchcraft would do nothing to threaten Heidegger's theory. It is Bergson and Deleuze who are the clearest heirs of the theory of appetition (not even Whitehead gets the point) since their doctrine of becoming *does* rule out any possibility of isolated instants. However, this merely gives them the different problem of accounting for how individual things and instants crystallise from a deeper becoming.

The theme of perception continues in *Monadology* 18–30. Only human monads are regarded as full-blown souls, a status that requires both distinct perception and memory. While debatable, this definition is well worth taking seriously—far more so than Heidegger's abortive efforts in the 1929–30 course, which treat the entire problem by means of the as-structure. Indeed, one is struck by the far greater sophistication and more contemporary attitude of Leibniz, who anticipates both Freud and science fiction: we do continue to perceive even while sleeping, and there may also be numerous different forms of sense-experience of which we are not consciously aware. Furthermore, Leibniz has a number of interesting ideas for characterising the state of inanimate perception, all of them worth taking seriously; meanwhile, Heidegger offers us nothing but silence when it comes to the inanimate realm. For Leibniz, an inanimate object resembles a dizzy child who has spun too many times in a circle, and no longer perceives one thing more clearly than another. By contrast, the human soul has memory, whose sequential structure imitates reason. Humans also perform reflective acts, which by encountering the 'I' let us eventually discover being, substance, simples and composites, the immaterial, and finally God. While all of this remains uncertain, at least it is a guess at the riddle. When Leibniz denies to human being the status of a unique ontological fissure in the cosmos, and offers a general theory of objects holding good for everything, he opens up the possibility of finding a better explanation for human uniqueness than the Heideggerian pistol shot of the as-structure. Under the circumstances, distinct perception, memory and reason are as good a guess as any as to what comprises the unique human properties. My point here is that any good metaphysics will have to deal with this theme in a way much closer to Leibniz than to Heidegger, who has less to say on the features of human uniqueness than is commonly believed.

We now come to *Monadology* 31–38, the transition to the more speculative portions of the work. Here we find the two great Leibnizian principles of contradiction and sufficient reason. cursory examination will show that these are not logical principles of the world, but ontological ones based on the nature of objects themselves. The principle of contradiction is based on the identity of objects, and this identity is easily upheld against critiques such as found in Derrida's 'White Mythology', which confuse the lack of literal *meaning* of a thing for a lack of univocal *being*. Against this, Aristotle is right when he says that the same thing would be 'a trireme, a wall, and a man' if Derrida or Anaxagoras were correct. Meanwhile, sufficient reason stems from the obviously composite nature of all non-simple situations—any simple situation is not as simple as it appears, and can be decomposed into a massive aggregate of contributing factors that are the sufficient reason for why it is one way rather than another. We should avoid the present-day fad of 'calling into question' or 'problematizing' every classical principle of philosophy. We can simply accept contradiction and sufficient reason as valid principles grounded in the nature of reality. The attempt to call them into question often has good motives—the wish that other suns will rise, that the history of philosophy could still take an unexpected course, instead of having dry schoolmasters hammer Aristotelian logic into us for generations to come. But this is a false opposition. The return to metaphysics, to identity and reality, can be far wilder and more psychedelic than anything ever scraped up by postmodernism. Any era in philosophy is defined more by its instincts than by its specific theories. What is most important in the coming years is that we lose our collective instinct for the reflexive step backwards, the smirk, the scare quotes, the puns, and the hunt for hypocrisies in the forest of power. Instead, we need to retrain our instincts toward a childlike delight in the frank, clean positions taken by classical philosophy, while also cultivating the ability to twist these positions in unusual ways.

Against current fashion, then, we can accept the principles of contradiction and sufficient reason without irony. However, we need not and cannot accept Leibniz's passage from sufficient reason to God. For Leibniz, since an infinity of past causes enter into his act of writing at this very moment, we have an infinite chain of contingent events; the ultimate necessity can only lie outside this chain, and this necessity must be God. While wishing to avoid the usual reflexive avant-garde

suspicion against the merest mention of God in a philosophical text, we also need not accept a proof as shaky as this one, which displays the same needless fear of infinite regress as did the supposed simplicity of the monad.

—METAPHYSICS RECONSTRUCTED

Let's close with a brief summary of what has been discussed. The shared insight of Leibniz (explicitly) and Heidegger (implicitly) is that objects lie deeper than all composites. Since this means that they lie outside all relations, some form of indirect causation is needed in order that they can ever relate. The shared weakness of these thinkers is that both believe in a two-layered universe and thereby miss the endless interlocking levels of the world. They are also wrong to imply that windows do not exist in substance, for substance is also a composite when viewed from the side of its component elements, and to be a composite means nothing other than to link one's own pieces together. And if things cannot relate directly, they can still relate by proxy, since the *images* of two things come into proximity inside a single perception by some other entity. The secret of vicarious causation is this: things can relate insofar as they are components on the interior of a third substance. This third substance is not a single flavorless God for all interactions, but a different third substance in each case—a local ward boss who keeps the water and natural gas flowing between things. What we need, then, is a metaphysics of objects that accounts for both (a) the levels of the world and (b) the vicarious causation between separate objects. Such a metaphysics should preserve the undoubted mirror-play between objects: not through Leibnizian theodicy and pre-established harmony, but in a manner more reminiscent of Heidegger's fourfold mirror-play.

Such a metaphysics should also account for time and space in an object-oriented way. The famous Leibnizian concept of time and space as systems of relations between monads is curiously absent from the *Monadology*, but should be mentioned here anyway. This theory fails, just as the theory that the monad is only a tangle of perceptions must fail. After all, to reduce something to its relations leaves nothing—no substance, nothing outside the current relations, nothing that can possibly change. Time and space do have a reality apart from all relations. However, they are not objective, present-at-hand containers in which everything else unfolds, which means that Clarke is just as wrong as Leibniz. Since nothing exists but objects,

time and space must be expressible in terms of the structure of objects. As I have argued elsewhere,² space is the firewall that forms between objects, while time is the very interior of objects. Space, especially, has been badly neglected by philosophers. And if space describes the very principle of separation between objects, this means that it lies at the heart of any object-oriented philosophy. Do not be surprised if the next fifty years of philosophy come to be dominated by space, after the long reign of time when space was dismissed as something relatively obvious.

Such a metaphysics must also revive dozens of traditional questions currently found only in the supposed naive gaffes of beginners. We still know nothing of what it means for an object to endure through time, and little about the exact difference between human and non-human perception. Although this article has argued briefly for the infinite regress, it has not discussed the converse theme of infinite progress, or whether a single universe contains everything. More controversially, it would also be interesting to tackle the questions of God, the immortality of the soul, the justice or injustice of the world, and of reward and punishment for evildoers. It is evasive to take a blasé distance from all these issues and leave them to faith, just as it was evasive for philosophers to abandon the inanimate realm completely to science.

We must insist on a distinction between two meanings of metaphysics. In one sense, metaphysics means presence as onto-theology, with certain objects taking precedence over all others and measuring their nearness and distance from true reality. This form of metaphysics is justifiably condemned by Heidegger and his postmodern disciples. But in a second sense, metaphysics entails *realism*. The realism of a reality-in-itself, beyond the play of surface effects, is not some fossilised doctrine of the past, in such a manner that progress would consist in being ever more sceptical and aloof from the real. Instead, realism is the surprising but inevitable verdict of the greatest philosophical experiment of our era: Heidegger's tool-analysis. Objects surprise theory and praxis, but objects surprise each other as well. This is no longer the dry realism of oppressive schoolmasters, but a *weird realism*. Through the monstrous fusion of Heidegger and Leibniz, metaphysics begins to be reconstructed as weird realism.

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—NOTES

¹ This phrase is taken from Edgar Allen Poe's short story 'The Black Cat', where the reference is not to an infinite regress, but to a splotch of white fur on the breast of a stray cat that finally takes the form of the gallows. But the infinite regress is often viewed with precisely this much horror by philosophers. Poe, 'The Black Cat', in *Poetry and Tales*, Library of America, New York, 1984, p. 603.

² Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, Open Court, Chicago, 2005.