

# Leibniz on the Union of Body and Soul

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## *Introduction*

In the 1690's Leibniz claims in a letter to Bossuet: "I believe I have resolved the great problem of the union of the soul and the body. My explanation will be presented as a hypothesis, but I take it to be demonstrated."<sup>1</sup> Leibniz is referring to his presentation of the hypothesis of pre-established Harmony in the *New System*. According to this hypothesis God created the soul in such a way that its states proceed from the soul itself alone. Its union with the body consists in the fact that the soul generates its states "in conformity with the rest of the universe, but in particular with the organs of the body that constitutes its point of view in the world".<sup>2</sup> On a number of occasions Leibniz argues that this view of the union of body and soul is superior to two alternative accounts. According to one of these, the union of body and soul consists in each exercising a real influence on the other: this is the view that there is genuine causal interaction, which Leibniz attributes to the scholastics and describes as "the way of the vulgar philosophy" (G IV 498, 577 and 579).<sup>3</sup> The other one is occasionalism, which he sometimes calls the view of the Cartesians: body and soul do not really interact, but on the occasion of an alteration in either body or soul

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<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence de Bossuet* (C. Urbain and E. Levesque eds., Paris, Hachette, 1912), vol. 6, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Draft of the *New System*, G IV 477. Leibniz states the view in the published version at G IV 484 f., AG 143 f. References to Leibniz' work concern *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, C. I. Gerhardt ed., 7 vols, Berlin, Wiedmann, 1875–90, repr. Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1978 (G). Translations can be found in G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber eds., Indianapolis, Hackett, 1989 (AG), and *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, Leroy E. Loemker ed., Dordrecht, Reidel, 1969 (L).

<sup>3</sup> Donald Rutherford presents Descartes's view as an instance of this position (*Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 213). But Leibniz did not see it this way. He wrote in the *New System*: "M. Descartes had given up on this issue, insofar as one can know from his writings." (G IV 483, AG 143)

something corresponding occurs in the other in virtue of God's causal activity.

About a decade after the letter to Bossuet, however, the Jesuit father Tournemine charges that Leibniz' account of the union of body and soul is not satisfactory. Tournemine grants that Leibniz' account is superior in certain respects to the one offered by the Cartesians, that is, the occasionalists. And he writes that Leibniz was right in claiming that on the occasionalist account there is no *real union* – *véritable union* – between body and soul. But he objects that in this regard Leibniz' own account is no better because “correspondence, harmony, do not make an essential union or connection [*liaison*]”<sup>4</sup>. Leibniz' response sounds quite surprising in light of his earlier optimism:

Father Tournemine has spoken of me so obligingly [...] that I would be wrong to complain that he attributes to me an objection to the Cartesians that I do not remember, and that can clearly be turned against me. Yet I declare that if I have ever made this objection, I renounce it at present [...] I must admit that I would have been very wrong to object to the Cartesians that the accord that God maintains immediately, according to them, between soul and body, does not make a real Union [*une véritable Union*], since surely my pre-established Harmony cannot do any better. (G VI 595)

So in 1695 Leibniz claims that he has solved the problem of body-soul union, and that his own position is superior to the one proposed by the occasionalists. But a decade later he denies that his own account is better than theirs. Now Leibniz could have issued such a denial because he changed his mind, possibly as a result of Tournemine's objections. But what is particularly surprising is that he does not even seem to remember having claimed that his account is superior. In their recent books on Leibniz, both Robert M. Adams and Donald Rutherford have noted the puzzling nature of this response to Tournemine.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper I wish to examine the role of the pre-established Harmony in Leibniz' account of mind-body union and offer a solution to the problem this response poses. I will argue that in the writings of Leibniz, as well as other early modern philosophers, the label ‘body-

<sup>4</sup> Tournemine, “Conjectures sur l'Union de l'Ame et du Corps”, *Journal de Trévoux, ou Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des sciences et des arts*, vol. III (May 1703), p. 869.

<sup>5</sup> See Robert Merrihew Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 295; Rutherford, p. 274. See also Daniel Garber, “Leibniz and the Foundations of Physics: The Middle Years” (*The Natural Philosophy of Leibniz*, K. Okruhlik and J. R. Brown eds., Dordrecht, Reidel, 1985, pp. 27–130), p. 44.

soul union' covers two importantly different problems, which have not been sufficiently kept apart in the literature on Leibniz. One of these is the union as it concerns the interaction of body and soul. The other one concerns the unity of the body-soul composite: in the scholastic terminology sometimes used by Leibniz, its status as an *unum per se*. In section I, we will see that given the distinction between these two issues, the two very different attitudes with regard to body-soul union Leibniz expresses are entirely compatible. And we will see that his account of union in terms of the Harmony largely concerns interaction rather than *per se* unity. In the course of this section questions arise about an account of *per se* unity in Leibniz during the important years from the mid-80's to the response to Tournemine – what Daniel Garber has called Leibniz' middle years.<sup>6</sup> In section II, I will turn to this question. In his recent book *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, Robert Adams has offered an interpretation of Leibniz' account of the *per se* unity of body and soul that uses scholastic elements, in particular the notion of incompleteness. In combination with the pre-established Harmony, Adams argues, these elements afford quite a strong account of the *per se* unity of body and soul, which compares well with the scholastic view. Adams wonders, however, why Leibniz does not use the account in question more. But I will argue that in fact this account does not afford a suitable explanation of the *per se* unity of body and soul. Consequently, it is not surprising that Leibniz was unwilling to rely on it.

I will conclude that there is very little by way of an account of *per se* unity in Leibniz' middle years. And indeed, his philosophical system gave him very little to go on. There is some change in his statements about such unity in his writings around the time of the response to Tournemine. But it is not the case, as some commentators have thought, that there is a radical shift at that time in his attitude towards the pre-established Harmony as an account of *per se* unity.

### 1. Union, Interaction, and Per Se Unity

Our first problem is to explain the tension between Leibniz' optimism about his solution to the problem of the union in his letter to

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<sup>6</sup> Garber may wish to put the end of the period at a slightly different date. But for the purpose of my topic the response to Tournemine is the most suitable cut-off point.

Bossuet and his modesty in his reply to Tournemine. It is important to note that Leibniz' optimism about his account of body-soul union is not nearly unique to the letter to Bossuet. In particular, he frequently compared his solution by means of the pre-established Harmony favorably to that of the occasionalists or Cartesians.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this optimism does not disappear after the response to Tournemine. In 1714, at *Principles on Nature and Grace* 4, he claims that his pre-established Harmony explains the "agreement and physical union" of body and soul. In the same year he writes in the *Monadology*, article 78, that his principles, in particular the Harmony, allow him to account for "the union or the conformity of the soul and the organic body naturally". So the tension between Leibniz' two attitudes towards the union does not seem to lie in a change of heart.

We can find a hint of the solution to the resulting problem in the response to Tournemine itself:

My intention was to explain naturally what they explain by perpetual miracles: and I have only tried to account for the phenomena, that is to say, the relation one perceives between soul and body. But since the Metaphysical Union that one adds is not a phenomenon, and since no intelligible notion has been given of it, I have not undertaken to look for an account of it. Yet I do not deny that there is something of this nature: and it would be something like *presence*, the notion of which has so far also not been explained, when it has been applied to incorporeal things, and when it has been distinguished from the *harmonious relations* that accompany it, and which are also *phenomena* proper for marking the *place* of an incorporeal thing. (G VI 595)

Various aspects of this text are noteworthy. But for present purposes the most important one concerns Leibniz' distinction between something he has and something he has not explained better than the Cartesians had – presumably by means of the pre-established Harmony. He writes that he had only tried to account for the phenomena, and that he tried to explain naturally what the Cartesians explained by means of perpetual miracles. On the other hand, he writes that he had done no better than the Cartesians in explaining the 'real Union', and that he had not *tried* to explain their 'Metaphysical Union'. Leibniz draws this kind of distinction on several occasions, for instance in a letter to des Bosses and in the *Theodicy*. The second issue he indicates by the terms 'metaphysical union', or 'real union', which he sometimes

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (DM) 33; and G II 57f., L 337f.; G IV 483f., AG 143f.; G IV 509f., AG 160f.

contrasts with a 'physical union'.<sup>8</sup> The distinction between the two issues is clearly important to Leibniz, but what is it?

Let us begin by looking at what problem Leibniz thinks he *has* solved by means of the pre-established Harmony. In a letter to des Bosses Leibniz writes that Tournemine has not questioned that he had explained the *accord* of the phenomena – *phaenomenorum consensum*. And now the issue becomes quite clear upon examination of a number of different texts, for instance article 33 of the *Discourse on Metaphysics*. Leibniz summarizes this article for Arnauld (in a letter to the count Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels) as "Explanation of the interaction [*commerce*] of the soul and the body which has passed for inexplicable or miraculous, and of the origin of confused perceptions" (G II 14).<sup>9</sup> The article begins as follows:

We can also see the elucidation of this great mystery of the union of soul and body, that is, how it happens that the passions and actions of the one are accompanied by the actions and passions or the phenomena that belong to the other. For there is no way of conceiving that one has influence on the other, and it is not reasonable to take recourse simply to the extraordinary operation of the universal cause in an ordinary and particular matter. But this is the real reason: we have said that whatever happens to the soul and to any substance follows from its notion. So the idea itself or the essence of the soul contains that all its appearances or perceptions must happen to it spontaneously [*sponte*] from its own nature, and precisely in such a way that they correspond [*répondent*] of themselves to what happens in the entire universe, but more particularly and more perfectly to what happens in the body that is assigned to it, because the soul expresses the state of the universe in some way and for some time, according to the relation of other bodies to its own. This also explains how our body belongs to us without, however, being attached to our essence. (G IV 458 f.)

Leibniz writes here that the pre-established Harmony (although he did not yet call it by this name) rather than the theory of real influence or

<sup>8</sup> For the letter to des Bosses see G II 354 f. In the *Theodicy* Leibniz writes: "Although I do not hold that the soul changes the laws of the body nor that the body changes the laws of the soul, and I have introduced the pre-established Harmony in order to avoid this disorder, I do not fail to admit a real union between soul and body, which makes a suppositum of them. This union concerns the metaphysical, whereas the union of influence would concern the physical." (G VI 81, see also G VI 45) For the term 'physical union' see also *Principles of Nature and Grace* 3, and discussion of this article in Robert Adams, p. 306. Note that Leibniz does not offer any account of the real or metaphysical union. I return to this point later in this section.

<sup>9</sup> Garber and Ariew translate the word 'commerce' in the summary as 'union' (AG 64). But either 'intercourse' or 'interaction' is more appropriate.

occasionalism explains the union of soul and body. But it is very clear that the problem at issue concerns *mind-body interaction*: Leibniz explains the problem as concerning the correspondence between the passions and actions of body and soul, and the two theories he rejects are accounts of interaction. This text is typical of the way in which he presents the pre-established Harmony. For on many occasions he presents the Harmony as the solution to the problem of the *union* of body and soul while being concerned with the question of their interaction.

Indeed, we also find this approach in the *New System*, the text Leibniz claimed contained the solution to the problem of the union of body and soul in his letter to Bossuet. For there he writes that he was at first baffled by this problem because: "I found no way of explaining how the body makes something happen in the soul, or vice versa, nor how a substance can communicate with another created substance." Next he criticizes alternative accounts of interaction, and then proposes the pre-established Harmony (G IV 483, AG 142 f.).<sup>10</sup>

This use of the term 'union' may seem surprising, but it is not unusual. It has its precedents, for instance, in Descartes and Malebranche. When dealing with the question how mind and body interact, Descartes replied on several occasions that answering this question requires addressing the union of mind and body.<sup>11</sup> On his view, mind and body are united in such a way that they interact in sense perception and voluntary action. The case of Malebranche is similar but different in an interesting way. Malebranche believed, of course, that mind and body have no genuine causal powers at all and so do not interact. He placed the explanation of the correlations between states of body and soul in God. This view has the following unintuitive implication, which is important in relation to Leibniz. In Descartes one can see how the issue of interaction is connected with union, since he thinks that the union of mind and body *explains* their interaction – although he does not offer much by way of an account of this union or of how it is supposed to explain interaction. But in the context of Malebranche's view, speaking of such a union becomes tenuous in regard to interaction, given that for him the explanation for correlations between mental and physical states lies instead in God's activity. As Tournemine noted, on

<sup>10</sup> Other texts where Leibniz clearly presents the Harmony as an account of the union as it concerns interaction can be found at G II 57 f., L 337 f.; and André Robinet, *Malebranche et Leibniz: relations personnelles* (Paris, Vrin, 1955), pp. 314 f.

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Clerselier, January 12, 1646, AT IXA 213, CSM II 275. See also the letter to Elizabeth, May 21, 1643, AT III 664 f., CSM III 217 f. For Descartes I provide references to the edition by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, *Œuvres de Descartes* (Paris, Vrin 1974–1989, abbreviated as AT). Translations can be found in John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (Cambridge University Press, 1984–91, abbreviated as CSM).

this account there is no real sense of union between body and soul. Nevertheless Malebranche used the term 'union' for the explanation for the correlation between states of the soul and of the body.<sup>12</sup> As Tournemine also pointed out, like Malebranche, Leibniz did not provide a genuine sense of union: he relied on the pre-established Harmony. Indeed, in Malebranche and Leibniz the union is *whatever* state of affairs explains the (apparent) interaction of body and soul, even if intuitively this state of affairs does not warrant the label 'union of body and soul'.

So when Leibniz claims he has solved the problem of this union, he is speaking of this union insofar as it concerns interaction. But that issue is very different from another problem that falls perhaps more obviously under the label of the 'union of body and soul'. This other problem is the question how body and soul are united so that they form a genuine unity, a single unified entity. In scholastic terms, the question is how together they constitute an *unum per se*, something that is essentially one. There is an important philosophical distinction between these two issues.

For two things, say my computer and my printer, can be united so that they can interact without thereby constituting a single, unified entity. Similarly, one may think that body and soul are *united* so that they interact without being *unified* into a single entity. When Descartes and Malebranche discuss the union in relation to interaction, they leave the issue of the unity of the composite aside.<sup>13</sup> This is particularly clear when Malebranche writes that the soul "is united to God in a much closer and more essential way" than to the body: he clearly does not mean to say that God and the soul together constitute an *unum per se*.<sup>14</sup>

The issue of *per se* unity is certainly very important in Leibniz, especially given that *per se* unity was for him an important necessary condi-

<sup>12</sup> *Search after Truth*, "Preface", *Œuvres* I pp. 9–19, *Selections* pp. 3–7; and Book 5 ch. 5, *Œuvres* II p. 172, *Selections* p. 59; *Dialogues on Metaphysics and Religion* 4. X–XIII, VII.I, *Selections* pp. 222 f. For these references see *Œuvres complètes de Malebranche* (André Robinet, dir., Paris, Vrin, 1958–1967) and *Philosophical Selections*, Steven Nadler ed. (Indianapolis, Hackett, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Descartes does not always sharply distinguish the issues of union as it concerns interaction and *per se* unity. In a letter to Elizabeth he writes that in order to think of interaction of body and soul one must conceive of their union, and that doing so is to conceive of them as one single thing – *une seule chose* (AT III 692, CSM III 227). But in his discussion of interaction he ignores the issue of *per se* unity and he leaves the sense in which the mind-body composite is one thing unexplained. Indeed some of what he says in this context strains against the idea that body and soul together have *per se* unity. I discuss this issue at length in *Descartes's Dualism; Something Old, Something New* (forthcoming, Harvard University Press), ch. 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Search after Truth*, "Preface", *Œuvres* p. 9, *Selections* p. 3.

tion for substancehood.<sup>15</sup> But it is equally important that this issue is distinct in his mind from the issue of the union in regard to interaction. This distinction is crucial for understanding his views about body-soul union, and specifically, his response to Tournemine. For when Leibniz puts forward the pre-established Harmony as a solution to the problem of the union of body and soul (in the *New System* and elsewhere) he routinely proposes it as a solution to the problem of interaction rather than the problem of *per se* unity. On this problem he is convinced that he does better than the Cartesians. But now we can see that Leibniz' optimism about this issue is entirely in agreement with his response to Tournemine. For in this response he does not disavow having solved the problem of the union as it concerns interaction. Nor does he deny that in this regard his position is superior to that of the Cartesians: as in the *New System* and elsewhere, he claims he does better, because he explains naturally what they explain by a perpetual miracle. But Leibniz takes Tournemine to be interested in the other issue, which concerns the *per se* unity of the body-soul composite.<sup>16</sup>

It is perhaps not so clear from the response to Tournemine itself that a real or metaphysical union concern *per se* unity, since Leibniz does not explain what such unions are supposed to be. But elsewhere, in particular in the *Theodicy*, he explicitly connects the notion of a Metaphysical Union with the view that body and soul together constitute a single entity, one person, or one suppositum (G VI 45, 81).<sup>17</sup> And on that issue, he admits, he has done no better than the Cartesians.

<sup>15</sup> For this point see G II 77, 96f., AG 80, 85f., and G II 304, 446. For discussion see Robert Adams, pp. 291 f., Rutherford, pp. 134, 136, R. C. Sleigh, Jr., *Leibniz and Arnauld: A Commentary on Their Correspondence* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990), p. 110, and ch. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Leibniz' assessment of the situation corresponds to Tournemine's evaluation in so far as the latter had written that Leibniz did better than the Cartesians in regard to interaction, but not in regard to the 'real union'. They differ in so far as Tournemine implied that Leibniz thought he had done better than the Cartesians in regard to the 'real union' as well (Tournemine, pp. 867–870). Leibniz denies he had ever made such a claim.

I think that Leibniz himself may be misinterpreting Tournemine as well. For although he takes Tournemine to be concerned with *per se* unity, it is not clear that Tournemine himself had that issue in mind. But it would take us too far afield to sort out the precise nature of his concerns with union.

<sup>17</sup> He also speaks of 'metaphysical *communication*' in relation to this issue (G VI 135). To my knowledge, Leibniz does not ever explicitly connect the notions of metaphysical unity, person, or suppositum with *per se* unity. But the notions of a person or suppositum are explicitly connected to *per se* unity by Suárez. He uses both terms to describe a type of *per se* unity different from the type consti-



Following the scholastics, Leibniz does call the human being an *unum per se* during his middle years. So we may well ask: how does Leibniz account for this *per se* unity during this period? The first thing to note is that he is remarkably evasive on this issue on many occasions throughout his life. For instance, sometimes he simply states that the human being is such a unity without any explanation. Thus in a letter to Arnauld of September 1687 Leibniz writes that “supposing that there is a soul or entelechy in animals or other corporeal substances, we must reason about it as we all do about the human being, who is a being endowed with a genuine unity – *une véritable unité* – that the soul bestows on it” (G II 120, L 344). But he does not say how the soul gives rise to this unity.<sup>18</sup>

And again at DM 34 he calls the human being an *unum per se* without explanation. It is tempting to think that in this article Leibniz has the pre-established Harmony in mind as the solution, since he offers the Harmony in the previous article as the solution to mind-body union. But we must be careful: in that article he is concerned with interaction, and he does not say that the Harmony also explains the status of the human being as an *unum per se*. In later years his evasiveness takes a different form. In the *Theodicy* of 1710 he claims that he does not deny that there is a metaphysical union between body and soul – again without explaining what such a union would amount to (G VI 45, 81).<sup>19</sup> Finally in the correspondence with des Bosses, he proposes an account in terms of a substantial bond, an entity added by God to the monads. But as various texts indicate and others have argued, that notion is not one Leibniz himself accepted.<sup>20</sup> So if anything, this pro-

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tuted by a substance – where the latter results from the combination of matter and form. See his *Disputationes metaphysicae* (in *Opera Omnia*, Paris, Vivès, 1859, vols. 25–26, abbreviated as *Disp.*), IV.III.8. In light of Suárez’ position, what Leibniz might be granting in the *Theodicy* is that the human being is an *ens per se* of a kind different from a substance. Noteworthy in this regard is also Leibniz’ phrase at the beginning of DM 34: “Supposing that bodies that are *unum per se*, like man, are substances ...”. For here he presents the idea that the human being is an *unum per se* as assumed, but writes hypothetically about its being a substance. This is interesting in light of the complicated question of Leibniz’ attitude towards corporeal substances such as the human being. For discussion of that question see Garber, *Leibniz and the Foundations of Physics*, Sleight, ch. 5, Robert Adams, ch. 10.

<sup>18</sup> He also points out that on his view there is a genuine unity for the corporeal substance, not the body itself. Leibniz is responding to a question from Arnauld about the unity of corporeal substances in general. Sleight interprets the passage as meaning that Leibniz thought that there must be an acceptable account of *per se* unity “because, as we all know, that is how it is with the one corporeal substance we know from the inside out, so to speak – ourselves” (p. 107).

<sup>19</sup> See also letters to des Bosses, G II 296, 355, 371. See also fn. 8 above.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Adams, pp. 299–303, Rutherford, pp. 276–282.

posal suggests that he thought that such unity cannot be accounted for within his own system.

Sometimes, however, Leibniz offers a scholastic account of unity, by claiming that the soul is the form of the body. He does so in particular in letters to Arnauld, although it is worth noting that the texts are not always so clear. Leibniz insists on several occasions that the notion of substantial form provides unity: but he often does not clearly say that it unifies the corporeal substance. What he is very clear about is that substantial forms themselves are genuine unities.<sup>21</sup> When Arnauld asks him how substantial forms generate unified corporeal substances, Leibniz' reply, which I quoted above, implies that they are indeed unified by their forms or souls. But that answer gives rise to further questions: in particular, what does it mean for the soul to be the form of the body on Leibniz' view, and how does the soul give unity to the entire substance?

On one occasion Leibniz suggests that the soul is the form of the body in virtue of relations between the perceptions of the soul and the states of its body, that is, in virtue of the pre-established Harmony (G II 58, L 338). But this remark might suggest that there is a problem for my attempt to help Leibniz by distinguishing between the two issues concerning body-soul union. For now the idea that the soul is the form of the body seems to boil down to the pre-established Harmony, and the contrast between the issues of unity and interaction might seem to vanish.<sup>22</sup> One might conclude that Leibniz himself did not clearly distinguish between these two issues in his middle years. Or at least, one might argue that my explanation is in trouble because in the end the two problems have the same solution.

It seems implausible, however, that Leibniz failed to distinguish the two issues. Once we see that the term 'union' was used in connection with interaction, we can see that, philosophically speaking, failing to distinguish this issue from *per se* unity would amount to a very serious confusion. And it is a confusion that concerns major issues in Leibniz' thought, which receive considerable attention from him. The distinction between the two issues seriously undermines the view that Leibniz believed in his middle years that he had a satisfactory account of *per se* unity for the composite of body and soul in terms of pre-established Harmony. So I do not think

<sup>21</sup> See especially G II 76 f., AG 79 f.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Adams points out a version of this problem (p. 297). –

Leibniz also seems to account for the unity of body and soul by means of his notion of domination. I will not go into this notion in detail here, but what is important is this: the soul that Leibniz sometimes presents as the form of the body he also sometimes describes as its dominant monad. This monad 'rules' the body and unifies the corporeal substance, the composite of body and soul (letter to de Volder, G II 252). But Leibniz analyzes domination in terms of relations between perceptions of the dominant monad and the states of its body. So domination also seems to reduce to pre-established Harmony. I think that the situation for domination as source for *per se* unity is essentially the same as for the idea that the substantial form generates *per se* unity. For discussion of the notion of domination see Robert Adams, pp. 285–291.

one can speak of Leibniz' "oft-repeated claim that the dominant monad is the principle of unity that makes a corporeal substance one *per se*".<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, even if the unity of the human being should be understood in terms of the pre-established Harmony, the Harmony still provides solutions for two really different problems, and Leibniz does not treat them the same way. For during the middle years he offers the idea of the soul as substantial form as an account of *per se* unity on several occasions. But the pre-established Harmony he repeatedly proposes as a solution for the problem of union as it concerns interaction, not as an account of *per se* unity.<sup>24</sup> My explanation of Leibniz' claims about the strength of his account of union requires that he had different attitudes towards these two problems. In my view, he always held that the pre-established Harmony offered a better solution than the occasionalist account of the union insofar as it concerned interaction. He might well have thought during his middle years that this Harmony also explains the unity of the human being. But he certainly never expressed the same optimism about the Harmony as an account of this unity.<sup>25</sup>

This would seem to be enough to account for what Leibniz says to Tournemine. But it still leaves us with the question whether previous to Tournemine's objections Leibniz did in fact hold that he *could* explain the *per se* unity of the body-soul composite by means of the Harmony – even if he could honestly claim he had never

<sup>23</sup> Robert Adams pp. 305 f. The distinction between the two issues also counts against Rutherford's claim that "As far back as the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz is eager to deflate the problem of the union of the soul and the body" (p. 266).

<sup>24</sup> Some statements in his summary of his account of union in the *New System* might suggest that Leibniz does there claim that the Harmony accounts for *per se* unity. He writes: "In this way [by way of the Harmony] one can understand how the soul has its seat in the body through an immediate presence, that could not be greater, since it is there as unity is in the result of unities that is a multitude." (G IV 485, AG 144) Now this sentence is rather enigmatic, but I don't see any convincing reason to regard it as concerned with *per se* unity. The idea of the soul having its seat in the body suggests Leibniz' view that the soul derives its *point of view* from its Harmony with the body. This interpretation derives support from the fact that in addition the sentence suggests there is nothing more to the union than the Harmony. For in the draft of the *New System* Leibniz makes that claim right after a comment about the soul's point of view (G IV 477).

<sup>25</sup> This interpretation removes the radical discord between Leibniz' optimism about his account of the union of mind and body with his denial to Tournemine that he had done any better than the Cartesians with regard to the 'Real or Metaphysical Union'. It leaves us with something else to explain, however. For Leibniz writes to Tournemine that he had not *tried* to explain the Metaphysical Union. But as we just saw, there is reason to think that in his middle years he thought the unity of body and soul derives from the soul being the form of the body, and that this explanation reduced to the pre-established Harmony. At this point it is crucial that Leibniz is evasive about this issue and does not provide a full-fledged account of the unity of the resulting entity. Indeed, the best one can do is construct an account of body-soul unity on Leibniz' behalf. In light of this situation, it no longer seems surprising that he himself claimed that he had never attempted to *explain* the Metaphysical Union of body and soul.

done so. This is a more difficult question to answer, and I will not be able to enter into the question in as much detail as it deserves.

Scholars have pointed out that the textual evidence is ambiguous.<sup>26</sup> For whereas Leibniz is evasive about the matter, some texts support the view that he did think that body and soul constitute a *per se* unity. Matters are complicated by the fact that he sometimes claims that there are no genuine *per se* unities other than souls or substantial forms.<sup>27</sup> So there is conflicting evidence on the question whether Leibniz even held that soul-body composites are such unities. I find it quite unlikely that Leibniz thought during his middle years that body-soul composites have genuine *per se* unity. It is hard to see how he could provide an account of such unity, and I find it hard to believe that Leibniz himself did not recognize the difficulties in question. These problems will become clear in the next section.<sup>28</sup> His evasiveness on the issue is important. He seems willing to claim *that* the human being is a *per se* unity, but he seems to avoid offering an account of *how* such *per se* unity should be understood. Consequently, I do not think that Leibniz believed he had such an account.<sup>29</sup>

I think that most likely pressure from external sources explains Leibniz' statements to the effect that body and soul together form a *per se* unity.<sup>30</sup> It is especially clear in later years that he was sensitive to such demands. Thus he claimed repeatedly that he did not deny a metaphysical union, although he also called such a union "ultramundane and utopian". And he worked on the notion of substantial bonds, although he clearly did not accept it himself.<sup>31</sup> But whereas he did not think he could generate genuine *per se* unity for body-soul composites, he did try to account for at least some features characteristic of *per se* unities. A feature that stands out is their continued identity over time despite turnover in matter.<sup>32</sup> Leibniz did indeed

<sup>26</sup> For the sense of the uncertain nature of the evidence see Garber, pp. 44 f., Rutherford, ch. 10, especially pp. 266–273.

<sup>27</sup> He says so in the *New System* (G IV 483, AG 142), and also, for instance, later in the correspondence with De Volder (G II 268, 282, L 536, 539).

<sup>28</sup> When Leibniz speaks of the Metaphysical Union that philosophers have added, he could have had something further in mind. For some scholastics held that in order for the human being to be an *ens per se* it was not enough that they be composites of matter and form. They held that there must be some additional entity that unites them. (For discussion of the entity in question in scholasticism, see A. Boehm, *Le 'vinculum substantiale' chez Leibniz*, Paris, Vrin 1962, especially part 2.) Leibniz could have been thinking of such a position. In fact, the notion of a substantial bond that he discusses in the correspondence with des Bosses is such an entity. It is hard to say whether Leibniz did have this idea in mind, but I find it unlikely.

<sup>29</sup> Sleight expresses a different perspective on one of the passages at issue. See fn. 18 above.

<sup>30</sup> For this view, see also Robert Adams, p. 307.

<sup>31</sup> I am assuming that these two notions would purport to concern genuine *per se* unity.

<sup>32</sup> Both Sleight and Rutherford point to the importance of identity over time in relation to unity. Sleight writes that "Leibniz did not intend to commit himself to the corporeal substance theory, realistically construed", but that, "nonetheless, Leibniz intended to demonstrate in the correspondence [with Arnauld] that the corporeal substance theory, realistically construed, could be so understood that

frequently insist on such identity of organisms. And he often claimed that there is an important difference between organisms, which the scholastics regarded as having *per se* unity and other bodies (G II 100, AG 88; G IV 480 f., AG 140 f.). The question then becomes what, in the years previous to the response to Tournemine, the role of the pre-established Harmony was in this effort.

It does seem plausible that Leibniz relied on the pre-established Harmony for this purpose. There are textual reasons for thinking so, and this purpose of the Harmony is more philosophically feasible than genuine *per se* unity. Leibniz offered the soul as what unifies the human being by being its form, and he writes to Arnauld: “Nevertheless [*cependant*] the soul does not fail to be the form of its body, because it expresses the phenomena of all the other bodies according to their relationship to its own [body].” (G II 58, L 338)<sup>33</sup> Leibniz does not say here that the *per se* unity of the body-soul composite is explained by the relations of expression that make the soul the form of the body. But he might have in mind that in virtue of this relationship of expression the soul does have a special relationship with its body as opposed to other bodies, one which does not generate genuine *per se* unity, but which does afford a substitute by accounting for some characteristics of *per se* unities. In particular, the Harmony might individuate its body, and give it identity over time. Indeed it is only natural to take this passage to mean that Leibniz did think the Harmony provides something that corresponds to *per se* unity given the frequent connection between such unity for a composite substance and the notion of form. So this strikes me as the best way to read Leibniz’ views on *per se* unity for body-soul composites in his middle years.

These are complicated matters. But I think it should be clear now that Leibniz’ optimism about the pre-established Harmony as an account of the union is entirely compatible with his modesty in his response to Tournemine. For the two attitudes concern two different issues. Without the distinction between the two issues, it is tempting to see Leibniz as changing his mind radically about the success of the pre-established Harmony as an account of the union of body and soul.<sup>34</sup> But we have seen that this approach will not do, since Leibniz’ optimism about the union is not confined to the years preceding the re-

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corporeal substances met the relevant requirements having to do with substantial (true) unity and divisibility” (p. 119). At pp. 125 f. he argues that what matters (one thing that matters?) is identity over time. Rutherford argues that Leibniz was confused between strict *per se* unity and the idea that a substantial form functions as the principle of identity over time for a body (p. 269).

<sup>33</sup> This sentence occurs right after Leibniz discusses the pre-established Harmony in relation to interaction. His use of the word ‘nevertheless’ strikes me as important here: for this word acknowledges that he sees trouble for the idea that the soul is the form of the body as a result of his hypothesis of pre-established Harmony.

<sup>34</sup> See the references in fn. 5 above.

sponse to Tournemine. This is not to say that nothing changes in Leibniz' attitude towards the union of body and soul. In the *New System* he had boldly written that the union the Harmony generates is the only one (G IV 484 f., AG 143 f. See also G IV 573). But in the response to Tournemine and other later texts we find him referring to a metaphysical Union distinct from the union explained by the pre-established Harmony. Towards this additional type of union he expresses various attitudes. Consistently with the *New System*, he describes such a union to De Volder as "ultramundane and utopian", and he claims that there is no notion or knowledge of it (G II 281, L 538 f.). This letter is dated 19 January 1706, and was written around the same time as the response to Tournemine.<sup>35</sup> In the response itself he writes that the notion of such a union has not been made clear. A few years later, in a letter to des Bosses of 1708, he claims that he does not deny that there is such a union. In the *Theodicy* of 1710 he even seems to admit it – contrary to his outright rejection in the *New System*. The attitude in the *Theodicy* probably constitutes a concession to external pressures rather than an expression of genuine conviction on Leibniz' part. Part of the explanation could lie in the need Leibniz felt to present a certain view in public. But the *New System* was also published, and apparently at that point he did not find it necessary to allow for a union other than the one established by the Harmony. And so in later years Leibniz seemed to feel such pressure more than he had previously.

## 2. *Per Se* Unity and the Scholastics

Nevertheless on various occasions during his middle years Leibniz expresses the view that corporeal substances such as human beings and animals, have *per se* unity. Thus they would have a stronger sort of unity than other bodies, which are aggregates and only have *accidental* unity. The distinction between these two types of unity is not new with Leibniz, and it is rooted in the Aristotelian tradition.<sup>36</sup> But it is hard to see what the stronger unity could amount to on Leibniz' view. As

<sup>35</sup> Leibniz writes that he has sent the response in letters to des Bosses dated February 2 and 14 1706 (G II 296, 301). For this issue, see also Rutherford, p. 285 fn. 24.

<sup>36</sup> Suárez comments on the difficulty of defining the notions in question. He writes that Aristotle, the source of the distinction, does not define unity *per se* and *per accidens*, but merely provides examples (Disp. IV.III.1).

Robert Adams writes: “Given his doctrine that ‘there is nothing in things except simple substances, and in them perception and appetite’ (G II 270/L 537), there is no way for the unity of a corporeal substance to be anything over and above the system of relations among the perceptions of simple substances. But aggregates, too, are united by relations among the perceptions of substances, according to Leibniz.”<sup>37</sup> Adams points out, however, that Leibniz sometimes called body and soul incomplete, and that the notion of incompleteness was central to scholastic conceptions of the *per se* unity of composite substances. And Adams argues that the notion of incompleteness in combination with the pre-established Harmony affords Leibniz a pretty strong account of the unity of composite substances, one that compares well with these scholastic explanations of unity. He thinks this account is the best one suggested by Leibniz’ writings, but acknowledges that Leibniz never explicitly adopts it. Adams writes that it fits “elegantly both [Leibniz’] own metaphysics and some important scholastic accounts of *per se* unity. It is therefore puzzling that [Leibniz] does not make more use of it”<sup>38</sup>. In this section I wish to examine the account of *per se* unity Adams discusses.

The idea that such an account is to be found in Leibniz and that it has significant virtues is of considerable interest. Leibniz clearly adopted elements of Aristotelian scholastic doctrine, and for a proper understanding of his thought it is important to see just how much of the scholastic notions he preserves. Furthermore, the possibility that Leibniz could offer a strong account of the *per se* unity of corporeal substances, such as the human being, that contains scholastic elements is of great significance for his attitude towards such substances. In particular, it is important to the question whether – as has been argued with particular force by Daniel Garber – in his middle years Leibniz accepted genuine corporeal substances in the scholastic sense: composites of matter and form. Adams rejects the view that Leibniz did. But interestingly enough, the account of *per se* unity he sees in Leibniz offers a possible contribution to Garber’s interpretation. For the notion of *per se* unity was central to Leibniz’ conception of substance, and the notion of incompleteness was widely used by the Aristotelian scholastics to explain the *per se* unity of substances that are matter-form composites. So the account fits Garber’s view that during his middle years Leibniz held that there are such substances.

I will compare Leibniz’ views with the scholastic account of *per se* unity in terms of incompleteness that Adams refers to. *Per se* unity was

<sup>37</sup> Robert Adams, p. 293. Rutherford cites a text from the “Nachlass” where Leibniz himself states that pre-established Harmony merely generates “mental or relational results” (pp. 271 f.).

<sup>38</sup> Robert Adams, p. 294.

a prominent issue in scholasticism, and it is very likely that Leibniz was familiar with this type of account.<sup>39</sup> I will pay special attention to the late scholastic philosopher Francisco Suárez, who is also the focus of Adams' discussion. Suárez was very influential in the seventeenth century, and Leibniz refers to him on several occasions.<sup>40</sup> But the account of *per se* unity in question was not nearly unique to Suárez and quite common. I will argue that the conceptions of incompleteness found in Leibniz and the scholastics are very different, and that the differences are crucial to the question of the unity of corporeal substances. Consequently, the Leibnizian version does not lend itself well to an account of this unity. Given this assessment of the comparison with Suárez, it is not surprising, Adams to the contrary, that Leibniz did not use the notion of incompleteness more for the purpose of such an account. In fact, as Adams notes, although the notion of incompleteness does make appearances in his writings, Leibniz did not ever use it to account for *per se* unity. His not doing so suggests that Leibniz himself recognized the significance of the differences between his own notion of incompleteness and the one common among the scholastics.

The scholastics followed Aristotle in regarding substances that are corporeal, including the human being, as constituted by matter and form. For Aristotle himself the unity of matter and form was fairly unproblematic: matter and form are not distinct things that can exist apart. On his view a hylomorphic substance is a genuine unity because matter and form complement each other as act and potency. A substance has a potential for all kinds of behavior and characteristics in virtue of its matter, which *actually* belong to it in virtue of its form. This distinction and the relationship of complementarity it implies was clearly very important for the scholastics in regard to the unity of substances: thus Suárez writes that in a substance its *per se* unity derives from the combination of act and substantial potency.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams discusses the reliance on incompleteness in Ockham and Scotus in *William Ockham*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1987, pp. 665–667. I provide a detailed discussion of the use of this notion by Aquinas and several late scholastics (Suárez, the Coimbra Commentators, Eustachius of St Paul) in my *Descartes's Dualism ...*, ch. 5.

<sup>40</sup> For discussion of the relationship between Suárez and Leibniz see André Robinet, "Suárez im Werk von Leibniz", *Studia Leibnitiana*, 13, 1981, pp. 76–96.

<sup>41</sup> Disp. IV.III.4, 5 and 8. For this idea in Aristotle, see *Metaphysics* 8.6, 9.6. The actuality of matter and its separability from form were connected for the scholastics. Thus Aquinas denied both that matter has any actuality and that it can be separated even by God. See *Summa theologiae* (Blackfriars and McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964–, abbreviated as ST) I 66.1, III 75.6, Suárez writes that the



Now Leibniz does often speak of passivity and activity, but as Adams points out, there is little trace in his writings of the Aristotelian notion of formal causality where the form actuates matter that serves as potency or potentiality.<sup>42</sup> Most importantly for our purposes, the Aristotelian notions of act and potency do not seem to be significant in Leibniz' account of the unity of corporeal substance. From an Aristotelian scholastic point of view, this feature of his position already constitutes an important difference, as we shall see more clearly in a moment.

In scholasticism the unity of composite substances came under considerable pressure. For our purposes, the principal source of tension specifically concerns the case of the human being. It derives from the scholastic commitment to the immortality of the human soul. Aquinas and others argued that the soul, the form of the human body, can exist without a body. In doing so they appealed to texts in *De anima* where Aristotle himself seemed to allow that at least the intellect can exist separately.<sup>43</sup> But this feature of the soul was regarded as in tension with its status as the form of the body, and with the unity of the human being, which, for the scholastics, derived from the soul being the form of the body. For substantial forms were not supposed to be able to exist by themselves.

Indeed, in response to the relevant passages in Aristotle, the Arabic philosopher Averroes had argued that the intellect is not part of the soul, that is, of the form of the body. Aquinas, for instance, saw this tension very clearly and proposed ingenious solutions.<sup>44</sup> For many other scholastics the unity of composite substances also came

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motivation for the view that matter cannot be conserved separately is the view, which he rejects, that matter has no existence of its own (Disp. XV.IX.2).

The idea that matter has actuality posed a problem for the scholastic view that composite substances have *per se* unity in virtue of the complementarity of actuality and potentiality. In order to solve this problem the scholastics drew a distinction between different types of actuality: the kind that is proper to forms, and the kind that also belongs to matter. Thus form and matter still complement each other with regard to the first kind. See Suárez, Disp. XIII.V.8–11. He ascribes the distinction between types of actuality to Scotus. For a discussion of composite substances in Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham, see Marilyn Adams, *Ockham*, ch. 15. She discusses the status of prime matter at pp. 639–647.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Adams pp. 309 f.

<sup>43</sup> *De anima* 413a3–9, 413b24–26, 429a18–29, 430a18–25. Some aspects of Aristotle's view, however, seem to imply the inseparability of the intellect. The issue in Aristotle is complex and has been subject to much debate by interpreters for many centuries.

<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, ST I 76.1, first and sixth objection.

under pressure because they ascribed some sort of actuality to matter, and because they regarded matter and form as separable. They thought that only the human soul can exist apart naturally, but they held that matter and other substantial forms can do so by virtue of God's power.<sup>45</sup> Although the resulting issues are of considerable interest, for our purposes it will not be necessary to discuss them in detail.

Of particular interest in relation to Leibniz is the fact that besides using the notions of act and potency, the scholastics also commonly relied on the notion of incompleteness in their accounts of *per se* unity of hylomorphic substances. They held that matter and form are incomplete substances: each belongs to the category of substance, but only, as they sometimes put it, by reduction.<sup>46</sup> Properly speaking, only the composite of matter and form is a substance. It is crucial for this scholastic conception of *per se* unity that by themselves matter and form are not complete *qua* substances. For on their view complete substances cannot be constituents of *entia per se*.

The importance of this idea comes out in Suárez' conception of *per se* unity, which, incidentally, was meant to apply not only to substances.<sup>47</sup> He writes that an *ens per se* has one essence within one category, and he defines a being *per se* as follows: "the definition [*ratio*] of an *ens per se* consists in this that it precisely [*praecise*] has those things that are required *per se* and intrinsically for the essence, integrity or complement of such a being in its genus"<sup>48</sup>. On his view, if a constituent of an entity is already complete within a category, it cannot form an *ens per se* with another entity. Thus Suárez writes that "because one being is complete and whole in its genus, what is added to it belongs to it accidentally, and therefore it is said to compose an *unum per accidens* with it"<sup>49</sup>. Applying these ideas to substances, he writes that a substance has *per se* unity insofar as it consists of matter and form: "For since neither matter nor form are complete and entire beings *in their genus*, but are instituted by their nature to compose such a being, that which is proximately

<sup>45</sup> Both views can be found in Suárez (Disp. XV.IX.1–3). In addition, numerous scholastics, including Ockham and Scotus, thought that a substance can contain several substantial forms. But Leibniz rejected that idea (G VI 521). For extensive discussion of the view that a substance can have more than one substantial form, see Roberto Zavalloni, *Richard de Mediavilla et la controverse sur la pluralité des formes* (Louvain, Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1951), and also Marilyn Adams, *Ockham*, ch. 15.

<sup>46</sup> See Aquinas, *Quaestiones de anima* (James H. Robb ed., Toronto, Pontifical Institute for Mediæval Studies, 1968), first question. For a translation see *Questions on the Soul* (James H. Robb transl., Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1984). For Suárez see Disp. XXXIII, I, 4–6.

<sup>47</sup> See Disp. IV.III.3, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Disp. IV.III.6.

<sup>49</sup> Disp. IV.III.13.

composed of them is justly called, and is in essence and nature one *per se*." (Disp. IV.III.8, emphasis added) So an *ens per se* has one essence, and because matter and form are incomplete *in the category of substance* they constitute one essence and an *ens per se*.

So far this account is rather abstract. But in fact in scholastic writings we can find a much more concrete sense in which the constituents of a substance are incomplete. The issue was specifically addressed for the human soul, whose natural capacity for separate existence is particularly threatening to the unity of the composite substance. The incompleteness of the human soul, it was argued, means that it properly belongs in the union with the body and that it has an aptitude for this union. This fact is part of its nature, even though the soul is separable from the body and so strictly speaking their union is not essential to the soul.

Aquinas uses an analogy to illustrate his view:

[... ]It belongs to the soul by virtue of itself to be united to the body, just as it belongs to a light body by virtue of itself to be up. And just as a light body remains light even when it has been separated from its proper place, and retains nevertheless its aptitude and inclination for its proper place, so the human soul retains its being (*manet in suo esse*) when it has been separated from the body, and it still has the aptitude and natural inclination for union with the body. (ST I 76.1 ad 6)

Furthermore, it was made quite clear why the soul needs the body: the soul cannot exercise its functions without it. A substantial form, such as the human soul, is by its nature, by being the actuality of a composite substance, an entity that bestows various kinds of functions on a body. These functions cannot be exercised in separation from the body. For the human soul what matters are the functions of life which it bestows on the human being: nutritive, sensitive, and intellectual ones. Nutritive and sensitive functions cannot be performed without the body, for the simple reason that they take place *in* the body. Digestion and growth obviously do, and for the scholastics sensory powers are also located in the body, in its sensory organs.

It is worth pausing over the case of sensation, as scholastic conceptions of sensation differ considerably from the one introduced by Descartes into modern philosophy. This comparison will bring out the sense in which the operations the soul confers on the body belong to a single, unified thing for the scholastics. The scholastics often discussed sensation when wondering what powers the soul retains when separated from the body. Aquinas, Suárez, and others distinguished intellect and will from sensory and nutritive powers in that the former, but not the latter, inhere in just the soul. Thus Aquinas writes:

Certain powers are related to the soul alone as their subject, such as the intellect and the will. And such powers necessarily remain in the soul when the body is destroyed. But other powers inhere in the composite [*conjuncto*] as their subject, such as all the powers of the sensitive and nutritive parts. (ST I 77.8)

Suárez' view was subtly different. He claimed that sensitive powers do not inhere in the composite, but in matter, although they "have their subject [*subjectari*] in the composite insofar as they presuppose that it is constituted: for they cannot exist unless first matter is informed by the soul, from which they then arise [*oriantur*]"<sup>50</sup>

This view is very different from a Cartesian picture of sensation: for Descartes in sensation mechanistic events occur in the body which bring about other states that belong to the mind.<sup>51</sup> But for the scholastics there is no stage of sensation that inheres in the incorporeal mind and that is the result of processes in the body: the entire process takes place in the ensouled body. The role of the soul consists in the fact that it informs the body and functions as its actuality so that the body is the sort of thing that has sensory powers. On this scholastic view, the operations the soul confers on the body are functions of a single ensouled subject. This idea is fundamental to the distinction between the conception of the soul as the form of the body and a Cartesian, dualistic conception of the soul.

For many scholastics the intellect constituted an exception, however. Aquinas, Suárez and others argued that the intellect does not operate in a corporeal organ, but that the soul alone is its subject. And they used this conception of the intellect to argue that the human soul can exist without the body.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, intellectual activity plays a central role in the strain on the conception of the soul as form of the body and on the unity of the human being. These scholastics recognized this problem quite clearly. But they did not think that the intellect is entirely independent of the body. They held that the intellect requires a body because it derives its representations – its 'intelligible species' (what the early moderns called 'ideas') – from the imagination, which they regarded as a corporeal faculty. Furthermore, they thought the human intellect cannot operate without the imagination even once the intelligible species have been produced, because it cannot understand anything without forming images. Consequently, although the soul alone is the subject of inherence for the intellect, it does require the

<sup>50</sup> *De anima* (in *Opera Omnia* vol. 3), II.III.3. Unlike Aquinas and Suárez, Ockham held that the sensitive soul is the subject of sense-perception. Cf. *Reportatio* IV qu. 9, *Opera Theologica* (Francis E. Kelley and Girard I. Etzkorn eds., St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, New York, 1982) vol. VII, p. 162. But for him the sensitive soul is really distinct from the intellectual soul.

<sup>51</sup> This interpretation is not uncontroversial, but aside from its accuracy the view it expresses is helpful in illustrating the present point. I discuss the issue in my *Descartes's Dualism ...*, ch. 6.

<sup>52</sup> They argued that something that can act *per se*, in its own right, can also exist *per se*. Cf. Aquinas ST I 75.2, *Summa contra gentiles* (Ed. Leonine, Turin, Marietti, 1946, for a translation see James F. Anderson transl., Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), II 49–51, *Quaestiones de anima*, 1. Suárez argues similarly (*De anima*, I.IX.20).

body to exercise its intellectual capacity.<sup>53</sup> Still, the sense in which intellection does require a body is clearly different from the sense in which the activities the soul confers on the body depend on it. For the soul alone is the subject of inherence for the intellect; whereas other activities belong to the composite or to matter as informed by the soul.<sup>54</sup> In sum, the reason why the soul has a natural aptitude for union with the body is that it needs a body to exercise its faculties.

I have focused on the sense of incompleteness of the soul, but let me briefly touch on body. For the scholastics, there is an important distinction between matter and body. The soul forms a substance and an *ens per se* with prime matter: matter rather than body is the other incomplete substance that is the soul's complement. The body, in Suárez' words, is the "natural being itself [...] that consists of matter and form"<sup>55</sup>. This distinction is important in relation to Leibniz. For the question we are considering is how Leibniz unites soul and *body*: not how he unites soul and *matter*. The significance of this point is complicated, however, since Leibniz' notions of form and matter are not identical with the scholastic ones. I will not attempt to sort out the differences and similarities, but it is important to note the following. In scholasticism the incompleteness of prime matter is obvious: matter is potentiality and without form it is featureless. Prime matter needs substantial form as the actuality for the whole substance. But Leibniz' notion of body is not a notion of something merely in potentiality: a body is an aggregate of substances and contains within itself a multitude of substantial forms. Leibniz himself saw this distinction quite clearly.<sup>56</sup> When he calls body incomplete he will have to give a very different content to that claim than the scholastics did for matter.

Before we turn to Leibniz' notion of incompleteness, it is worth pausing over the intuitive force of this scholastic account of the unity of a substance. On a dualistic account like Descartes's, body and soul

<sup>53</sup> Aquinas, ST I 84.6, 7, 85.1, 86.1. The distinction between the two roles of the imagination is particularly clear at 85.1 ad 5. For Suárez see *De anima*, IV.VII.3. Some scholastics argued that as a result of this dependence the intellectual soul cannot exist without the body. See the references to Gilson and Kessler in fn. 65 below.

<sup>54</sup> The scholastics did think that when the soul is separated from the body it can exercise its intellect, but it does so in a different way, which is not the one *natural* to the human soul, and they regarded this observation as important in relation to the union with the body. See Aquinas, ST I 89.1. Aquinas held that understanding without help of the body is superior *tout court*, but not the best for human beings. Suárez, however, thought that the human soul understands better in separation, although he did regard understanding in union with the body as the mode of understanding *natural* to the soul. See his *De anima* VI.VIII–X.

<sup>55</sup> Disp. XV.V.2.

<sup>56</sup> See especially G IV 572 f., but also, for instance, G II 252, III 657. For discussion of this distinction see Robert Adams, pp. 265–267.

are two different things, distinct subjects of inherence which exercise efficient causality on each other. But on the scholastic account, matter and form constitute a genuine unity in that together they constitute a single subject of inherence: this one single hylomorphic entity is the subject of the activities of a substance.<sup>57</sup> Matter and form play complementary theoretical roles in constituting this single entity, as act and potency.

In this regard matter and form function as causes, but – and this is important – as formal and material, not efficient causes.<sup>58</sup> Suárez does also recognize efficient causality for the soul.<sup>59</sup> But his account of *per se* unity clearly does not rely on it. Indeed, he makes a point of distinguishing the causality of form, which results in the *per se* unity of the composite, from efficient causality:

[... I]f the form is united to matter, it necessarily communicates itself through itself to matter, that is, not by effecting some other similar thing [*aliam similem*], but by communicating its own perfection and entity to matter, and by actuating it in this way. And hence also the composite substantial nature that is *per se* one necessarily emerges. [...] Consequently it must be noted that in this lies the difference between the union, which we have said is the causality of form, and the action which later we will say is the causality of the efficient cause. For an action is the causality of the agent in such a way that, insofar as it is an agent it remains entirely outside of the effect; because, although it communicates itself through its action, it does not do so by giving itself through itself to the effect, but by conferring some similar entity to it. (Disp. XV.VI.7)

Unlike an efficient cause, the formal cause is an intrinsic cause, Suárez points out. This distinction between formal and efficient causality is crucial for our purposes, as we shall see in a moment.

It is now time to turn to Leibniz' notion of incompleteness and its relationship to *per se* unity. Again I will focus on forms or souls. On the scholastic view I have discussed, the incompleteness of even the most independent of forms, the human soul, means that it depends essentially on body for its activity. Both matter and form play a causal

<sup>57</sup> Of course, the scholastic conception of intellection strains against this conception of substances as a unitary subject of inherence. But then it also strained against the conception of the human being as an *ens per se*.

<sup>58</sup> It is interesting to note in this context that the scholastics often insisted on the idea that together matter and form have one act of existence – which may, however, be composed of several partial acts of existence. See Aquinas, ST I 76.1 ad 5. Scholastics who awarded some sort of actuality to matter said that a substance can contain several partial acts of existence. Cf. Suárez, Disp. IV.III.4.

<sup>59</sup> Disp. XVIII.V.2, 3.

role, formal or material, in the operations of a substance. For Leibniz, on the other hand, substantial forms, or monads as he came to call them, are independent from body and causally self-contained. God creates them in such a way that each of them produces every one of its states by itself. No other created entity plays a role in causing them. Similarly, the states of a body are causally independent of its soul or substantial form: their correlation with the states of the soul is explained by the pre-established Harmony.

We have seen that in view of our purposes what matters is the complementarity of act and potency and formal and material causality. In light of this consideration, the first thing to note is this. As we saw in section I, in offering the pre-established Harmony as an account of the union of body and soul Leibniz is clearly concerned with efficient causality. He is not focused on offering a version or simulacrum of a scholastic account of *per se* unity. But secondly, since for him the states of our bodies merely correspond to the states of our soul in accordance with the pre-established Harmony, Leibniz also does not regard body and soul as interdependent as formal and material cause. These states are causally *entirely* independent of each other. And they belong to different, independent entities; they are not modifications of a single hylomorphic subject for which soul and body function as act and potency. Indeed, referring to entities like our souls Leibniz writes to Arnauld that “each individual substance or complete being [*être complet*] is as it were a world apart, independent of anything other than God” (G II 57, L 337). And he calls souls and substantial forms “the only really complete beings” – *les seuls êtres accomplis véritables* (G II 76, AG 79). Furthermore, for Leibniz the *essence* of a substantial form is complete, a view that is most famously expressed in his complete concept view.

It is true that the states of Leibniz’ souls resemble the intellectual states of the scholastics, because the latter inhere in the soul alone. But this resemblance does not bring his view closer to their account of *per se* unity. For in the first place, they regarded the intellect as a source of strain on the unity of the human being. And secondly, the scholastics did think that the intellect depends on the body even though the soul alone is its subject of inherence, whereas Leibniz did not recognize any dependence for the states of a soul on its body. In fact, on one occasion he claims so while also stating the incompleteness of each:

[... T]he mass of these organized corporeal substances that constitutes our body is only united to our soul by this relation that follows from the order of the phenomena natural to each substance separately. And all this shows how one can

say on one hand that soul and body are independent of one another, and on the other hand that one is incomplete without the other, since naturally one is never without the other. (G IV 573)

So the question is now what the incompleteness of body and soul amounts to for Leibniz. One question we need to ask, from a scholastic perspective, is whether the soul is supposed to be incomplete *qua substance*. Leibniz does regard the soul as a substance, and he sometimes calls it incomplete, and he writes that body and soul cannot naturally be without one another. But the basis for these claims in his thought is very different from the basis for the corresponding scholastic ones – and it does not reveal an incompleteness for the soul *qua substance*.<sup>60</sup> As Adams puts it, the reason for the incompleteness of a soul lies in the demands of the pre-established Harmony, which imply that neither can naturally be without the other. Leibniz writes to Lady Masham:

You remark that it seems that organs have no use if the soul is sufficient. I answer that if the soul of Caesar (for instance) was supposed to be alone in nature, the creator could have abstained from giving him organs. But in addition this same creator wanted to produce an infinity of other beings, who are involved in each other's organs. Our body is a kind of world full of an infinity of creatures that also deserved to exist, and if our body were not organized, our microcosmos or little world would not have the entire perfection that it should have, and the great world itself would not be as rich as it is. (G III 356)

The reason Leibniz gives here for his view that the soul of Caesar does not exist without a body is that God wanted to create numerous other entities: doing so enhances the perfection of the universe. But this reason has nothing to do with the question whether the composite of body and soul has *per se* unity. It also has nothing to do with the question whether the soul is complete *qua substance*. Nor does it suggest that Caesar's body and soul cooperate in producing various operations or states of a composite. What Leibniz writes later in the same letter makes this even clearer. He now claims that he does not believe that there are complete entities without extension among creatures:

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Adams writes that Leibniz presents the soul as an incomplete substance in the passage just quoted (p. 272). It is true that Leibniz does present the soul as a substance and as incomplete in this passage, but he does not commit himself to the idea that the soul is incomplete *qua substance*. Certainly, what Leibniz says about incompleteness does not explain why the soul is incomplete *qua substance*. Incidentally, the same can be said about Descartes; whereas he calls body and mind incomplete and substances, he does not think they are incomplete *qua substances* (AT VII 222, CSM II 156 f.). See my *Descartes's Dualism ...*, ch. 5.



[...F]or souls or forms without bodies would be something incomplete, especially since, in my view, the soul is never without animal or something analogous. And God himself is only known to us by way of an idea that includes a relation to extension, that is, to a continuous and ordered variety of the things that exist at the same time and that he produces. (G III 357)

Particularly striking in this passage is Leibniz' comparison between the connection of the soul to the animal (or something analogous) on one hand, and the connection of God to extended things on the other hand: for surely he does not hold that without extended things God fails to be a complete substance, or that with them he constitutes an *unum per se*. Indeed, in light of these observations it is not surprising that Leibniz never invokes the notion of incompleteness to provide an account of *per se* unity, even though he does call body and soul incomplete.

He does connect incompleteness and *per se* unity when he describes the scholastic position:

The opinion of the schools, that soul and matter have something incomplete, is not as absurd as is thought. For matter without souls and forms or entelechies is only passive, and souls without matter would only be active: the complete corporeal substance, genuinely one, that the schools call *unum per se* (as opposed to a being by aggregation) must result from the principle of unity that is active, and the mass that constitutes the multitude and that would only be passive, if it would only contain prime matter. (G IV 572)

But these two entities, soul and prime matter, do not correspond within his own system to the soul and body that are united by the Harmony. Instead they correspond to two aspects of the monad as explained in a letter to De Volder: its primitive active and passive force (G II 252; L 530 f.).<sup>61</sup> In the next sentence Leibniz turns to secondary matter or body, the entity that he does regard as united to the soul by way of the pre-established Harmony. He contrasts secondary matter with prime matter and writes: "Whereas [*Au lieu que*] secondary matter or the mass that constitutes our body has everywhere parts that are themselves complete substances, when they are other animals or organic substances that are animated or actualized separately [*à part*]." He then describes secondary matter as united to the soul in virtue of the Harmony, but his presentation suggests that this union is different from the union of prime matter with the soul described before: "But the mass of these organized corporeal substances that constitutes our body is *only* united to our Soul by way of the relationship that follows the

<sup>61</sup> For this point see also Robert Adams p. 271.

order of phenomena natural to each substance separately [emphasis added].” And he goes on to describe body and soul as incomplete in terms of the Harmony; but now he does not attach the claim that together they constitute an *unum per se*.

In support of his view that Leibniz’ notion of incompleteness affords a strong account of *per se* unity, Adams writes that the pre-established Harmony generates very strong reasons why soul and body demand each other’s existence. These reasons, he writes, are “tantamount to demands of the goodness of God, and surely not weaker than the natural aptitude that matter and substantial form have for each other according to Suárez”<sup>62</sup>. I do not wish to disagree with this claim: if body and soul imply each other’s existence in virtue of God’s goodness the reasons for this mutual implication are indeed very strong. But these reasons are not the *right kind of reasons*: there is nothing about these reasons that explains how body and soul constitute a genuine unity.

This point bears on an important issue about the notion of incompleteness. It is tempting to analyze this notion, and the notion of unity *per se*, in terms of separability. Leibniz himself connects the two ideas (G IV 573). But the account of incompleteness offered by scholastics such as Suárez does not simply consist in claims about the question whether one entity can exist without another. And for them *per se* unity also does not arise from the idea that one thing cannot exist without another – whether naturally or by divine power. Thus Suárez does not define *per se* unity or incompleteness in terms of separability. The question whether two things constitute a *per se* entity in the category of substance is determined by more specific considerations about the actual nature of the entities in question: matter and form complement each other as act and potency. These considerations do have implications for the separability of these entities, but what matters for the notion of *per se* unity, is the *specific kinds of reasons why* there are obstacles to their separability. Thus on the scholastic view, the soul’s nature calls for the existence of its body because it needs the body in order to exercise its functions. It needs to be part of a single hylomorphic entity that is the subject of the functions of a substance for which the soul serves as actuality (ignoring for now complications about the intellect). It is the body-soul composite or ensouled body that performs these functions. On the other hand, for Leibniz the soul alone is the subject of its states and it operates entirely independently of the body. The reason why its existence implies the existence of the body is that

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Adams p. 294.

God wishes to create a number of other creatures and wishes the soul's perceptions to correspond to the states of other entities.<sup>63</sup> Adams may be right that these foundations for inseparability are very strong. But from a scholastic point of view – and I agree – nothing about the nature of these considerations generates an entity that is a genuine unity.

Adams raises the question why Leibniz does not rely more on the notion of incompleteness to account for *per se* unity for corporeal substances. I hope to have explained how far Leibniz' views of body and soul remove him from a scholastic account of *per se* unity for composite substances in terms of incompleteness. Consequently, we can now see why he had reasons for not adopting such an account at all.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless Leibniz did regard the soul as a substantial form. One might well think for historical reasons that his calling the soul the substantial form of the body implies a genuinely Aristotelian conception of the unity of body and soul. After all, the notion of substantial form was central to scholastic accounts of this unity. But in fact there are historical reasons of an entirely different nature that bear on this issue. The Lateran Council of 1513 had demanded that one do so, and Leibniz refers to this demand (G II 75, AG 78). The Council was not

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<sup>63</sup> The fact that the question of separability is not the most fundamental issue for the scholastics is brought out by their notion of a real quality. Generally speaking, qualities are accidents and cannot exist naturally without the substances in which they inhere. But the scholastics recognized a range of qualities, real qualities, that can exist separately by means of God's power. Certainly in Suárez' view there is a similarity between the relationship these qualities bear to their substances and the relationship between matter and form. For substances can exist without their real qualities and vice versa, and matter and form can exist apart from one another. The similarity is especially close for the case of the human being. For the human soul can exist naturally without matter, and a substance can exist naturally without a particular quality. In both cases the converse requires God's power. Yet for Suárez matter and form or soul together constitute an *ens per se*, substance and quality form the paradigm case of an *ens per accidens*. For discussion of this issue, see my *Descartes's Dualism ...*, ch. 4.

<sup>64</sup> I have focused on soul and form. One could argue that Leibniz' account of *per se* unity should instead focus on body, since he frequently claimed that body needs unification by means of form. But this unification will amount to correlations between the states of body and soul which do not result in a genuine, intrinsic unity of the sort the scholastics generated. Furthermore, I have noted that for Leibniz the issue concerns the union between soul and body rather than soul and something like Aristotelian prime matter. In light of this consideration, the issue is for Leibniz in some important respects closer to Descartes's problem of the union of mind and body than to the scholastic problem of the union of matter and form.

concerned with *per se* unity, however, but with the soul's immortality, which for the scholastics strained against its status as substantial form. The pronouncement in question was issued in response to the Averroist view that the human intellect is not part of the human soul, the form of the body. Averroes had inferred that there is only one intellect for all human beings. As a result, a philosophical defense of the individual soul's immortality on the basis of the nature of the intellect became impossible. These views had gained popularity in early sixteenth century Venice. So the Council's concern was not with *per se* unity, but with the immortality and individuation of human intellectual souls.<sup>65</sup>

I do not know what the state of the issue was in Leibniz' time, which, after all, was some two centuries later.<sup>66</sup> But it is important to note that the Lateran Council's pronouncement might make an early modern philosopher refer to the soul as the substantial form of the body without thereby accepting the Aristotelian conception of *per se* unity for the human being.<sup>67</sup>

### Conclusion

Over the course of his life Leibniz expresses considerable satisfaction with his account of the union of body and soul in terms of pre-established Harmony. I have argued that this satisfaction concerns the union

<sup>65</sup> For the pronouncement by the Lateran Council see *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, p. 482 f., art. 1440 f., and p. 390, art. 901. The issues that provoked these statements from the Lateran Council are discussed in detail by Étienne Gilson, "Autour de Pomponazzi: problématique de l'immortalité de l'âme en Italie au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle" and "L'affaire de l'immortalité de l'âme à Venise au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle" (both in Gilson, *Humanisme et Renaissance*, Paris, Vrin, 1983). See also Kessler, "The Intellectual Soul", *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, and Jill Kraye eds., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 500–507.

<sup>66</sup> For a relevant condemnation that occurred in 1706, see Leibniz' correspondence with des Bosses, G II 312–314. The English of the list of condemned propositions can be found in Roger Ariew, "Descartes and Scholasticism: the Intellectual Background to Descartes' Thought", *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, John Cottingham ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 58–90, pp. 89 f.

<sup>67</sup> These considerations are also important in relation to Descartes, who occasionally called the human soul a substantial form. When he does so, he is clearly concerned with immortality rather than with the *per se* unity of the human being. See the letter to Regius of January 1642, AT III 503, 505, CSM III 207 f. I discuss this issue in ch. 5 of my *Descartes's Dualism ...*

as explanation of the correlation of the states of body and soul, their apparent interaction. Contrary to what scholars have thought, this level of optimism on Leibniz' part is entirely compatible with his claim in the response to Tournemine that he had never boasted of the advantages of his account over an occasionalist one. For this claim concerns a different type of union: *per se* unity. Interpreters have thought that during his middle years Leibniz thought that the Harmony also generates *per se* unity. But as some have pointed out, it is hard to see how the Harmony could do so. I have suggested that Leibniz himself would have agreed. And I have proposed that in his middle years he merely tried to offer something corresponding to *per se* unity and save certain aspects of this notion, in particular identity over time. But in my view, it is unlikely he had illusions about his ability to offer the real thing.

Leibniz' writings contain notions that were used in scholasticism to account for the *per se* unity of composite substances: the notions of substantial form and incompleteness. Robert Adams has proposed that Leibniz could have relied on his notion of incompleteness to supplement the Harmony. But I argued that this notion is too far removed from its presumed scholastic equivalent, which was indeed used to account for the *per se* unity of composite substances. Consequently, this notion cannot help improve prospects for genuine *per se* unity in Leibniz' thought. In fact, the comparison with scholastics like Suárez showed just how far Leibniz' notions of body and soul remove him from the scholastic hylomorphic account of *per se* unity in terms of a substantial form.<sup>68</sup>

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