

A Defense of a Monadological Analysis in Leibniz's Middle Years

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PHILOSOPHERS commonly read *The Monadology* as a confident assertion of Leibniz's views about the foundations of his metaphysics. Most agree that during his later years, Leibniz holds that only monads are ultimately real substances.¹ His confidence about what qualifies as a substance is somewhat lacking, however, in texts written in the 1680s and 1690s. As a result, giving an explanation of the foundations of his middle-years metaphysics has become one of the most widely contested projects in contemporary Leibniz scholarship. The traditional view is that Leibniz endorses a monadological theory and characterizes only monads as ultimately real substances (Adams; Sleight). Recently, however, many scholars have suggested that he endorses a corporeal substance theory and qualifies corporeal substances as ultimately real substances (Garber; Levey).

I will present a new argument in support of the traditional view by drawing a parallel between the underlying motivations of Leibniz's metaphysical project and the foundational concerns typically associated with Agrippan skepticism.² For the purposes of this discussion I will call the underlying methodological principles embodied by the Agrippan mode of criticism "Agrippan Foundational Principles" or "AFPs" for short.

¹This point is contested by some scholars. For example, see Hartz's "Why Corporeal Substances Keep Popping Up in Leibniz's Later Philosophy" and Phemister's "Corporeal Substances and the Discourse on Metaphysics."

²For inspiring my interest in the relevance of Agrippan skepticism, I am indebted to Paul Franks and his book *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*.

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Conspicuously conscious of certain rules that cannot be broken, Leibniz employs the AFPs to criticize other metaphysicians of his day. Charity, I argue, requires that Leibniz not be seen as breaking these rules himself. This sanctions the move from a philosophical point to an interpretative one. Assuming that Leibniz was consistently applying the AFPs to his metaphysics in his middle years, a powerful case can be made for the claim that he would have been compelled to reject the corporeal substance theory and to endorse a monadological analysis.

The Intractable Debate

Though it is explicit that substances constitute the foundation of Leibniz's metaphysics, the scholarly literature is divided with respect to how exactly to understand his views of substance and, more specifically, what qualifies as a substance.³

Those who attribute the monadological theory to Leibniz claim that he characterizes only monads as individual substances. Monads, composed of primary matter and further substantial forms, are simple, indivisible, unified, mind or soul-like entities. I will note that during his middle years, Leibniz does not use the term "monad." This observation, however, is inconsequential to the attribution of the views in question. As I understand it, the term "substantial form" in texts from Leibniz's middle years is extensionally equivalent to the term "monad" in later-Leibniz. For brevity, I use these terms interchangeably.⁴ Those who attribute the monadological theory to Leibniz claim that he holds an idealistic or phenomenistic view of the universe. The consequence of such a view is that reality is ultimately all mental and immaterial; matter is not fundamentally real. Corporeal substances (e.g., human beings understood as composites of matter and substantial form) are distinguished from other bodies insofar as their unity is on a firmer footing. Like all bodies, however, corporeal substances are phenomenal and not fundamentally real. This means that talk about the properties of corporeal substances, such as extension, motion, or shape, ultimately reduces to talk about the properties of monads. On this view, only monads qualify as fundamental substances.

³ In this discussion, I follow Sleight (98–103).

⁴ Using these terms interchangeably does not amount to begging the question. Leibniz, in his middle years, characterizes substantial forms as simple, indivisible, unified, mind or soul-like entities. Later-Leibniz characterizes monads in the same way. It will make no difference to my argument whether I refer to these entities as "monads" or as "substantial forms": whether Leibniz includes monads (or substantial forms) in his system is not at issue here—both the monadological and the corporeal substance theory qualify monads (or substantial forms) as substances. At issue is whether Leibniz includes only monads (or substantial forms) in his system. See Sleight (98–103).

Proponents of the corporeal substance theory claim that Leibniz regards both corporeal substances and, in some respects, substantial forms as individual substances. On this view, corporeal substances are not phenomenal. They qualify as ultimately real, fundamental substances because there are truths about their modes (extension, motion, shape, etc.) that are not analyzable in terms of properties of substantial forms. Corporeal substances consist of aggregates of further corporeal substances, and this combination is unified into a single individual by a substantial form (of which there are infinitely many, each the form of some corporeal substance). There are also infinitely many extended things that are mere aggregates of corporeal substances. On this view, the entire created world is decomposable into created corporeal substances and their substantial forms.

It might seem odd that the proponents of these competing theories propose such distinct interpretations of the foundations of Leibniz's metaphysics, especially given that they are interpreting the same texts. Leibniz's middle-years views of substance, however, are elusive *precisely* because the texts suggest both interpretations. While many passages in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and the *Correspondence with Arnauld* seem to favor ascription of the corporeal substance theory,⁵ there is also a significant number of passages suggesting that only monads are to be considered fundamental substances.⁶ On what grounds, then, is one to decide which view to attribute to Leibniz?

Agrippan Foundational Principles

To decide which theory of substance to attribute to Leibniz, one must consider the crucial underlying question of the debate: what, according to Leibniz, makes up the ultimate constituents of the universe (that to which the entire created world is reducible)? The answer to this question will reveal whether he thinks that monads alone, or both corporeal substances and substantial forms, qualify as substances.⁷ Thus the question is whether,

⁵See, for an example, his October 9, 1687 letter to Arnauld: "Man . . . is an entity endowed with a genuine unity conferred on him by his soul, notwithstanding the fact that a mass of his body is divided into organs, vessels, humors, spirits, and that the parts are undoubtedly full of an infinite number of other corporeal substances endowed with their own forms" ("Correspondence with Arnauld" 120).

⁶See, for an example, Sleight, who cites a passage from a draft of the *Discourse*: "I agree that a particle of matter will never become a single being, speaking in metaphysical rigor, whatever soul is given to it, but it is the soul that is a true being" (108).

⁷Important to this discussion is a specific meaning of the term "substance" understood as "substance *in concreto*." According to Robert Sleight, "In the seventeenth century, a theory telling us

during his middle years, Leibniz holds that monads alone or both corporeal substances and monads constitute the foundation of the universe. In what follows, I suggest both a way of tackling this question and what I consider the most plausible answer.

Leibniz's position about metaphysical foundations begins to emerge during his middle years. In the next section, I will argue that Leibniz's work reflects the underlying principles of the Agrippan mode of criticism (the AFPs). First, however, I will describe Agrippan skepticism and address two issues I anticipate to be points of contention: (1) how Agrippan skepticism, given that it addresses epistemic concerns, can be extended to the metaphysical domain, and (2) why, epistemology aside, Agrippan Foundational Principles should be read into Leibniz's project at all.

Essentially, Agrippan skepticism is a dialectical strategy applied to individual theoretical claims to show, in agreement with ancient skepticism, that no such claim is ever justified. The aim is to show that all efforts to justify a claim will lead either to arbitrary supposition, vicious circularity, or an infinite regress.⁸ These three ills comprise what has come to be called the Agrippan trilemma.⁹

To make clear the Agrippan mode of criticism, I will outline the basic structure of an argument between an Agrippan skeptic and a dogmatist. The dogmatist puts forth some claim *P* and the skeptic claims that *P* is not justified, either because of diversity of opinion (i.e., there are plausible alternatives to *P*), or relativity of opinion (i.e., *P* is relative only to the context of the dogmatist). The dogmatist must then provide an argument to show that *P* is the only plausible option and not merely subjective to context. The skeptic will then argue that the justification for *P* leads to arbitrary supposition, to vicious circularity, or to an infinite regress.

A justification involving arbitrary supposition is a proof that, in order to provide support for its conclusion, appeals to some random, illogical reason. A justification containing vicious circularity is a proof that either appeals to a premise that states the conclusion or in some way presupposes the truth of the conclusion. A justification involving an infinite regress

what were the substances *in concreto* was a theory about the ultimate furniture of the universe. Substances *in concreto*, with their properties, were taken to constitute the base on which every other fact about the universe supervened" (98). Substances *in concreto*, then, are the ultimate constituents of the universe.

⁸ For a description, see Empiricus (72–75). (Note: Sextus does not credit Agrippa with the modes of skepticism: this attribution comes from Diogenes Laertius.) For further discussion, see Barnes (37–39).

⁹ Agrippa is associated with five modes: discrepancy, relativity, infinite regress, circularity, and arbitrary presupposition. Following Franks (see footnote 2), I focus on the three latter modes, which compose the trilemma and which aim to show that the reasoning process cannot be completed in a satisfactory way.

results from the requirement that all premises in a proof have to be, themselves, justified. Each premise requires a further premise to justify it; the justifying premise requires a further premise to justify it, and so on, *ad infinitum*. A justification implicated as containing arbitrariness, vicious circularity or an infinite regress will not qualify as satisfactory. The Agrippan skeptic prevails if he or she shows that the claim lacks justification.

Epistemic concerns with giving complete justifications can parallel concerns with giving satisfactory metaphysical accounts of foundations. In this extension of Agrippan skepticism, I follow Paul Franks. Although his focus is not on Leibnizian metaphysics, he emphasizes the general point that the basic structure of Agrippan skepticism can be extended to the metaphysical domain. According to Franks,

The Agrippan trilemma is often discussed as if it were an exclusively epistemological topic. . . . But in fact the trilemma can arise whenever what is at stake is the nature of reasons, which need not only be reasons why someone believes something, but may also be reasons why . . . something is the something it is. (20)

Suggesting an understanding of Agrippan style argumentation that is neutral between epistemic and ontic reasons, Franks talks of grounds, including metaphysical grounds (20).¹⁰ This broad conception of grounding motivates an extended understanding of Agrippan argumentative strategies applied to domains or reasoning. The idea is that the Agrippan strategy can be extended to challenge answers to *why* questions, whether they be epistemic (“How do you know?”) or metaphysical (“How did this come to be?”).

Skepticism about epistemic grounding (i.e., about reasons and justification) can be extended to concerns about the coherence of theories of metaphysical grounding (i.e., about what the world is fundamentally made up of). According to the principles embodied by the Agrippan strategy (the AFPs), grounding cannot be arbitrary, circular, or lead to an infinite regress. Understood in this broad sense, the AFPs can be extended to challenge whether any metaphysical account can be properly “grounded.” The worry in the metaphysical domain is not that reasons are subject to doubt and thus that complete justification is impossible. The worry is that definitions of substance are objectionable and thus so too is the metaphysical account of what underlies the “stuff” in the world. Substances, then, are to a metaphysical account as the grounds of a belief are to the belief itself. Thus the restrictions that the AFPs impose on metaphysical grounding apply to any proper account of substance.

¹⁰ Franks says that “metaphysical grounding may be conceived as escaping—in the Leibnizian tradition, is conceived *in order* to escape—the Agrippan Trilemma” (20).

One might argue that it is not clear how arbitrariness, vicious circularity and infinite regress would be problematic in metaphysics. It might be argued by a theist, for example, that we must arbitrarily presuppose the existence of God in order to reach the conclusion that the world is intelligible. The theist might even present this as an unproblematic assumption for which no additional argument is necessary. There is no reason to see ills of this kind, however, as more pernicious in the epistemic case than in other cases (and, for example in the preceding case, which involves a metaphysical claim). Ills of this kind are problematic for any explanation. Explanations are judged as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. It is fair to assume that, to be deemed satisfactory, an explanation (regardless of its content) must meet certain conditions, including justificatory conditions. If *any* explanation involves arbitrariness, circularity, or infinite regress, then it fails to meet such conditions and is therefore unsatisfactory.

One might still resist the idea that Leibniz is concerned with epistemology or Agrippan skepticism at all.¹¹ My thesis, however, is not that Leibniz was focused on epistemology or even directly engaging with Agrippan skepticism. My thesis rests on the idea that the same methodological principles (AFPs) that moved Agrippan skepticism also moved Leibniz, but in the realm of metaphysics. These AFPs (although not labeled as such, and perhaps not even explicitly linked to Agrippa) certainly would have been salient in the era in which Leibniz wrote. These are indeed principles which Leibniz's entire body of philosophy seems to employ. Whatever may be said about Leibniz's epistemological concerns, his work reflects these underlying AFPs.

I will make lucid the parallel between Leibniz's metaphysical concerns and the general philosophical concerns underlying Agrippan skepticism by elaborating on first, Leibniz's position with respect to substance and metaphysical foundations; and second, his endorsement of the AFPs.

A Leibnizian Endorsement of the AFPs

The aim of Leibniz's metaphysics mirrors the aim of the dogmatist's attempt to escape the Agrippan trilemma. The aim of the dogmatist is to

¹¹ I note, however, that several points can be made in response. First, as R.H. Popkin has argued, Leibniz had robust epistemological concerns. Popkin notes that three of Leibniz's correspondents (Simon Foucher, Bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet, and Pierre Bayle) were leading skeptics of the time and "several of [Leibniz's] most famous presentations of philosophy were published as answers to the skeptics or to deal with problems they had presented to him" (262). Moreover, Popkin observes that Leibniz's *Specimen Dynamicum* was an attempt to answer the ancient skeptic, Sextus Empiricus (268). Given that Sextus discusses the five tropes, it is likely that concerns with Agrippan skepticism were available to Leibniz. It is also worth noting that Descartes, in his *Meditations*, explicitly expresses concerns with skepticism and grounding. Leibniz might well have been influenced by such motivations of the Cartesian project.

put forth a rational, complete, perhaps self-evident or self-justified first principle which acts as a foundation on which other claims can be justifiably made. One method of answering the Agrippan skeptic in the metaphysical domain is to posit an absolute ground with ultimate explanatory power. This is precisely what Leibniz seems to be after. This aim is reflected in his April 30, 1687 letter to Arnauld where Leibniz writes, “As long as we do not discern what a complete being, or rather a substance, really is, we will never have something at which we can stop; [[and this is the only way of establishing solid and real principles]]” (*Philosophical Essays* 90).

Leibniz's very project, then, seems to reflect concerns with answering Agrippan worries about foundations. What is more, during his middle years, Leibniz employs the AFPs against his contemporaries. Let us consider each facet of the trilemma in isolation and explore the mirroring concerns expressed by Leibniz.

Arbitrary Supposition

During his middle years, Leibniz expresses his methodological commitments with respect to avoiding arbitrary supposition in a number of ways. I focus on his critique of occasionalism and his frequent appeals to an absolute, non-arbitrary grounding in the formulation of his own system.

Leibniz expresses concerns with avoiding arbitrary supposition in his discussion of mind-body interaction where he criticizes occasionalism and introduces his pre-established harmony. Occasionalism—also known as the “way of assistance”—is the view that on the occasion of something happening in one's mind, God causes something to happen in one's body. Leibniz rejects this account precisely because it involves an arbitrary supposition. He says, “This is to bring a *deus ex machina* into natural and everyday things, where reason says that God should intervene only in the way in which he concurs with all other natural things” (“Third Explanation of the New System” 192). Occasionalism, according to Leibniz, is not a natural resolution to a problem of mind-body interaction. It is unmotivated and *ad hoc*. We can discern from this criticism a commitment to avoiding arbitrary supposition in a metaphysical account.

Leibniz, moreover, shows a concern with avoiding arbitrary supposition in the formulation of his own system. To ground his own system, he frequently appeals to an absolute, non-arbitrary ground consisting in God and created substances, both of which have explanatory power. Of particular importance are his early formulations of the principle of sufficient reason, as observed by Christia Mercer. According to Mercer, during

Leibniz's middle years, he asserts that there is a complete *ratio* for everything (*Leibniz's Metaphysics: Its Origins and Development* 89).¹² This principle, Mercer says,

is an articulation of Leibniz's fundamental commitment to the harmony and intelligibility of the world. Against the background of the notion of a complete *ratio*, the view seems to be that for everything in the world, there is a complete explanation of exactly why it and no other came about. (90)

Leibniz's commitment to avoiding the arbitrary is contained in his commitment to the principle of sufficient reason. This principle, which essentially states that everything is what it is, and every event occurs as it does, for some sufficient reason, embodies a strong aversion to the arbitrary.

Vicious Circularity

If we consider the fundamental goal of Leibniz's metaphysical project, and also what vicious circularity would amount to in the metaphysical domain, then it becomes clear that Leibniz would have rejected vicious circularity in an explanation. His principle of sufficient reason suggests not only that he was concerned with avoiding arbitrary supposition, but also that he was concerned with evading vicious circularity. I will note that vicious circularity in any attempt to justify a claim is generally offensive. What I intend to show is that it would be especially offensive for Leibniz.

Leibniz's metaphysical project, much like the projects of the other early modern rationalists, was motivated by a fundamental desire to make the world intelligible. With this goal in mind, Leibniz would certainly not have entertained vicious circularity in a metaphysical explanation.

Here it is helpful to consider the distinction between the concept of an "explanandum" and the concept of an "explanans." The former is what is being explained and the latter is what is doing the explaining. Consider the following explanandum: "This is the best of all possible worlds." As discussed in the preceding section, Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason states that everything is what it is, and every event occurs as it does, for some sufficient reason. According to the principle of sufficient reason, there must be some explanans which acts as the sufficient reason for the explanandum, and explains why this is the best of all possible worlds and why it should not be otherwise. For Leibniz, the explanans would be that "God always wills the best." It is because God always wills the best that this

¹² Note that *ratio* is translated from Latin as "account" or "reason."

is the best of all possible worlds. Notice that this explanation would be viciously circular if the explanandum and explanans were the same. We would yield the following unsatisfying explanation: It is because this is the best of all possible worlds that this is the best of all possible worlds.

The principle of sufficient reason is somewhat of a bridge between the explanandum and the explanans. It is because of the way the principle of sufficient reason is formulated that both concepts are needed. For the world to be intelligible, the sufficient reason (the explanans) cannot be identical to that which needs to be explained (the explanandum). If we suppose that Leibniz would have allowed vicious circularity in his metaphysical explanations, we also have to suppose that he would be willing to forfeit his goal of making the world intelligible. This would certainly be an uncharitable reading.

Infinite Regress

Leibniz's methodological commitment to avoiding infinite regress is revealed by his critique of the Cartesian conception of substance. More specifically, he shows this commitment by rejecting Cartesian matter on the grounds that matter consisting in mere extension is incoherent because it would be infinitely divisible.

A substance for Leibniz needs to be a complete unity. Cartesian matter, in virtue of occurring as a being by aggregation, has no more unity, metaphysically speaking, than a slab of marble. Leibniz says:

A slab of marble is perhaps only like a heap of stones, and so could never pass for a single substance, but only for an assemblage of many substances. . . . For imagine there were two stones, for example the diamond of the Grand Duke and that of the Great Mongul. . . . Even [if we] bring them into contact they will not be any more substantially united. ("Correspondence with Arnauld" 115)

According to Leibniz, then, anything that is essentially extended lacks unity. He argues that this is problematic for an account of substance.

Leibniz's argument runs as follows. Cartesian matter is essentially extended, and since anything that is extended is infinitely divisible into parts, Cartesian matter is infinitely divisible into parts. Since it is a being by aggregation, Cartesian matter must derive its reality from its parts. Because it is infinitely divisible, however, Cartesian matter has no parts from which it can derive its reality. The matter will be divided into parts over and over again without ever hitting rock bottom. Leibniz says:

Every extended mass can be considered as made up of two, or a thousand others. Extension comes only from contact. Thus you will never find a body of which we can say that it is truly a substance: it will always be an aggregation of many substances. Or rather, it will never be a real being, since the parts which make it up face just the same difficulty, and so we never arrive at a real being, because beings by aggregation can have only as much reality as there is in their ingredients. (“Correspondence with Arnauld” 115–16)

If there is no foundation, there will not be any fundamental beings from which the parts can derive their reality. The idea is that since Cartesian matter is infinitely indivisible, there are no ultimate constituents from which it can derive its reality. It is not, concludes Leibniz, ultimately real. Using the Agrippan mode of argument as a tool to criticize Cartesian matter, Leibniz reveals a commitment to avoiding infinite regress when giving a coherent account of substance.

Leibniz seems particularly keen, then, to criticize other metaphysicians for committing arbitrary suppositions, vicious circularity and regress in their theories of the ultimate constituents of the universe. It also seems evident that he is trying to avoid these offences in formulating his own system.¹³ It is worth noting that Leibniz is not unique or peculiar for endorsing something like the AFPs and wanting to avoid arbitrariness, circularity, or regress; these are offences that no one wants to commit. Considering his commitment to the AFPs in the metaphysical domain, however, is illuminating for our discussion because, as I argue in the next section, it would preclude him from adhering to the corporeal substance theory.

Corporeal Substances: An Inconsistent Endorsement

To decide whether to attribute the corporeal substance or monodological theory to Leibniz, we must consider each position against the question of what, according to Leibniz, makes up the ultimate constituents of the universe. The corporeal substance theory is attributable to Leibniz only if he holds that both substantial forms and corporeal substances are substances. I argue, however, that in light of his commitments to the AFPs, Leibniz would not have been able to consistently hold that corporeal substances are ultimate constituents of the universe.

¹³ It is worth noting that I am maintaining neutrality on the question of whether or not a commitment to the AFPs in the realm of metaphysics is a sound one (i.e., whether it is advantageous to think about substance in the way that the skeptics think about justification and whether this is a clever or an absurd move on Leibniz’s part).

Leibniz, as I have shown, employs the Agrippan Foundational Principles to criticize other metaphysicians of his day. If we are attempting to provide a reasonably charitable interpretation of Leibniz's metaphysics of his middle years, we cannot read him running afoul of the AFPs himself. It is true that charity requires that we try to read people as presenting positions that are not arbitrary, viciously circular, or infinitely regressive. There is, however, a special reason to read Leibniz as presenting a consistent position given that he is conspicuously conscious of these offences when committed by others. In endorsing the corporeal substance theory, however, Leibniz would be allowing for at least an infinite regress, and perhaps even arbitrary supposition.

In his middle years, Leibniz criticizes the Cartesian account of the ultimate constituents of the universe, where both mental and material substances are understood as substances fundamental to reality. This system, according to Leibniz, is flawed because Cartesian matter is infinitely divisible, lacks substantial unity, and has no ultimate constituents from which it could derive its reality. Just as epistemic grounding cannot involve an infinite regress of reasons, with no fundamental reason from which reasons derive their justification, metaphysical grounding cannot involve an infinite regress of parts, with no fundamental being from which parts derive their reality. Thus, absolute metaphysical grounding, argues Leibniz, cannot involve infinite regress.

According to the corporeal substance theory, however, corporeal substances would be subdivided *ad infinitum*: "each corporeal substance involves an 'infinite descent' in the sense that each corporeal substance is composed of other corporeal substances, each of which is similarly composed—without end" (Sleigh 98). Any given corporeal substance can be divided into a composite of matter and substantial form. The form, in virtue of being unified and indivisible, could function as an ultimate constituent of the universe because it would derive its reality from itself. The matter, on the other hand, just like a piece of Cartesian matter, would be subject to further division. It would be divided into another composite of matter and form, the matter from that combination subdivided again, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Leibniz could not have consistently tolerated this result. It is not clear, given its infinite descent, that the matter constituting corporeal substances would have any parts from which to derive its reality. Given that in his middle years Leibniz rules out Cartesian matter on account of the infinite regress argument, it seems strange that, *in the same period*, he would allow for it in his own system. In tandem with his critique of Cartesian matter, Leibniz attempts to posit a new system—a rival account of the ultimate furniture of the universe. To attribute to Leibniz a rival account that

is susceptible to the same charge of infinite regress as the account that he rules out would seem a less-than-charitable interpretation. If he were consistent, Leibniz would have been precluded from endorsing the corporeal substance theory.¹⁴

An advocate of the corporeal substance theory might, in response, argue that a substantial form would unify the corporeal substance to form a unified entity and thus, a real substance. It is not clear, however, that Leibniz would have been able to account for the unification of corporeal substances.¹⁵ Discussing the metaphysical union in a letter to De Volder, Leibniz claims that since he has no notion or acquaintance of it, he cannot explain it. In a reply to Tournemine, he says that we only have obscure notions of the union (Rozemond 163). To account for the unification problem, Leibniz might just have to appeal to some arbitrary explanation (such as “it just has to be the case”).¹⁶ In doing so, however, he would be contradicting the AFPs. If we are going to interpret Leibniz as consistent, we cannot interpret him as running afoul of the commitment to avoiding the arbitrary.

Even if Leibniz could give a non-arbitrary answer to the unification problem of a corporeal substance, he still seems to think that the substance is analyzed in terms of a form plus an aggregate. The corporeal substance theory, then, would still involve infinite regress. If we consider the corporeal substance theory against the crucial underlying question of

¹⁴ An objection might be raised by the advocate of the corporeal substance theory who questions what should be made of passages that appear to lend support to the corporeal substance theory. They might argue that such passages suggest that Leibniz was not moved by an urge to avoid the horns of the trilemma. In response, I point to Sleight’s helpful explanation of such passages. He claims that Leibniz supported the corporeal substance theory only superficially because it was compatible with his church reunion project (115). Corporeal substances are compatible with Catholic doctrine (the Eucharist, for example). Notwithstanding this superficial endorsement, Leibniz did not, himself, actually believe that corporeal substances would qualify as substances. Given that passages suggesting the corporeal substance theory might not actually reflect Leibniz’s actual views, it would be too quick to say that he was not moved by the horns of the trilemma. (Thanks to Jennifer Nagel for raising this objection.)

¹⁵ An objection might be raised here that Leibniz did not realize this problem at the time, and once he did, he abandoned the corporeal substance theory for the monadological theory. As observed by Marleen Rozemond, however, it is not clear that Leibniz ever thought he had a solution to the unification problem. (Thanks to Marleen Rozemond for raising this objection.)

¹⁶ One might argue that Leibniz’s pre-established harmony thesis constitutes a resolution to the unification problem. As explained by Rozemond, although Leibniz sometimes refers to his account of soul-body interaction as the issue of the union of the body and soul, there is a distinction between them. Pre-established harmony gives an account of one kind of union, namely, body-soul interaction, but does not answer the further question of how the body and soul are united to form a genuine unity as opposed to an accidental one. Although Leibniz claims that his pre-established harmony gives an adequate account of the interaction, he is not as adamant that it provides an explanation of the genuine union.

the debate, it does not seem that Leibniz would have been able to adhere to this theory. Given the infinite division aspect of corporeal substances and his commitment to the AFPs, Leibniz could not have consistently qualified corporeal substances as ultimate constituents and hence, as substances. The corporeal substance theory, therefore, does not seem a reasonably charitable interpretation of Leibniz's views.

Defense of a Monadological Analysis

We must now consider the monadological theory against the question of what, according to Leibniz, makes up the ultimate constituents of the universe. A monadological analysis is attributable to Leibniz only if he holds that monads, and *only* monads, are substances. Given Leibniz's commitment to the AFPs, he could consistently endorse a picture in which only monads constitute the ultimate constituents of the universe. Given that they are simple, indivisible unities, and also that they have explanatory power, monads seem to be the only kind of substance that could provide a non-arbitrary, non-circular, non-regressive, and ultimate stopping ground.

A monistic conception of substance, where the ultimate constituents of the universe are complete, simple, and indivisible, would not be susceptible to charges of arbitrary supposition, vicious circularity, or infinite regress. Assuming, then, that Leibniz was consistently applying the AFPs to his metaphysics in his middle years, the most viable interpretation of his views of substance is the monadological analysis.

Final Remarks

It is true that Leibniz's confidence regarding the extension of the term "substance" is somewhat lacking in his middle years. Although this initially made the debate concerning his views of substance seem intractable, I do not think this need be the case.

I have shown that Leibniz's work in his middle years reflects the Agrippan Foundational Principles. Such a demonstration should put the once intractable debate into perspective. Charity, as I have argued, sanctions the move from a philosophical point to an interpretative one. The philosophical point is that Leibniz's project expresses a commitment to the AFPs. Leibniz, however, does not explicitly endorse the AFPs as guiding his project, nor does he explicitly say such a commitment precludes him from including corporeal substances in the extension of the term substance. Despite the absence of such claims, and based on the philosophical point, we can make an interpretative point. If we

consider Leibniz's commitment to AFPs, and assume that he was consistently applying the AFPs to his metaphysics in his middle years, only one interpretation of his view of substance seems plausible. Given that Leibniz would be unable to explain the unity of a corporeal substance, the corporeal substance theory might be susceptible to the charge of arbitrary supposition. Whether or not Leibniz could account for the unification problem, the corporeal substance theory would still allow for an unacceptable subdivision to infinity. In light of such considerations, Leibniz could not have consistently endorsed corporeal substances as constituting the ultimate constituents of the universe: they could not have qualified as substances. The most charitable interpretation of Leibniz's middle-years views of substance, then, assuming that he was consistently applying the AFPs to his metaphysics, is the monadological analysis.¹⁷

¹⁷ For helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper, I am indebted to Marleen Rozemond, Mohan Matthen, Peter Ludlow, and Jennifer Nagel, to the participants of the 2007 Philosophical Research Seminar at the University of Toronto, and to Liam Brown and Brian Wayment, associate editors of *Aporia*.

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