

REINTRODUCTION OF THE ARISTOTELIAN ENTELECHY IN LEIBNIZ'S THEORY OF SUBSTANCE IN THE 17TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT. *Entelechy is one of the key Aristotelian concepts. Leibniz reintroduced this term to his Monadology to explain his thought of substance and active cosmology. As opposed to Cartesian conception and atomism, Leibniz thinks that every substance has entelechy which can transform potential into reality. He says the entelechy's substance has three elements: dominant entelechy, subordinate entelechy, matter. Passive matter constitutes the aggregate body, while the primary force or entelechy controls the whole corporeal substance and has permanent impact. All these living substances compose the universe, so the entire universe is full of entelechies and their activities.*

KEYWORDS: *Aristotelian entelechy, Leibniz, monad, active force, passive force, corporeal substance*

Monadology is the definite summary of Leibniz philosophy. The term 'monad' from Monadology has the same meaning of "unity, or what is one" in Leibniz's book Principles of Nature and Grace. (GP IV, 598/ AG 207/ L 636) The etymology of the term comes from the Ancient Greek, 'monas' means 'one thing'. Leibniz first used this term in relation to the individual substance or single unity in his book "New System of the Nature and Communication", in 1695.

According to Leibniz, each monad is a simple substance. Simplicity is the essence of monad because it cannot be divided into any parts. This is opposite to the view of atomism. Monad has no parts. It cannot be destroyed in the natural course of event, but exclusively by annihilation. Monad is created by God and disappears only if God deliberately annihilates it. In others words, Leibniz believes that there is birth and no death of the Monad. There is only a kind of the awakening in birth and a slipping into the deep stupor-like sleep in death. The origination of this thought is found in the concept of entelechy by Aristotle. Leibniz says, 'primitively, active force, which Aristotle calls first entelechy and one commonly calls the form of a substance, is another natural principle which, together with matter or passive force, completes a corporeal substance.' (On Body and Force: GP IV, 395/ AG 252)

1. Aristotelian notion of entelechy

The term of entelechy is originated from the Greek word 'entelekheia', which means 'to have perfection'. For Aristotle, it means 'the condition in which a potentiality has become an actuality.' The notion of substantial form is equivalent to the notion of entelechy in the philosophies of Leibniz and Aristotle. Matter exists together with entelechy as a complete being. If matter is without entelechy, then it is

only the primary matter, with bare potentiality, and it cannot be realized by itself. The concept is intimately connected with Aristotle's distinction between matter and form, or the potential and real. He thinks that each thing is realized by making the material or element composed by a certain form. The entelechy is the essence and the actual activity. Aristotelian entelechy has the same meaning as the mind or soul in living substance in philosophical conceptions of the 17th century. As the substance, matter and form, body and mind cannot be separated in Aristotelism. However, things changed in the 17th century.

As for Aristotle, the entelechy has different kinds. He distinguishes first and second entelechies. The first entelechy makes the substance's ability to exhibit or become what it really is. The second entelechy is the actual exercise of the first entelechy, in its first's capacity.

In Monadology, Leibniz gives his understanding of entelechy, '[o]ne can give the name 'entelechy' to all simple substances or created monads entelechies, because they have in themselves a certain perfection (*echousi to enteles*); there is a sufficiency (*autarkeia*) that makes them to sources of their internal actions, and, so to speak, incorporeal automata.' (§18: GP VI, 609-10/ AG 215/ L 644)

Leibniz thinks that all monads are self-sufficient and spontaneous, and possess a degree of perfection that characterizes the entelechy.¹ Leibniz considers that all nature is full of entelechies, while Descartes claims that just human soul has the substantial form or entelechy. He says, '[t]here is reason to think that there is an infinite of souls, or to speak more generally, of primary entelechies, which have something analogous to perception and appetite, and that all of them are souls and always remain substantial forms of bodies.' (New Essay, 3.6.24: A VI vi, 318/GP V, 297/ RB 318)

All substances in the nature possess organic bodies and share the basic qualities of perception and appetite, but they differ according to the degree of distinctness of their perception. This hierarchy can also be described in terms of a hierarchy of primitive active forces.

Leibniz's primitive force and derivative force correspond to the Aristotelian first entelechy and second entelechy. According to Leibniz, the primary or first entelechy is the soul and the derivative or secondary entelechy is 'involved in the conception of conatus, and of force and impetus.' (New Essay, 2.22.11: A VI vi, 216/GP V, 200/ RB 216) The primary force is the dominant entelechy having permanent effect on the monad or substance.

In the Theodicy Leibniz gives his public admission of the same meaning of the terms 'entelechy', 'soul', 'mind' and 'substantial form' in his thought. But Leibniz never admits primary matter in public. Although his monad is always interpreted as the Cartesian soul-like substance, he never diminishes the existence of the body. He says that each living animal, plant and other corporeal substance have the entelechy. Primary matter is the foundation upon which is built the body to which the entelechy necessary relates. If there is the body from which the soul or entelechy is never

¹ See Theodicy, §87; GP VI, 150/H 170; Monadology, §48: GP VI, 615/ AG 219/ L 647.

separated, then there must be primary matter as well. Leibniz uses the term entelechy in order to show that his notion is more close to the philosophy of Aristotle than to Plato and Descartes.

2. Against atomism

Leibniz shows his antagonism in his early writings. He says ‘a material thing cannot simultaneously be material and perfectly indivisible’ (GP IV, 478-9/ AG 139/ L 454). Once the material atom is indivisible, it should face the problem of being integrated into the unity, which is how to explain that they conjoin together. In the contrast, if the material atom is not truly indivisible, given it has extension, it should face the problem of being split into further parts. If so, it cannot be understood as the simple substance and the true element of nature.

Once the entelechy comes into the atom, they become one and unsplittable whole, independently of the size and place. ‘There seem to be elements, i.e., indestructible bodies, because there is a mind in them.’ (A VI iii, 521) In some aspects, we can still call a monad ‘an ideal atom’. It still has body but it cannot be split into further parts.

3. Differences with Descartes

As for Descartes, his position is that body and mind are different and separated substances. On the contrary, Leibniz believed that the entelechy is never separated from the body. And there is no co-existence of the entelechy with the body. Entelechies exist only together with the body, exercising permanent principles of the substances’ action.

Leibniz does not admit the idea of Descartes. He says that the mind or entelechy is the true substance, and that entelechy integrates body and mind. Precisely the dominant entelechy turns the aggregate of substance into the organic body within the indivisible corporeal substance. C. D. Broad explains, ‘the substantial form makes the whole composed of itself and the machine which it animates into a single natural psycho-physical unit’.¹

Body has extension. For living creatures, body cannot exist without mind or entelechy, the point with which Descartes disagrees. Descartes argues that mind and body are distinct substances from each other, capable of existing independently of one another. He also assumes that the mind could separate completely from its extended body, when the individual dies. Descartes has another idea that just mind (rational human mind) is the indivisible substance, animal and plant do not have mind.

For Leibniz, the soul or mind together with the organic body comprises the indivisible unit which is not destroyed even by death. All living creatures have the entelechy (the substantial form). Both rational and non-rational creatures have the soul-like substantial form, the latter capable only of insensible confused perception and appetites.

¹ C. D. Broad (1975). *Leibniz: an introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.78

4. The structure of Leibniz's substance

Leibniz says, 'I arrange in the monad or the simple substance, complete with an entelechy, only one primary passive force which is related to the whole mass of the organic body... I therefore distinguish: (1) the primary entelechy or soul; (2) primary matter or primitive passive power; (3) the monad completed by these two;...(To De Volder, 20 June 1703: GP II, 252/ AG 177/ L 530)

Also in the Correspondence with De Volder, Leibniz has placed primary matter together with the soul or entelechy in the monad. Thus, we can conclude that according to Leibniz, the animal-like corporeal substance as a soul or entelechy (together with a primary matter, as well as the subordinate monads) makes up its organic, secondary matter body.¹

In the 1702 paper *On body and Force, Against the Cartesians*, Leibniz says, 'Properly speaking, passive force [vis] constitutes matter or mass [*massa*], and active force constitutes entelechy or form' (GP IV, 395/ AG 252) The active and the passive are as the two sides of the same coin. In his letter to Bernoulli Leibniz writes, 'what is incomplete for me here? I respond: it is the passive without active, and the active without passive.'(20/30 September 1698: GM III, 542/ AG 167) The same is the relation of entelechy with matter. The (active) entelechy and passive matter cannot exist without each other. And the complete substance cannot have completion without any one of them. 'Along with the entelechy, I don't put anything into the monad or the complete simple substance, but the primitive passive force.'(To De Volder, 20 June 1703: GP II, 252/ AG 177) Obviously, here Leibniz says that the entelechy should be the dominant entelechy, and the matter should be the primary passive matter. What is the primary matter? Leibniz gives his answer (in the letter to Bernoulli), 'that which is merely passive, and separated from souls and forms' (To Bernoulli, 20/30 1698: GM III, 541/ AG 167)

In my opinion, according to Leibniz, the dominant entelechy is responsible for the whole mass of the organic body. The organic body is constituted by secondary matter. Leibniz calls the animal or living substance *per se*, comprising primary matter together with the substantial form.

But where are the places of subordinate entelechies and secondary matter? Leibniz says, 'the remaining subordinate monads placed in the organs do not constitute a part of the substance, but yet they are immediately required for it, and they come together with the primary monad to make the organic corporeal substance, or the animal or plant' (to De Volder, 20 June 1703: GP II, 252/ AG 177/ L 530) We can conclude from these words that since matter, both primary matter or secondary matter, is homogenous, Leibniz just concerns the relations of the dominant entelechy and subordinate entelechies.

Leibniz denies the interaction between different monads. One entelechy and one primary matter make the complete monad. At the same time, there is no interaction between entelechies.

¹ See To De Volder, 20 June 1703: GP II, 252/ AG 177/ L 530.

‘I arrange in the monad or the simple substance, complete with an entelechy only one primitive passive force which is related to the whole mass of the organic body.’ (GP II, 252/ AG 177/ L 530)

The same primary matter as completed with the dominant entelechy and incorporated into the organic body, it is treated therein as the secondary matter. In other words, the primary matter that is completed with the dominant entelechy is itself completed by the existence of innumerable subordinate entelechies. The completion of primary matter is achieved through both the dominant and the subordinate entelechies. The introduction of subordinate entelechies brings about the aggregation of secondary matter. Thus, the created primary matter is completed by the plurality of subordinate entelechies. When an entelechy becomes the dominate one, it begins to guide the organic body’s life activity.

So the complete living corporeal substance is constituted by the dominant entelechy, subordinate entelechies, primary and secondary matter. Both primary and secondary matters are essentially the same, completing the entelechy.

The relation of these three is special. The entelechies in secondary matter (that is body) are active and presumably do not participate in the completion the dominant entelechy whose body they partially comprise. These subordinate entelechies do not ‘flow into other entelechies and substances’. They are involved in the completion of the dominant entelechy, but only indirectly, because they are required for the completion of the primary matter, which directly completes the entelechy. The primary matter is in part completed by the presence in it of the subordinate entelechies, so as to make up the organic body.

5. The significance of re-introduction of Aristotelian entelechy in Leibniz monad in the 17th century

Leibniz re-uses the notion of Aristotle’s entelechy in his conception of monad that is basically used in the construction of his main theory of substance. The latter had a great superiority in the 17th century. Synchronously, mechanism became popular and formed the mainstream philosophy of this time. Therefore, everything, including living animal and plant and human being were compared to machines. The belief was that the entire natural world is functioned in accordance with the mechanic laws. However, as history shows, the mechanic doctrines have brought about some global problems and led humankind to some dangerous states of being. First of all, they ignore the active and living essence of the universe.

Leibniz has realized the difficulties of mechanism and, to withstand them, – he found the solutions in the Aristotelian theory. Firstly, he re-introduces the Aristotelian term entelechy to his Monadology, and he advocates that we should return to the philosophy of Aristotle, which is the right way to get truth. Therefore, following the trajectory of the development of Aristotle’s philosophy (and the forms of neo-Aristotelism, including Biocosmology), we might find out a way for the well-being future of mankind.

Abbreviations

- AG – Ariew, R. and Garber, D. trs. & eds., G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989.
- GP – Gerhardt, C. I. ed., Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 7 vols., Berlin: Weidman, 1875-90. Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1965.
- L – Loemker, L. E. tr. & ed., G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters, 2nd ed., Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969.

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