

COMPLETING LEIBNIZ'S PHENOMENOLOGY OF REFLEXIVITY

This paper explores Leibniz's texts and context to reconstruct the implications which what, metaphysically, makes minds rational entail for *what it is like*, phenomenologically, to be a rational mind. Engaging in such a reconstruction brings to the fore some methodological questions concerning the study of the history of philosophy.

It is when a philosophical system dedicates little space to a concept which it nevertheless presents as crucial, that the methodological questions facing the historians engaging with that system become most urgent. The central methodological question is perhaps: "how we are to make explicit what is implicit without betraying the intentions of the author?"

The humblest answer is perhaps to only recount and contextualise what is explicit. But few thinkers subject to historical study seem as allergic to this modest attitude as the one who had occasion to say that "Metaphysics should be written with accurate definitions and demonstrations, but nothing should be demonstrated in it that conflicts too much with received opinions. [...] if any examine it more profoundly, they will draw the necessary consequences themselves." (A6.3.573).

In particular, for so central a pillar as reflexivity in the perception of rational souls, Leibniz largely leaves its explication to those who 'examine it more profoundly.' The difficulty of this examination resulted in the summary that "Leibniz's attempt to press ideas of reflection into the service of innateness has generally been regarded as an embarrassment, and with good reason" (Jolley 1998 182).

Hoping to paint a more positive picture, this paper looks in detail at the historical context of Leibniz's appeals to reflection, especially in the correspondence with Sophie Charlotte and the 18th century writings, and focusses on the phenomenological counterpart to the ontological role it plays. To provide the reconstruction, a useful tool is the comparison between phenomenology of non-rational animals, and rational minds.

While on the metaphysical side the key difference between sense and intellect is the reflexivity, which only the latter possesses, I argue that the primary phenomenological difference resulting from this metaphysical one consists in *the awareness, or lack thereof, that an apperceived perception is an expression of a substance other than oneself*.

The metaphysical route is that if there is reflection there is a sense of 'me', which serves as an archetype for notions such as 'substance', 'inherence' and 'identity' (Bender 2016 273). But even before it is elevated to such explicitly metaphysical cognitions, the power unique to rationality also confers an implicit sense of self: it does so because reason is first of all the thinking of possibilities *as such*, as something that may be actual or not, and their actuality would make them something *other* than the mind which is merely entertaining them.

But if there is no self-notion of this mind, i.e. if a soul is *irreflexive*, there is also no sense of otherness from it, and all experience will be present in a *neutral*, i.e. neither internal nor external way. Animal phenomenology, then, in being purely sensitive, will lack all *intentionality*, i.e. attribution of *aboutness* of the conscious sensations towards an external world. This means that even apparent *recognition*, in their 'shadow of reasoning', is nothing but a similar reaction to an experience similar to one which is stored in the animal's memory.

This phenomenological comparison also seems clarify what Leibniz might have hoped we would draw from profound examination of his metaphysics, even though it uses notions, first among them that of phenomenology, which remain implicit in his own definitions. Reflection is metaphysically crucial to intellection because through it we gain phenomenological access to the *otherness* between us and the substances our perceptions express, and that otherness is the basis of the *aboutness* of our thoughts.

KEYWORDS: reflection, rationality, phenomenology.