An Informational Interpretation of monadology

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Abstract

In this paper, I will try to exploit the implication of Leibniz's statement in Monadology (1714) that "there is a kind of self-sufficiency which makes them [monads] sources of their own internal actions, or incorporeal automata, as it were" (Monadology, sect.18). Leibniz's monads are simple substances, with no shape, no magnitude; but they are supposed to produce the phenomena resulting from their activities, which for us humans look as the whole world, the nature. The activities of a monad are characterized by mental terms, perceptions (internal states) and appetites (which change the internal state). By means of perceptions, a monad becomes a "perpetual living mirror of the universe"; it can receive the information of other monads and it can send its own, in turn, to others. The communication and interconnection thus produced result in the physical and the psychical phenomena observed by us, humans. According to Leibniz, all monads are governed by the teleological law given by the God, and the world of phenomena are governed by the causal and mechanical law. Leibniz argues that there is a pre-established harmony among the monads so that this double character is no problem.
Now, I will propose an informational interpretation of monadology, which regards the monads as an automaton governed by the God's program and arranged appropriately; and I will argue that Leibniz's scenario can be defended in terms of this interpretation. The crucial part of this interpretation is that the God's program and the monads' activities are related with the phenomenal world by means of a coding by God. This interpretation is also defended on the textual basis, with a special reference to Leibniz's distinction between primitive and derivative forces. Drawing on R. M. Adams's careful reading of Leibniz's texts (Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist, 1994), I will argue that his rendering is quite in conformity with my interpretation, although he does not seem to be aware of the notion of coding.

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