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Spinoza-Malebranche: à la croisée des interprétations ed.

by Raffaele Carbone, et al (review)

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or specific institutions and contexts in Holland, Germany, Ireland, and elsewhere—can be read profitably in that celebratory light, as bearing witness to the adaptability and productivity of the “radical enlightenment” as a historiographical heuristic, beyond the tiresome quarrel with the cultural historians.

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Raffaele Carbone, Chantal Jaquet, and Pierre-François Moreau, editors. *Spinoza-Malebranche: à la croisée des interprétations*. Paris: Panthéon-Sorbonne, and Lyon: École Normale Supérieure, 2018. Pp. 251. Paper, €24.00.

This collection includes material from the international conference, “Spinoza-Malebranche,” held in 2015, first at the Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne and subsequently at the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon. The justification for the volume, as indicated in Chantal Jaquet’s preface (see 9 and 11–12), is that the relations between Spinoza and Malebranche have not recently drawn the sort of attention from scholars that the relations of each to Descartes have received. Of course, there is the question of why the former relations are worthy of investigation, a question that is perhaps not as pressing in the case of the relations that Spinoza and Malebranche each bear to Descartes. I return to this “why” question in brief closing remarks.

Following Jaquet’s preface and an introductory essay from Raffaele Carbone, the first part of this collection, “From Ontology to Politics,” is devoted to conceptual relations among the views in Spinoza and Malebranche on a range of issues. These issues include some with respect to which the two are seldom compared in the literature (see especially the last two essays in this section). The first part comprises the following (here, as elsewhere, translations of titles are my own): Pierre-François Moreau’s “On the Brink of the Precipice: Dortous de Mairan between Malebranche and Spinoza”; Cristina Santinellis’s “*Mos geometricus* and Attention after Descartes: Spinoza, Malebranche and the Method of Philosophy”; Éric Marquer’s “Spinoza and Malebranche on Consciousness and the Imagination”; Dániel Schmal’s “The Concept of Representation in Malebranche and Spinoza”; Francesco Toto’s “Humility and Penitence in Malebranche and Spinoza: Theological Roots of an Ethical Difference”; and Carbone’s “Passions and Civil Society in Spinoza and Malebranche.”

The second part of the volume, “Intersecting Receptions,” concerns evaluations and appropriations of Spinoza and Malebranche in the work of others. This part consists in the following essays: Antonella Del Prete’s “Malebranche-Spinoza, Round-Trip: The Polemical Course of Pierre-Sylvain Régis”; Marine Picon’s “Idea and Intellection: The Formation of the Leibnizian Noetic between Spinoza and Malebranche”; Gianni Paganini’s “The Heterodox Malebranchism of the Clandestines Challe and Du Marsais”; Laetitia Simonetta’s “The Condillacian Reception of Malebranche and Spinoza”; and Sophie Bergont’s “Hume in ‘Fairyland’: The Destiny of Malebranchian Occasionalism in Humean Philosophy.” The volume closes with Moreau’s postscript, “Concerning an Epistemology of the Confrontation between Philosophies.”

As is typical for collections drawn from conferences, certain essays do not completely fit the overall theme, and there are problems with evenness of the coverage. The most obvious illustrations of lack of fit are the essays from the second part by Paganini and Bergont, both of which focus on early modern receptions of Malebranche and offer only passing mentions of Spinoza. To be sure, there is something of value in these essays. Indeed, I found to be particularly intriguing Paganini’s discussion of selective uses of Malebranche in certain proto-deist tracts. It is just that such a discussion does not contribute much to the consideration of the ways in which receptions of Malebranche intersect with those of Spinoza.

With respect to evenness of coverage, the first part is dominated by issues in psychology (attention, consciousness, imagination, ideas, representation), with no treatment of certain

other important intersecting issues in ontology (e.g. causation and miracles). Related to this latter point is the fact that there is no discussion in the second part of Leibniz's charge that Malebranche's occasionalism leads to Spinozism. Picon's essay on the Leibniz reception focuses rather on epistemological issues, where the connection to Spinoza is, by the author's own admission (see 192–93), somewhat attenuated. Moreover, though some of the essays mention the ways in which Arnauld invokes Spinoza in his critique of Malebranche, it would have been helpful for the volume to include an essay devoted to the Arnauld-Malebranche-Spinoza intersection. Of course, no collection of this sort can provide complete coverage, and editors can work only with the essays they are able to receive. But the result here is less a systematic introduction to the Malebranche-Spinoza connection than a sample of scholarly discussions pertaining to this topic that are pitched to specialists.

Even for specialists, however, there is the question of why it is worthwhile to consider relations between Spinoza and Malebranche on particular sets of issues. This question is especially pressing in cases where doctrines are merely juxtaposed rather than genuinely interconnected. I must admit that some of the essays from the first part struck me as verging on being a kind of *nebeneinanderstellung* justified primarily by the fact that Malebranche and Spinoza both have something to say about (more or less) similar issues. To my mind, the most successful essays in the volume are those in which there is an emphasis on a clear historical basis for linking the two philosophers in a particular manner. Among these essays I would include Moreau's, which connects the two through Dortous de Mairan; Del Prete's, which connects them through Régis; and Simonetta's, which connects them through Condillac.

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Julia Jorati. *Leibniz on Causation and Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 224. Cloth, \$99.00.

In *Leibniz on Causation and Agency*, Julia Jorati provides an account of Leibniz's mature views regarding causation, freedom, and moral responsibility. Few monographs treat these central topics in Leibniz in such a sustained and helpful way. The focus on appetite and action is most welcome, and the book is well written and usually well argued. Even on the few occasions when Jorati's arguments are unpersuasive, the theoretical benefits of her readings are clear, and the work displays an impressive command of the primary and secondary literature.

The first three chapters treat monads, spontaneity, and teleology, respectively. Jorati gives useful accounts of the motivations for Leibniz's bold theses. A clear strength of Jorati's treatment is the emphasis on appetite, since most treatments of Leibniz's monads put nearly all their attention on perception. The importance of attending to appetite is felt throughout the volume and has far-reaching implications. In chapters 2 and 3, Jorati outlines three senses of spontaneity and teleology in Leibniz's thought. The distinctions here are not ones Leibniz explicitly makes, but the distinctions give us a useful perspective on Leibniz on spontaneity and teleology, highlighting some of the ways in which he thinks these matter.

The most surprising thesis in these chapters claims that there is a kind of teleology in monads that is goal-directed without necessarily being goodness-directed in any interesting sense. Jorati's main line of argument is that this kind of teleology is often associated with changes that in no way are good for the monad. It is a provocative thesis and argument, but I would like to see a stronger treatment of the possibility that these actions are directed at unachieved goods, a possibility raised in *Monadology* §15.

The next four chapters treat, respectively, divine concurrence; freedom; control, akrasia, and compulsion; and moral agency and responsibility. The last three chapters especially deserve to be read widely as they contain strong arguments for surprising theses. The most successful of these have to do with the issue of control. In chapter 6, Jorati draws our attention to underappreciated passages from the *Theodicy* and the *New Essays* in which