Dual Character of Information - on the relationship between individual and general aspect of reality

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Introduction

Information has two features which are in tension. One is the conceptual aspect and the other is the material or extra-conceptual aspect. The non-conceptual may be characterized as singular, private and conceptually incorrigible data. In order to grasp the individual content and communicate it, we use concepts.

Even though Leibniz has been considered a great metaphysicist, he touched the limits of metaphysics, too. In my article I'd like to show Leibniz's position presents some limits of thinking in general terms. This idea has been later picked up developed by the founder of phenomenology, E. Husserl.

Leibniz's perspective

Consciousness represents the starting point of modern times' philosophy. However, even in Descartes who can be considered the father of modern times the consciousness is not the self-sustaining principle, but represents one type of substance, namely res cogitans with its cognitive abilities, which is supplemented with another type, namely res extensa with its extension. R. Descartes didn't stay at the position of the thinking consciousness, but supplemented it with the proof of God's existence whose perfection then served him as a guarantee for the existence of objects outside consciousness.

It's true for Descartes reality and existence of res extensa remains subordinated to the reality of consciousness which is more original and provides the proof for the existence of res extensa. However, consciousness has proven the existence of res extensa as independent and separated from itself. The question in any case remains open how to understand the relationship between the consciousness as res cogitans and its counterpart res extensa. One option is the transcendental philosophy which sees in objects just the reified abilities and contents of consciousness, the other may consist in respect for the irreducibility of objects on consciousness and focus on their unity with consciousness. Descartes may be considered a dualist because he understood res cogitans and res extensa as independent entities only subsequently related in the human being.

I agree to Michael Kook Shim[1] that Leibniz wanted to rescue the irreducibility of the body in order to avoid the contradictions of conceptualism where the transcendental project would otherwise lead. The concepts need content and motivation which would impute life into them,

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[1] M. K. Shim, *Leibniz´s Idealism and Husserl´s Monadology*, New York, 2003
http://www.scribd.com/doc/222957501/Leibniz-s-Idealism-and-Husserl-s-Monadology-Michael-Kook-Shim#scribd

otherwise they are too formal. On the other hand, he didn't accept the Cartesian dualistic solution either which has difficulties with the relationship between body and mind.

Leibniz's substance

Leibniz adhered to the logical explanation of the world and stressed the idea of substance. He accepted the Aristotelian conception of substance. Aristotle in Categories puts substances in relation to propositions. Primary substances are not predictable of or attributable to anything else. So individuals are primary substances and qualities can be predicated of them, they are in a sense in or on them. However, this definition cannot be considered a full definition of a substance because an individual may be located in a location and so be attributed to a place. Because of such difficulties we may understand Aristotle in Categories to be giving some criteria or marks of a substance only. So substance can be a subject of predication, but not be predicable of anything else; is able to receive contrary predicates (in time); if it didn't exist, it would be impossible for anything else to exist.

Leibniz wasn't satisfied with characterizing God's substance as the universe, because it was just a limited conception of God for him. God contains all possibilities, not just the actual universe. In any case Leibniz saw created substances as dependent on God who created them, conserves them and continuously produces them.[2] The independence of the substance is lost, but other criteria caracterizing the substance are kept. What is different in Leibniz from Aristotle is the differentiation of essential and accidental properties. For Leibniz the individual substances – called monads – have only essential properties, i.e. all properties the substance had, including those it had for a short period of its existence, are essential. The properties are part of the monad's nature and if they were different, the monad would be a different entity. It follows all predicates of a substance must be contained in its concept. (The monads also reflect the whole world - every monad from a different perspective.)

For Leibniz the notion of substance is one of the keys to the true philosophy.[3] Everything consists for him of simple substances. Substances are in his opinion endowed with perception and appetition.

Leibniz's logic

As we have seen substance can be analysed as a concept in the form of a proposition. From the logical perspective the situation is more complicated if we consider one can analyse categorical propositions from extensional or intensional perspective. This distinction refers to Frege's differentiation between sense (Sinn) – meaning in the intuitive sense - and meaning (Bedeutung) – object referred to. R. Carnap then suggested to replace the Frege's concepts of meaning and sense with extension and intension[4]. The extension of an individual expression is the object for which it stands, the extension of a predicate is a function assigning truth value to objects for which the predicate is true and extension of a sentence is its truth value. Expressions are in this interpretation mapped on their extensions, names on individuals, predicates on sets of individuals and sentences on their truth value. Frege's sense was presented as the way in which the term presents its referent, but Carnap modified it and said

[2] Irwin, T.,. *Aristotle's First Principles*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1988, p. 66.
[3] G III 245/AG 286
[4] J. Peregrine: "Extensional vs. Intensional Logic", in: Dale Jacquette (ed.): *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science*. Volume 5: Philosophy of Logic, Elsevier 2006.

that intension is what a term shares with the terms that are logically equivalent to it, i.e. their equivalence can be proven just by the laws of logic.

So extension is the referent of a term and the intension is the meaning or semantical aspect of the term which determines its extension. Carnap introduced 1947[5] the concept of state description which shows some similarities with possible worlds. Thus he prepared the way for subsequent understanding of intension as the set of possible worlds in which the sentence or term is true.

It follows we can analyse sentences from the intensional or extensional point of view. As Shim[6] suggests extensional propositions are appropriate for terms with universal and existential quantifiers. The quantity of the instances of the term is relevant which suggests existential import. In singular propositions the scope of an individual involves just one member and the extensional approach is less informative. And because Leibniz deals with individual substances the intensional approach is closer to his intentions. The intensional approach allows that subject contains the predicate. In a letter to Arnauld[7] Leibniz states that "in every true affirmative proposition, whether necessary or contingent, universal or particular, the notion of the predicate is in some way included in that of the subject. Praedicatum inest subjecto; otherwise I do not know what truth is." Leibniz also used the principle of contradiction which states that a proposition cannot be true and false at the same time.[8] The primary truths of Leibniz's metaphysical system are identities and all remaining truths are reduced to primary truths with the help of definitions. Another Leibniz's principle was the principle of sufficient reason which states that nothing is without a reason or that there is no effect without a cause. In Leibniz's view the principle of sufficient reason must follow from the principle that the predicate is contained in the subject because a truth without a reason means that in the proposition the predicate is not contained in the subject which is a violation of Leibniz's truth conception. Leibniz also used the principle of the identity of indiscernibles which is more controversial. Further Leibniz also applied the principle of continuity which means that nothing takes place suddenly and nature never makes leaps.[9] This principle implies that there is an actual infinity in things.

In §8 of the Discourse on Metaphysics, Leibniz presents his classical picture, writing: "The nature of an individual substance or of a complete being is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to contain and to allow us to deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which this notion is attributed."[10] Each individual substance has a complete individual concept which contains all its true past, present and future predicates. For Leibniz world is a collection of individual substances which are compossible – they don't contain any contradiction in their parts or properties. So the possible world is a set of compossible individuals with some laws of nature. The actual world is a set of things brought into existence by God because it is the greatest in goodness, reality and perfection.

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[5] R. Carnap: *Meaning and Necessity*, Chicago 1947.

[6] Shim, op. cit.

[7] G II 56/L 337

[8] G VI 355/AG 321

[9] A VI vi 56/RB 56

[10] A VI iv 1540/AG 41

That were some important features of Leibniz's conceptual picture of the world. But Leibniz has to add something more to his concepts. According to Shim[11] conceptualist metaphysics may specify the formal conditions for the actualization of the best of all possible worlds, but cannot furnish the substantial "content" of that best of all possible worlds.

Concepts and existence

Russel[12] objects to Leibniz the inconsistency between his main premise that every proposition has a subject and predicate and two minor premises that the ego is a substance and that perception yields knowledge of an external world. Russsel finds in this inconsistency the main objection to monadism. Shim[13] doesn't think there is an inconsistency, but complementarity of the two opinions.

In Leibniz' letter to Arnauld from July 1686[14] we can read: "Since God can form and does effectively form this complete concept, which encloses that which suffices to render the reason of all the phenomena that happen to me, this concept is thus possible, and the truly complete concept is what I call myself [Moy], in virtue of which all my predicates pertain [appartiennent] to me as their subject." Reason causes phenomena, but is not equal to them. Leibniz differentiates between the complete concept which contains what suffices to render the reason and the ego to which phenomena occur. Ego is not the complete concept because the complete concept pertains to the ego. The equivalence of the Ego and the complete concept should be interpreted just as the way of speaking.

God is "fount of all essence and of the existence of the rest."[15] That God realizes what is conceptually inevitable is the exercise of God's will and substance as distinct from its concept. We must distinguish between the best of possible worlds as a mere possibility in God's mind and the best of possible world as actually existent. Identity of substances is determined by their concepts, but not the substances as such. Substances have some non-conceptual content which can be described as their tendency or inclination to exist. And this inclination is not necessary, but contingent.

Leibniz has two possibilities how to explain the difference between potentiality and actuality. The first one is based on the ontological proof of God's existence. Existence is a perfection and so God necessarily exists. The statement that what is logically possible can exist is guaranteed by God's existence. However, that God's essence includes existence implies that the inclusion of existence in essence does not violate the principle of non-contradiction. That is a circular answer as existence is a perfection because it is compatible and it is compatible because it is a perfection. The second possibility consists in the differentiation between concepts and God's will. The principle that the best of all possible worlds as the greatest number of compatible possibilities as determined by the principle of non-contradiction must exist is independent of God's will. God's will consists in the realization of the possibilities. Symptoms of this process are according to Shim[16] phenomena, sensations, pleasure and

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[11] Shim, op. cit., p. 9

[12] B. Russell: *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1937, p. 4

[13] Shim, op. cit.

[14] G II 53

[15] G VII 305

[16] Shim, op. cit., p. 39

displeasure, the spatiality and temporality of experience. Appetition also belongs into this category.

The consequence of conceptualism is a coherence theory of truth. But why does Leibniz need God as a reason of the world's existence despite the world's logical independence? Shim[17] explains that what is logically possible exists if nothing hinders it from realization – just a contradictory logical possibility can hinder it. If the possibilities are mutually exclusive, the requirements of perfection decide so that the greatest sum exists. Another obstacle may lie in the incompossibility of the subject's predicates. The concept of a substance contains the concept of the predicate and any predicate contained in the subject is a reason for the concept of another predicate ascribed to the subject. So the compossibility of the substance can be analysed in terms of its predicates. Contingent propositions must be not only compossible, but also supported by other concepts of the universe. E.g. the unicorn is not ontologically supported by other substances of the universe. The logical possibilities are combined in the God's mind, some of them are however contradictory. How are they selected? The maximum cluster of possibilities should be the criterion for selection. That would imply no need for God to give substances existence. But God has a role in Leibniz's system.

All the logical possibilities have in Leibniz's opinion a tendency to existence. And that tendency is the answer to the question how does God bring things into existence and that justifies referring to him as a guarantee for the existence of the world. He gives them the tendency and decides which will be realized. The logical possibility has a tendency toward existence, towards actuality. From the logical perspective logically possible precedes existence, from the epistemological perspective what actually exists precedes the possible and the principle of non-contradiction.

For Leibniz only God exists necessarily and from him contingent existence may be derived. God's essence is the reason for his existence. Contingent contents must have external reasons for their existence. Existence can't be understood as a predicate because it wouldn't be possible to distinguish the real from the possible, it must be something not conceptual. God must choose the best of possible worlds, but the tendency is not conceptually determined, is contingent and God is then the cause of existence. His will plays the role not in whether something possible would exist, but in how it would exist or that it would exist. Existence is not something conceptual.

In Leibniz we must distinguish concepts and ideas. Concept is the idea in the Cartesian objective sense. An idea is understood in the Cartesian formal sense as objects of intellectual ideas gained in reflection and it includes being, unity, substance, duration, change, action, perception, pleasure[18], one, same, reasoning[19], existence and power[20], and relations[21]. These ideas are primitive and cannot be reduced into more primitive concepts or deduced from anything. They refer to reasons outside the world. They are used to accompany other ideas in higher order definitions. Other extra-conceptual entities are secondary qualities which are

[17] Shim, op. cit., p. 78
[18] Nouveaux essais, p. 51
[19] Ibid., p. 111
[20] Ibid, p. 129
[21] G VI 502

confused as they can't be explained or reduced to anything else and can be get by acquaintance only.

Body

Body is important in the perception of extra-conceptual qualities. In the Nouveaux essais, Leibniz repeatedly insists: "every Spirit, every soul, every created simple substance is always united with a body and that no soul is ever entirely without one; … no soul—human or otherwise— is ever without some body".[22] Through body I learn about the extra-conceptual content to which concepts are then applied.

Husserl's phenomenology

Husserl can in Shim's view[23] mean in his categorical intuition something similar to Leibniz's objects of intellectual ideas when he says the conditions of possibility for categorical intuition are the same as conditions of possibility for objects of categorical intuition. This means the categories are both subjective and normative and objective. Husserl writes: "Kategorial geformte Gegenständlichkeit, das ist kein apophantischer Begriff, sondern ein ontologischer"[24]. Husserl's formal ontology states the formal rules objects must fulfil, like it can't have two contradictory qualities at the same time, it must be identical to itself etc. However, objects in judgements are more than formal concepts, they have the quality of Gegenständlichkeit. Judgements are judgements about something. Husserl's ontology so differs from formal logic and mathematics. The rules of formal ontology must be used in judgements of a real actor which introduces subjective or psychological aspects into the area. For analysing the objective aspects of subjective mental processes Husserl suggests the process of Wesenserschauung – seeing the essences. The objective aspects of subjective mental processes allow communication.

Regarding Husserl's theory of intentionality or the process how content of the mind is constituted there is never an ideally formal type of intentionality achieved by concepts only. I only experience singular instances of intentionality. Even intentionality contains some aspects which come before predication and are not conceptual. Concepts are general, but intentionality is singular and that is why it needs something specific. This extra-conceptual aspect of intentionality are for Husserl the hyletic data. In every perception we intend more than is given and this discrepancy between judgements and actual perceptions confirms the conceptual and extra-conceptual content of consciousness. Hyletic data are meaningless and must be animated by some concepts.

The tension between specific allowed by the body which integrates us into the world and conceptual which is influenced by the intersubjective relations had effects on the development of phenomenology as well. Husserl has opened many new areas of research for which he was criticised or praised. One of the controversial topics in Husserl is his epoché which serves as a theoretical perspective in which the constitution of the world should be perceived. The problem with this perspective consists in the fact that the spectator is not inside, but outside

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[22] RB 58
[23] Shim, op. cit.
[24] FTL/Hua XVII 129

the world and so lacks the existential empirical binding. M. Heidegger, Husserl's student, suggested the concept of being in the world which should solve the contradiction.

The topic of tension between the conceptual and individual had effects on the development of hermeneutics as well. Hermeneutics originally dealt with text interpretation, then played a role in the fight between natural and social sciences and in the 20th century received the ontological character. In its approach the attempt is shown to grasp conceptually something extra-conceptual and so proves the tension between these two aspects.

Conclusion

The tension and mutual dependence of the strictly individual and conceptual aspect of reality plays a role in complex character of reality and doesn't give man space to grasp the world from one perspective only. Existence was a topic for the existential philosophers, but we may show it played an important role before them. It would be interesting to trace the similarities and differences in the conception of existence in the whole course of philosophical thinking to prove how innovative Leibniz really was.