

## LEIBNIZ' THEORY OF PERCEPTION RECONSIDERED

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*Abstract: A developmental review of cognitive science and philosophy of cognition reveals that over the sixty years since cognitive science began Leibniz' theory of perception has been largely ignored. It has been systematically overlooked that Leibniz offers an insightful theory of perception from the rationalist perspective. Although programs and projects in cognitive studies have been conducted primarily in the empiricist framework, rationalist perspective has become increasingly demanding. A review of literature on Leibniz' theory of perception reveals that there exist significant amount of misinterpretation and misunderstanding of Leibniz' theory of perception. This paper introduces and clarifies Leibniz' theory of perception through criticisms against M. Kulstad's claim that Leibniz' theory of perception is inconsistent with several important doctrines of his philosophical system, which is M. Kulstad's paper "Some Difficulties in Leibniz' Definition of Perception" is a salient example and representative work that embodies Leibniz' theory of perception is entirely ignored.*

A developmental review of cognitive science and philosophy of cognition reveals that over the sixty years since cognitive science began Leibniz' theory of perception has been largely ignored. It has been systematically overlooked that Leibniz offers an insightful theory of perception from the rationalist perspective. Although programs and projects in cognitive studies have been conducted primarily in the empiricist framework, rationalist perspective has become increasingly demanding. A review of literature on Leibniz' theory of perception reveals that there exist significant amount of misinterpretation and misunderstanding of Leibniz' theory of perception. This phenomenon is well represented in M. Kulstad's paper "Some Difficulties in Leibniz' Definition of Perception." In what follows I will introduce and clarify Leibniz' theory of perception through criticisms against M. Kulstad's claim that Leibniz' theory of perception creates inconsistency in his philosophical system. I shall develop four

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lines of criticism against Kulstad's interpretation of Leibniz' theory of perception. Accordingly, this paper will be divided into four parts. In the first part, I shall argue that the so-called inconsistency problem is in fact caused by inappropriate deployment of Leibniz' points and it can be resolved by making a necessary and reasonable adjustment to Kulstad's argument. In the second part, I shall argue that the Kulstad's claim about Leibniz' inconsistency is misled by his interpretation of Leibniz' notion of "composite." In the third part, I shall argue that Kulstad's misjudgement of Leibniz' consistency is due to his misunderstanding of Leibniz' theory of perceptual objects. Finally, in part four, I shall argue that even on Kulstad's interpretation Leibniz' notion of perception would not be inconsistent with his theories of theology, ethics, and rationality, if the latter are properly construed.

## I

In his paper "Some Difficulties in Leibniz' Definition of Perception" Kulstad claims that Leibniz' theory of perception is inconsistent with several important doctrines of his philosophical system such as his theories of theology, ethics, and rationality. Kulstad's argument begins with the following proposition, which he takes to be "Leibniz' standard definition of perception" (1982, 65). Kulstad claims that it is precisely this definition that causes an inconsistency in Leibniz' philosophical system. Perception is the representation of the composite in simple. Or perception is nothing other than the expression of many things in one. Kulstad goes on to give the following interpretation of proposition (1), which he takes to be the only possible interpretation. "Simple" means "a simple substance" and "composite" means "an aggregate of simple substances." From these two propositions, Kulstad derives the following conclusion:

Therefore, perception is the representation of an aggregate of simple substances in a simple substance. Note that proposition (3) would not follow from proposition (1) in the absence of Kulstad's interpretation, which is proposition (2).

Notwithstanding, Kulstad moves to the following argument:

If something is not an aggregate of simple substances, then there can be no perception of it; Therefore, there can be no perception of a simple substance.

This new conclusion, then, appears to be inconsistent with Leibniz' theories that simple substances can perceive one another, that there can be perception of God, and that a rational soul can perceive itself.

This is what Kulstad means by saying that Leibniz' theory of perception is inconsistent with several important doctrines of his philosophical system. "The problem appears to run even deeper," claimed Kulstad. As his argument continues, Leibniz' theory of perception becomes self-inconsistent. The way Kulstad makes the case is to conjoin Leibniz' standard definition of perception—the proposition (1) above with the following Leibniz' points:

Every existing simple substance has some perception;  
If there is perception of something, there is perception of each part of the thing.

According to Kulstad's argument, the above conjunction entails that

There are no perceptions;  
There are no simple substances.

Kulstad claims that proposition (5) is crucial to his argument and that "we are forced to (5) only because of interpretation of Leibniz' standard definition of perception" (1982, 73), i.e., only because of interpretation of the term "composite" in proposition (1). It seems to Kulstad that proposition (2) is the only possible interpretation of (1). Hence, he suggests, the inconsistent consequences in question are inevitable. In next section I shall discuss Kulstad's interpretation of "composite". At the present section I argue that given Kulstad's interpretation of "composite" in proposition (2), there is a way to avoid the alleged difficulty that Kulstad indicates. Of the nine propositions that appear in Kulstad's argument, three are taken from Leibniz. These propositions are propositions (1) "perceptions are the representation of the composite in simple", proposition (6) "every existing simple substance has some perception", and proposition (7) "if there is perception of something, there is perception of each part of the thing. The remaining six propositions in Kulstad's argument are either interpretive or derivative. However, insofar as the reconstruction of Leibniz' theory of perception is concerned, these three propositions are used and arranged in rather a strange manner in Kulstad's argument. It is more like a deliberate plan in which

Leibniz' three points are separated and used for different purposes. The proposition (1), i.e., Leibniz' point that perceptions are the representation of the composite in simple, is used to arrive at the conclusion-proposition (5) "there can be no perception of a simple substance." Once this conclusion is drawn, propositions (6) and (7), i.e., Leibniz' points that every existing simple substance has some perception and if there is perception of something, there is perception of each part of the thing," are brought into the picture to help derive propositions (8) "there are no perceptions and (9) there are no simple substances." Leibniz' points so arranged does make his theory appear to be inconsistent. However, if we remove all of Kulstad's interpretive and derivative propositions and only retain Leibniz' points, then alleged inconsistency disappears. Here is how we do it.

Perceptions are the representation of composite in simple. (Kulstad's proposition 1)

If there is perception of something, there is perception of each part of the thing.  
(Kulstad's proposition 7)

Every existing simple substance has some perception. (Kulstad's proposition 6)

This is a clear picture of Leibniz' theory of perception. If we don't chop the theory into pieces and treat each element in isolation, we won't be able to derive an inconsistent conclusion from it. Therefore, I conclude that the inconsistency that Kulstad claims to exist in Leibniz' philosophical system is merely caused by the way in which Kulstad reconstructs Leibniz' theory of perception. In next two sections I shall show that the picture of Leibniz' theory that I reconstructed is justified and my correction of Kulstad's argument structure is necessary and reasonable.

## II

Missing premise is not the only problem with Kulstad's argument. Its problem also lies in his uncharitable interpretation of Leibniz' term "composite" in the so-called "Leibniz' standard definition of perception." It is indeed very difficult to make it clear what the term exactly means in Leibniz' writings. But a charitable interpretation is harmless. It seems to Kulstad that the term "composite" can only refer to one thing that contains, or that is composed of, many parts. When he uses the phrases such as "a set of simple substance," "a collection of simple substances," or "an aggregate of simple substances" to interpret the term "composite," what in Kulstad's mind is always one thing that contains many parts.

Since it is explicitly stated in Leibniz' *Monadology* that a monad cannot have parts, Kulstad arrives the conclusion that Leibniz' definition of perception implies that there cannot be perception of monads. I have shown in last section that such a radical conclusion is caused inappropriate arrangement of Leibniz' points. We shall now show that Kulstad's uncharitable interpretation of Leibniz' concept of composite makes the proposition (2) a false premise of his argument. The evidence that Kulstad finds in Leibniz' work is the passage from section 1 of *Principles of Nature and Grace*, where it says: "A composite substance is a collection of simple substances, or monads..... Composites or bodies are multitudes; and simple substances—lives, souls, and minds—are unities" (Ariew & Garber, 1989, 207). Kulstad believes that this passage supports his interpretation of Leibniz' notion of composite for the following reasons. First, Kulstad claims that in section one of *Principles of Nature and Grace* the term "composite" refers to an aggregate of simple substances, then, in section 2 the term must have the same reference.<sup>1</sup> Second, Kulstad claims that Leibniz uses the terms "composites" and "bodies" interchangeably and the latter is used to refer to aggregates of simple substances. Thus, Kulstad claims that Leibniz restricts objects of perception to aggregates of simple substances (Kulstad, 1982: 67). It seems to me that both of these claims are misleading. Kulstad fails to recognize two important distinctions made by Leibniz: the one between "composite substance" and "aggregate," and the one between "composite substance" and "the composite."<sup>2</sup>

Kulstad identifies "composite substance" with "aggregate." Leibniz, however, explicitly distinguished between two. For example, in a letter to Des Bosses (5 February 1712) Leibniz writes: "Concrete things are either substances or substantiata ..... Substances are either simple or composite ..... Composite substances are those which constitute a *per se* unity, composed of a soul and an organic body, which is a machine of nature resulting from monads. Substantiata are aggregates that are either natural or artificial, connected or unconnected. (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 200). In an undated essay Leibniz explains that by

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<sup>1</sup>Proposition (1) of Kulstad's argument is quoted from section 2 of Leibniz' *Principles of Nature and Grace*.

<sup>2</sup>Note that here the question is not whether "aggregates of simple substances" fall in the extension of "the composite," but rather, whether the latter is the short version of the former, that is, whether they are co-extensional.

substantiata he meant aggregates (Ariew & Garber, 1989: Note 249 on page 200). Obviously, composite substances fall in the category of *substances*, and aggregates are not substances at all but are mere *phenomena*. In another letter to Des Bosses (29 May 1716) Leibniz further explains: “An aggregate, but not a composite substance, is resolved into parts. A composite substance only needs the coming together of parts, but is not essentially constituted of them; otherwise it would be an aggregate..... And aggregates themselves are nothing but phenomena, since things other than the monads making them up are added by perception alone, by virtue of the very fact that they are perceived at the same time” (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 203).

It is clear that Leibniz regards composite substance as something different from aggregate of substances. The examples of the former are a man, an animal, etc., and the examples of the latter are an army of men, a flock of birds, etc. Here it is worth noting that to say that a composite substance is different from an aggregate of substances is not to say that it cannot be in any sense an aggregate of simple substances. Indeed, Leibniz sometimes also called a composite substance a collection of simple substances, even an aggregate of simple substances.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, an aggregate of simple substances can be viewed as a collection of simple substances. But according to Leibniz, a composite substance is not merely an aggregate of substances. Leibniz says: “Composite substance does not formally consist in monads and their subordination, for then it would be a mere aggregate or a being per accidents. Rather, it consists in primitive active and passive force, from which arise the qualities and the actions and passions of the composite which are discovered by the sense, if they are assumed to be more than phenomena” (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 204). Hence, although composite substance and aggregate of simple substances can both be called *collection* of simple substance, they are, nevertheless, different.

Kulstad also mistakenly identifies “the composite” with “composite substance.” It is true that for Leibniz a composite substance is composite. But as we have just shown, it is composite in a different sense from that in which an aggregate of substances is composite. Since “composite substance” and “aggregate of substances” can both be called composite, “the composite” is not to be identified with any of them. Here let me quote again from Leibniz’ letter to Des Bosses (29 May 1716): “Briefly: my entire view here is derived from these

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<sup>3</sup>See section 1 of *Principles of Nature and Grace* and section 2 of *Monadology*.

two positions, that there is composite substance, endowing the phenomena with reality, and that substance cannot naturally arise or perish, ... the formal distinction between composite substance and the monad and, on the other hand, the distinction between the composite substance and the aggregate, derives from these considerations, and also the independence of the composite substance from the ingredients, by virtue of which it is called composite, even though it is not aggregated from them" (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 205). This passage shows how Leibniz distinguished between "composite substance" and "the composite of substances." Leibniz sometimes referred to the latter by "aggregate". Hence the distinction is not obscured when he says: "everywhere there are only simple substances whose composites are only aggregate" (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 229). Now, it turns out that in Leibniz' philosophy, both composite substances and aggregates of simple substance fall in the extension of "the composite". This completes our discussion of Leibniz' notion of "the composite" and demonstrates that Kulstad has misinterpreted Leibniz' point that perception is the representation of the composite in simple.

### III

I don't mean to say that the issue with Kulstad's argument is merely verbal. It may be argued that Leibniz might agree that if something is not composite then there is no perception of it and that if Leibniz does agree with this position then that position would be inconsistent with the entire system of his philosophy. My counter-argument is that this is due to a misunderstanding of Leibniz' view on the objects of perception. To see this, we need to examine how Leibniz defines perception in various contexts. Here are some statements that may be considered as his definitions of perception:

"*perception* that is, the representation of the composite, or what is external, in the simple" (Ariew & Garber 1989: 207).

"*perception*, which is the internal state of the monad representing external things" (Ariew & Garber 1989: 208).

"The passing state which involves and represents a multitude in the unity or in the simple substance is nothing other than what one call *perception*" (Ariew & Garber 1989: 214).

"In the way in which I define *perception* and *appetite*, all monads must necessarily be endowed with them. I hold perception to be the representation

of plurality in the simple" (Loemaker, 1956: 662).

A careful reading of these passages (definitions) shows that Leibniz' definition of perception has two dimensions. In one dimension, perception is defined in relation to its subject, a monad; and in this dimension perception is to be construed as an internal state or quality of a monad. In the other dimension, perception is defined in relation to its objects; and in this dimension perception is construed as the representation of the composite, or multitude, or plurality, or external things. Leibniz' *standard* definition of perception, if any, should cover both of these two dimensions. If this interpretation is correct, then Kulstad's formulation of what he takes to be Leibniz' standard definition of perception refers only to the second dimension. I think that this one-dimensional interpretation causes some problem with his interpretation of Leibniz' notion of perception.<sup>4</sup> However, let's follow Kulstad's one dimensional interpretation and focus on Leibniz' theory of perceptual object.

Let us begin with statement (a). As shown in section one of this paper, this is the one that Kulstad takes to be Leibniz' standard definition of perception. It seems to Kulstad that the phrase "or what is external" in this statement is "redundant" (Kulstad, 1982: Note 9). It seems to me, however, that this phrase is just what is crucial to the understanding of Leibniz' theory. For, it gives an exact expression to Leibniz' view about what objects of perception are. All of Kulstad's efforts are to limit the object of perception to aggregates, trying to convince us that such a limitation was made by Leibniz himself. However, it is quite obvious that Leibniz' view is that whatever external to a monad is an object of its perception. To do justice to the dispute, let me quote from Leibniz' *Monadology* (section 60): "Because God, in regulating the whole, had regard for each part, and particularly for each monad, and since the nature of the monad is representative, nothing can limit it to represent only a part of things. . . Monads are limited, not as to their objects, but respect to the modifications of their knowledge of them. Monads all go confusedly to infinity, to the whole; but they are limited and differentiated by the degrees of their distinct perceptions." This passage is conclusive. It explicitly rejects Kulstad's interpretation. Whatever limitation to perception with reference to its object is not a Leibniz' view at all. If Leibniz'

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<sup>4</sup>Since this problem does not closely relate to my present task, I shall not deal with it in this paper.



monads were limited as to their objects, then most of his philosophical principles would be problematic, and the inconsistency in his theoretical system would be much more serious than Kulstad finds it to be.

There is every reason to believe that Leibniz does hold the point that whatever external to a monad is an object of its perception. According to Leibniz, every monad is a living mirror of the universe. Everything is perceivable in some way or another, and nothing is unperceivable. Evidence for this interpretation is everywhere in Leibniz' works. This is the right starting point from which we proceed to interpret Leibniz' view about the nature of perception with reference to its objects. Now, in explaining the fact that Leibniz refers to the object of perception by the term "the composite," the genuine question is not "Is something that is not composite perceivable?" but rather, "How is something that is not composite perceived?" The question is well answered by Leibniz. This question is in fact a question about *proper* object of perception. Since everything is perceivable in some way or another, in general everything is an object of perception. But not everything is a *proper* object of perception. Whether or not something is a *proper* object of perception depends on the way in which it is perceived. This is probably the reason why Leibniz refers to the object of perception by "the composite" and not simply everything external to a monad. He considers the composite to be the proper object of perception, although he also holds that everything else is also perceivable. And to avoid confusion about this, he adds a phrase "or what is external."

We have shown above that "the composite" means either composite substance or aggregate of substances. We may find more specific answer to the present question in Leibniz' description of these cases of "the composite." Leibniz says: "a distinct and simple monad makes up the center of a composite substance, e.g. a man, an animal, etc. The central monad is surrounded by a mass. The mass is composed of infinitely many other monads and constitutes a body that belongs to the central monad. The body is called an aggregate of simple substances" (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 207). Hence, the *spatially immediate object* external to a central monad is *the composite* that belongs to the central monad. From this metaphysical point of view, Leibniz might consider such composite as the *proper* object of perception of a monad.<sup>5</sup> Here, Leibniz' point is that a monad

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<sup>5</sup>Here I use the phrase "spatially immediate object" in order to distinguish the object we are referring to from what Leibniz called "the immediate external object" (Ariew & Garber

perceives the impressions that the body under its control receives from other bodies (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 65).

The composite could also be considered as *proper* object of perception for another reason. Though everything is perceivable, not everything is perceived *distinctly*. Leibniz explains that when we hear the noise of a waterfall or the roar of the sea that strikes us when we are at the shore, we hear the whole, the composite of the noise of each wave. So, we have clear and more distinct perception of the aggregate (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 295-6). We attend to the composite in particular, not to the parts or ingredients of the composite. Yet, “it is impossible for soul to attend to everything in particular” (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 65). With normal eyesight we see colors distinctly, but we do not see distinctly the physical properties that constitute the color we see (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 27). When looking around, we see distinctly each of individual persons, animals, cars, buildings, trees and other physical objects, but usually we do not see distinctly the parts or ingredients of these composites. Hence, in general perception is the representation of the composite. In the same sense Leibniz says: “perception is never directed toward an object in which there is not some variety or multitude” (Kulstad, 1982: 69). However, from the fact that only *some* composites<sup>6</sup> are proper objects of perception, it does not follow that things that are not composite are unperceivable. For, as I have argued earlier, Leibniz also holds that when the composite is perceived, at the same time its parts or ingredients are also perceived, they are perceived confusedly or unconsciously. About this point, Leibniz explains: “Since everything is connected because of the plenitude of the world, and since each body acts on every other body, more or less, in proportion to its distance, and itself affected by the other through reaction, it follows that each monad is a living mirror or a mirror endowed with internal action, which represents the universe from its own point of view and is ordered as the universe itself” (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 207).

Leibniz’ notion of perception is a notion of representation. In the case that a monad perceptually represents the body belonging to it, it also represents all the other external things through this representation. Leibniz says: “And just as this body expresses the whole universe through the interconnection of all matter in the

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1989: 59).

<sup>6</sup>In Leibniz’ term, “those that are the closest” or “those that are the greatest” “with respect to each monad” are distinctly and directly perceived (Ariew & Garber 1989: 220).

plenum, the soul also represents the whole universe by representing this body, which belongs to it in a particular way” (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 221). Furthermore, Leibniz indicates that there are hundred and thousand petite perceptions in the perception of the composite. These tiny perceptions “make up those impressions the surrounding bodies make on us, which involves the infinity, and this connection that each being has with the rest of the universe” (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 296). Hence, although a monad perceives particularly the states of the composite belonging to it, it cannot fail to perceive the rest of the world because there is a “transitive relation of successive expression” (McRae, 1976: 29).

#### IV

My interpretations of Leibniz' notion of “composite” and of his view on the objects of perception demonstrate that Leibniz' notion of perception is consistent with his view that monads perceive one another. One of the reasons why Kulstad thinks otherwise is probably that he fails to consider the reason why Leibniz holds such a view. Hence, it is worthwhile reviewing Leibniz' own explanation. Consider, first, the passage Kulstad quotes from Leibniz' Fifth Paper in “The Controversy between Leibniz and Clark”: “He (—God) makes them (—things) to be perceive by one another and makes them perceive one another in consequence of the natures which he has given them once for all and which he keeps up only according to the law of every one of them severally, which, though different one from another, yet terminate in an exact correspondence of the results of the whole” (Loemaker, 1956: 711). This passage does not directly say that simple substances perceive each other. However, it does say that everything perceives one another, and in this simple substances are surely included. Kulstad recognizes this fact. But he fails to recognize an important point Leibniz made in this passage, namely, that the mutual perceiving-relation is made case by God and consists in a perfect correspondence relation pre-established by God. This is explicitly stated in Section 56 of *Monadology*: “This interconnection or accommodation of all created things to each other, and each to all the others, brings it about that each simple substance has *relations* that express all the others” (emphasis added). Thereafter, in section 59, Leibniz repeats: “This universal harmony” “results in every substance expressing exactly all the others through the *relations* it has to them” (emphasis added). Now, what exactly are these relations?

There is “God’s intervention” of regulating everything he created; and hence, there is transitive relation of successive expressions. For this reason, there cannot be such an inconsistency in Leibniz’ system as Kulstad claims.

Now, let us turn to the question of whether or not Leibniz’ notion of perception is consistent with the other two of his important views, i.e., that there can be perception of God and that a rational soul can perceive itself. Consider, first, Leibniz’ view on perception of God. It seems to Kulstad that this view of Leibniz’ is merely an inferential result from the following argument: We can think of God; thought is a kind of perception; therefore, there is perception of God (Kulstad, 1982: Note 16). The textual evidence Kulstad finds for this interpretation is based on the following passage (in section 30 of *Monadology*): “In thinking of ourselves, we think of being, of substance, of the simple and of the composite, of the immaterial and of God himself, by conceiving that which is limited in us is limitless in him.” In this passage, however, Leibniz merely states the fact that a rational soul thinks of everything, including God, without particularly specifying the primary reason for which, and the distinct way in which, a rational soul perceives God. The latter is the key to our understanding of the perception of God and is not considered by Kulstad.

Why are rational souls capable of, but other substances are not, thinking of God? This is because, Leibniz explains, “God governs them according to laws which differ from those by which he governs the other substances” (Loemaker, 1956: 346). Leibniz says: “God governs the substances of beasts according to the material laws of force or of the transmission of motion. But he governs spirits according to the spiritual laws of justice, of which the others are incapable” (Ibid.). Obviously, Leibniz thinks that rational souls are special creatures of God; they hold a special relation to God; and they are endowed with a special role. The reason why God privileges rational souls is that “he is himself a spirit” (Ibid.). That is to say, with regard to rational souls, not only is God an author, a final cause of them, but he is also himself “the most perfect of all spirits” (Ibid., 326). Since God is the greatest and wisest of spirit, he can enter into spiritual conversation, and communicate his opinions and his wills with rational souls; he can even enter with them into the society. Hence, “for while all the forms of substances express the whole universe, it can be said that the substances of beasts express the world rather than God, but that spirits express God rather than the world” (Ibid.: 346).

To say that rational souls perceive God rather than the world is not to say

that rational souls do not perceive the world at all. According to Leibniz, rational souls' perception of the world is, in essence, the perception of God; specifically, they perceive all things in God (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 27, 55, 268). "The essence of our soul," Leibniz says, "is a certain expression, imitation or image of the divine essence, thought, and will, and all the ideas comprised in it" (Ibid.: 59). Rational souls perceive all things in God, because they perceive everything by God; and the latter is the case, because God immediately acts on them, and he is the only immediate object of them (Ibid.: 59, 268). Hence, there is no conflict between rational souls' perception of the world and their perception of God. Thus, even if Kulstad's interpretation of Leibniz' definition of perception were correct, the alleged inconsistency would still not follow.

Finally, let us examine Kulstad's claim that Leibniz' notion of perception is inconsistent with his view that a rational simple substance can perceive itself. Let's assume that Leibniz does hold the view that a rational simple substance can perceive itself.<sup>7</sup> But, in what sense might Leibniz hold this view? Consider the following passage that Kulstad quotes from *New Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: "It is true that our perception of ideas come either from the external sense or from the internal sense, which may be called reflection; but this reflection is not limited to the operations alone of the mind . . . it reaches even to the mind itself, and it is in the consciousness of self that we perceive substance" (Langley, 1949: 23-24). There are three important points in this passage: (1) perception which comes from internal sense is called reflection, (2) it is the reflective act that enables a rational soul to think of itself and raises it to the knowledge of itself, and (3) in the consciousness of the self, a rational soul thinks of everything. The last two points are also explicitly stated in section 30 of *Monadology*: "It is also through the knowledge of necessary truths and through their abstraction that we rise to *reflective acts*, which enable us to think of that which is called 'I' and enable us to consider that this or that is in us. And thus, in thinking of ourselves, we think of beings, of substance, of the simple and of the composite, of the immaterial and of God himself, by conceiving that which is limited in us is limitless in him. And these reflective acts furnish the principal objects of our reasoning" (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 217).

Here the phrase "thinking of self" is not significantly different from

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<sup>7</sup>In fact, it is not entirely clear whether Leibniz hold such a view. If he does, it is not made explicitly.

“consciousness of self” or “reflection on self”; and “thinking of the things in us” is called “apperception” by Leibniz (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 208); both are reflective acts.<sup>8</sup> About “the self” Leibniz says in his *A New System of Nature* that “by means of the soul or form there is a true unity corresponding to what is called *the self* in us” (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 142). This view together with his well-known view that in a monad we can find nothing but perceptions and apperception entails that a rational simple substance does not only represent external multitude, but it also involves itself multitude. In Leibniz’ terms, the “true unity in us” consists in “the composition of perceptions” or “the composite tendencies” to go from one perception to another (Ariew & Garber, 1989: 228). Hence, to reflect on our perceptions (i.e., to apperceive) is to reflect on ourselves. In the sense that the true unity in us, or the self, contains “a multitude of modifications and relations all at once” (Ibid.), we can say that to think of the self is to think of such a multitude. This is what Leibniz meant by the self-perception of a rational simple substance. I then conclude that given Kulstad’s interpretation of Leibniz’ definition of perception, Leibniz holds his notion of self-perception consistently.

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<sup>8</sup>McRae made a sharp distinction between these two reflective acts (1976, 30-35). My view in what follows is they are two aspects of the same thing.