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### Book Review

## Heidegger and Leibniz: Reason and Faith

Renato Cristin (1998). *Heidegger and Leibniz: Reason and Faith*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Hard Cover (130 pages + index)

by **Felicity Haynes**



Cristin sets out to analyze Heidegger's treatment and use of Leibniz, and in so doing presents a view of Leibniz which reconciles his monadology and mysticism with his calculative reason in a way which could be said to prefigure *Dasein*. He shows how Heidegger was aware that for Leibniz too, the reason for Being is the Being of reason, the *Grunt* of reason.

Cristin uses Heidegger to show that the essence of the principle of reason for Leibniz as much as Aristotle does not lie in its logical form but pre-exists it, in an original structure that is not nominalistic but purely ontological. He shows how Heidegger does not simply destroy the calculative aspects of Leibniz's main doctrines, but rather counter-balances his attack by positive assessments of some central features of Leibniz's thought. In Heidegger's concluding and most complex phase, according to Cristin, he salvages some Leibnizian elements that, in this forerunner of our technological age, may lead to Leibniz's salvation as a phenomenologist.

Cristin acknowledges that Leibniz envisages the formulation of logical rules for the universal characteristic, which has been used by logicians and mathematicians as a refined instrument for the effective calculation of truths and is seen, like formal

logic systems, as a language that is capable of representing valid reasoning patterns by means of the use of symbols - even to the extent of naming modern programming a monadic system. However, unlike formal logic systems, the universal language can also



express the content of human reasoning in addition to its formal structure. More than this, Cristin shows how for both Heidegger and Leibniz, reason or thought can only originate in the dynamic and energetic nature of the monad with its impulse towards transcendence. He argues that looking at Leibniz through an Heideggerian/Heraclitean notion of *logos* requires us to reinterpret Leibniz, and to see the Cartesian dualism between *extensio* and *res cogitans* dissolving through the medium of *existiturire*, the thirst for Being. Cristin shows how, even in Leibniz, the truth that all human reasoning uses certain signs or characters, does not make those signs or characters adequate to capture the mystical or premeditative Voice of Silence. This is to echo Aristotle's awareness that Being is the most universal term (*Metaphysics* 1001a) and it is impossible for Being to be a genus (998b). Cristin demonstrates a steady ontological path moving towards phenomenology from Heraclitus to Parmenides, from Plato to Leibniz, from Leibniz to Heidegger and from

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Kant to Hegel - the path of reason referred to in the subtitle.

Consistent with his theme is the presentation not solely of an abstracted argument and analysis but the presentation of images and metaphors. I particularly found illuminating (forgive the pun!) the comparative treatment of fulgurations in Heraclitus, Leibniz and Heidegger (pp. 23-27). Cristin discloses an entire constellation of metaphors revolving around the image of fire: thunderbolt, obscurity, darkness, extinguishing, seeing, light, fires, the metaphors that underpin or provide the foundation for *alethia*, or revelation. In Heidegger's experimental imagery, the sudden flash of the thunderbolt is equivalent to a quick glimpse of Being: "to lighten' [*Blitzen*] means, according to the word and the thing: to look [*blicken*] and as a glance the essence enters into its own shining [*Leuchten*]. Through the element of its shining, the glance retrospectively hides what it has grasped [*Erblicktes*] in looking. But at the same time the looking guards in the shining the hidden obscurity of its provenance as that which is not illuminated. The withdrawal [*Einkehr*] of the thunderbolt of the truth of Being is the glance (in-sight) [*Einblick*]. [...] If forgetfulness turns back, if the world withdraws as protection of the essence of Being, the lightning-up [*Einblitz*] of the world occurs in the neglect of the thing" (*Die Technik and die Kehre* p. 43). To equate *Blick* with *Blitz* according to Cristin means also to insert an ontological potential into the subjective activity of looking; to look is to be looked at. But he

locates the history of this idea in Leibniz "we may add the next words that signify a colour, splendour, or whatever attracts the glance [...] *Blicken* from *Blitz*, thunderbolt." (Leibniz *Collectanea Etymologica* in Dutens VI, part II, p. 184). In Leibniz' *Monadology* the creation is an incandescent flashing of lightning: "all created or derived monads are productions and are born, so to speak, by virtue of continuous lightning flashes of the divinity from moment to moment." What Heidegger adds is the "look into what is", the look which embraces reason, the foundation and the situation of Being as an appropriating event "of the constellation of the turning in essence of Being itself" (*Die Technik and die Kehre*, p. 44).

A similar transformation that interpreted the analytic/realist philosopher Donald Davidson as essentially Heideggerian was made some years ago by Jeff Malpas in his *Donald Davidson and the Mirror of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). I find Malpas's argument clearer than Crispin's, where several infelicities of translation through Greek, German, French and an occasionally clumsy Italianate-English, remain but each sheds light on Heideggerian thought. Malpas's representation of Davidson is accepted by Davidson himself. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing how Leibniz would have accepted his own transformation. As it is, Cristin's book remains an imaginative, erudite exercise in revisioning Heidegger and Leibniz.

### About the author

Felicity Haynes has lectured in philosophy of education at the Graduate School of Education at The University of Western Australia since 1977, although her Master of Arts degree was on creativity, insanity and mysticism in the poetry of Elizabeth Jennings. Her interests are epistemology, critical and creative thinking, metaphor, aesthetics and ethics. She has authored *The Art of Argument* (Felafer, 1987) and *The Ethical School* (Routledge 1998) and co-edited the just-released book *Unseen Genders: Beyond the binaries* (Lang, 2001). She has been National President of the Australian Institute of Art Education, and the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia and founding Director of the Association for Philosophy in Schools. She is about to write a book called Re-thinking Thinking. She may be contacted on fhaynes@ecel.uwa.edu.au