

Richard T. W. Arthur

McMaster University- Hamilton (Ontario, Canada)
Visiting Professor in Milan, April-May 2018

PhD Course:

*Monads, Composition and Force:
Ariadnean Threads through Leibniz's Labyrinth*

Abstract:

In this course of 4 lectures, I will present some of the main theses of my forthcoming book on Leibniz's theory of substance, *Monads, Composition and Force: Ariadnean Threads through Leibniz's Labyrinth*. First I shall explain how Leibniz's theory functions as a solution to the labyrinth of the continuum. From this perspective, there is no late change in his ontology to an idealist metaphysics: rather his theory of substance is shown to be a highly original position that is neither phenomenalist nor materialist. In the second lecture I explain how this depends on a notion of constitution that is distinct from composition: bodies and motions are constituted by the monads they contain, but are not composed of them. In the third lecture I situate Leibniz's metaphysical thought in the context of his early immersion in chymical atomism and the Scholastic tradition of the Plurality of Forms, and his equally profound commitment to mechanism. In the fourth, I tackle issues concerning the continuity of existence in time, explaining how the discreteness of monadic states is compatible with Leibniz's endorsement of continuous creation, and also with his doctrine of petites perceptions. This involves an analysis of his subtle theory of change first advanced in the dialogue *Pacidius Philalethi*, and showing how it conforms with his law of continuity.

Scheduled lessons:

Tuesday, May 8th, 10:30-12:30: “Monads as a Solution to Leibniz's Problem of the Continuum”;

Tuesday, May 8th, 14:30-16:30: “Constructing Bodies from Constitutive Unities”;

Wednesday, May 9th, 9.30-12.30: “Scaliger, Sennert, Boyle and the Origins of Leibniz’s Theory of Forms”;

Thursday, May 10th, 9.30-12.30, “Monadic States: Leibniz’s Law of Continuity and the Discreteness of Change”.

Room: Aula Paci

Other Activities:

(open to all who are interested)

Prof. Arthur, together with Stefano Di Bella and Giuliano Torrenco, has organised a workshop on the topics of philosophy of time, considered from a historical point of view:

Philosophy of time: A view from the Past
(to be held at the department on May 17-18)

Within this workshop, Arthur will give a talk on:

Neither ‘A’ nor ‘B’: Anatomy of an Ancient Amphiboly Concerning Time

Finally, he will give a talk on:

Local Time Flow and Relativity

within the cycle of seminars of our Centre for Philosophy of Time.