Leibniz and the Substance of the *Vinculum Substantiale*

BRANDON LOOK

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most curious features of Leibniz’s late metaphysics is no doubt the idea of the substantial bond, or *vinculum substantiale*. Apparently out of the blue, in his correspondence with the Jesuit philosopher, Bartholomew Des Bosses, Leibniz posits some kind of thing that will explain transsubstantiation, “realize” or “reify” phenomena, and ground the reality of corporeal or composite substances.

Despite its oddity, the *vinculum substantiale* has received relatively little critical attention, and when the *vinculum* is mentioned in expositions of the Leibniz’s thought, it is usually brushed over or unceremoniously dismissed as Leibniz’s disingenuous attempt to explain transubstantiation to his Catholic friend, Des Bosses.1 Indeed, Bertrand Russell, who set the tone for English-language commentators on Leibniz, says that Leibniz’s theory of the *vinculum substantiale*

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is "more the concession of a diplomatist than the creed of a philosopher." And the subtext of Russell's criticism is simply that, because the idea of the vinculum substantiale arises in a discussion of transubstantiation (and only with the Jesuit Des Bosses), we ought not to take the idea seriously. This view, the "Russell-Dismissal," as I shall call it, has become something of the standard view on the subject, to the extent that one may speak of a standard view at all.

In this paper, I shall not directly address the question, Did Leibniz believe in the vinculum substantiale? I think that the safest answer to this question is that Leibniz experimented with the idea of the vinculum substantiale in order to solve problems in his monadology relating to the nature of composite substance but did not ultimately regard the vinculum substantiale as a real feature of his metaphysical system. The question I do want to address is even more fundamental—namely, what is the vinculum substantiale anyway? What did Leibniz understand the vinculum substantiale to be? This question is far more difficult to answer, and, in my opinion, it has not only never been answered satisfactorily, it has never been approached rigorously.

I think that if we come to a better understanding of what Leibniz meant by the vinculum substantiale, then we will not only be able to appreciate the problems that prompted Leibniz to consider the vinculum but we will also be able to approach the question of his commitment to the vinculum in a much more interesting and helpful way. To give a part of the answer in advance: we shall see that the idea of the vinculum is such that Leibniz certainly should not have held it. A further interesting factor in my interpretation of the vinculum substantiale is the way in which it corrects the "Russell-Dismissal." As I shall argue, if one dismisses the discussion of transubstantiation, one misses some of the crucial features of the vinculum substantiale, and one further misses the fact that Leibniz argues strongly against the view suggested by Des Bosses.

Before turning to a detailed discussion of the nature of the vinculum substantiale, I shall in the following two sections explain the role of the vinculum in Leibniz's account of transubstantiation and in his account of the nature of composite substance. In the heart of the paper, §4, I shall present four models

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3 Russell, Critical Exposition, 152.

5 This safe answer is suggested most clearly by Blondel, in Chapters V and VI of his Étude historique. Robinson, too, could be said to advocate such a reading, though it is sometimes difficult to determine how committed Robinson thinks Leibniz is to what he calls D', the metaphysics that admits composite substances. (See his Archéologie, 83–124.) And, while both Adams and Rutherford ultimately dismiss the notion of the vinculum substantiale, they do treat the idea of the vinculum substantiale as a somewhat serious hypothesis on the part of Leibniz, who wishes to explain the nature of a composite substance.

6 Fremont and Robinson do try to explicate the nature of the vinculum substantiale. But I shall argue in this paper that Fremont is simply wrong and that Robinson, although holding a much more plausible view, is also wrong.
for the *vinculum substantiale*: the *vinculum substantiale* as substantial form, as relation, as composite substance, and as separate, substance-like thing. Each model can be seen to follow from some passage in the Leibniz-Des Bosses correspondence, but I shall try to argue that the model that is consistent with the majority of texts and that makes the most sense of Leibniz’s discussion of transubstantiation and the nature of composite substance is that of the *vinculum substantiale* as separate or independent substance-like thing.

2. THE *VINCULUM SUBSTANTIÆLE* AND TRANSUBSTANTIATION

It is no accident that the *vinculum substantiale* is associated with Leibniz’s account of transubstantiation in his correspondence with Des Bosses. Des Bosses sought to understand how Leibniz, in his world of monads, could explain transubstantiation or the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and in his final answer to this question Leibniz invokes a “*vinculum substantiale monadum*” —a “substantial bond of monads” that will indeed make transubstantiation possible. But this *vinculum substantiale* is only the end-product of some serious discussion between Leibniz and Des Bosses.

In his letter of 6 September 1709, Des Bosses says, “But principally it would have been helpful to have known how you would defend by your principles the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, a matter which I believe you have discussed to some extent in your anti-Bayle work” (GP II 388). Leibniz’s response is simply that, first, as a Protestant, he does not need to explain transubstantiation or consubstantiation but that, second, he considers the presence of Christ to be something metaphysical, like the union of mind and body. That is, Christ will be present in the bread and wine, just as the mind will be one with (or be in) the body, though in neither case are the phenomena altered. Since philosophers are to explicate the phenomena or the changes thereof, they cannot actually give an account of the metaphysical union of mind and body or the metaphysical presence of Christ in the bread and wine. And hence when Des Bosses asks how Leibniz would defend by his principles the real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, Leibniz says only that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the process of transubstantiation are not among the phenomena and so do not truly admit of scientific or philosophical explanation.

Nevertheless, Leibniz does try later to explain for Des Bosses what would have to be the case for transubstantiation to take place. According to Leibniz, bread is not, strictly speaking, a substance, but merely an *ens per aggregationem*, or a “substantiatum resulting from innumerable monads through the superaddition of a certain union” (GP II 398). Thus, one cannot explain transubstantiation, as

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5 The issue of the metaphysical union of mind and body is most fully discussed in Leibniz’s debate with Tournemine in the *Mémoires de Toulouse*, see GP VI 555-577. At 56-57.
Des Bosses had wanted, by claiming that it is possible for two substances to be present in the same thing, because the bread or the wine of the Eucharist is not itself a substance but rather a collection of substances. And the substantiality of the bread or the wine consists in the union of this aggregate of monads. Further, Leibniz claims that Des Bosses need not concern himself with the abolition or change of monads, but only with how God removes the monads from that union by which they produce a new being. And, ultimately, Leibniz claims, "substantiality consisting in this will cease, though the phenomenon will remain that does not arise from these monads, but from something equivalent to the union of these monads and substituted by a divine action" (GP II 399). In other words, in the service of the Eucharist, there is a certain union that will at first constitute the substantiality of the bread and that will later be abolished, being replaced by another union substituted by God that will be phenomenally equivalent to the previous union of monads. Thus, the phenomena associated with the bread will remain constant, as will the monads themselves, while the substantiality of the bread will, through divine intervention, be changed. Indeed, this is one of the signal features of the vinculum substantiale: that it unites what would otherwise be an ens per aggregationem, while changing nothing in the phenomena, and thus creates a new being. That the vinculum can be changed or that it can be substituted for another vinculum is another crucial feature of the doctrine, of course, but only when Leibniz is speaking of transubstantiation.

For his part, Des Bosses is dissatisfied with Leibniz’s account of the vinculum substantiale and argues against it. He suggests that in transubstantiation the monads of the bread are destroyed and new substances corresponding to the body of Christ are put in their place by God and that certain monads corresponding to the body of Christ can be said to have been previously in the bread and to remain after the service of the Eucharist. Des Bosses asks,

"by the phenomena corresponding to the destroyed monads God could represent the Eucharist as some sort of a new creation or transformation, whereas the vinculum substantiale could not.

He not be able in the same way to represent some monads from those that pre-existed and remained as were the monads constituting the substance of the body of Christ? (GP II 455)

Des Bosses seems to have one of two positions in mind: either the monads of the bread and wine are destroyed, being replaced by the monads corresponding to the body and blood of Christ, or God is able to constitute the monads in such a way that they represent the bread or the body of Christ. But in either case there is no need for a vinculum substantiale of monads. Thus, Des Bosses is

But, it must be admitted, Leibniz clearly does not intend this view to be part of his own system. He says, "But we who reject transubstantiation do not need such a thing" (GP II 399).
consciously rejecting the very doctrine that Russell and others would have us believe was proposed just for his benefit.

Rather than abandoning the doctrine of the *vinculum substantialia*, Leibniz goes on to give the clearest explanation of the use of the *vinculum substantialia* in transubstantiation. He claims that the monads of the bread and wine that would otherwise form a mere aggregate can be unified by a *vinculum substantialia*, making them into composite substances. The *vincula substantialia* that then exist in the bread and the wine are destroyed in the service of the Eucharist and replaced with new *vincula* somehow constituting the body and blood of Christ. Hence, Leibniz argues, when Christ said or a priest now says, “This is my body,” the reference is not to the monads that are the requisites for “hoc” or “corpus” but rather to the “substantiation” that arose or was composed by the *vinculum substantialia*. Indeed, in Leibniz’s next letter, he says quite simply that the mystery of the Incarnation cannot be explained unless one admits “real bonds or unions” [*vincula realia seu uniones*].

3. THE *VINCMUM SUBSTANTIALE* AND COMPOSITE SUBSTANCE

One of the issues in the literature on Leibniz that has perhaps received the most attention in the last several years relates to Leibniz’s conception of the nature of composite substance. This is not surprising; for when one considers the texts of Leibniz’s late metaphysics closely, one invariably begins asking the following kinds of questions: Is a composite, or a corporeal substance, real, or is it a phenomenon? Must a body be a mere aggregate of monads? Can a composite be an *unum per se*? If so, how? Are the relations between dominant and subordinate monad sufficient to provide the unity of a composite substance? As André Robinet sets out the issue in his thought-provoking *Architectonica dispositio*, Leibniz deals with essentially two metaphysical schemes. In the one (“D” for Robinet), bodies are not substances but rather phenomena, albeit real phenomena, and only minds are substances; in the other (“D” for Robinet), animated bodies are substances, and composites can in fact be considered per se unities. While there are many small details of interpretation that need to be worked out, it is generally regarded that Leibniz’s metaphysics, despite the pull of D, is most consistent with the first scheme laid out. Never-

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7See GP II 159, 160.
8See GP II 431.
10This is the “disjunction majeure” that Robinet sees in Leibniz’s work. (Robinet, *Architectonica*, 32)
theless, the pull of a more "realistic"11 metaphysics is indeed there, and Leibniz’s correspondence with Des Bosses is where one sees the tug-of-war most clearly taking place.

Leibniz’s letter to Des Bosses of 15 February 1712 represents a turning-point in their correspondence, for in it Leibniz begins to move from discussing the vicosum substantiae as a means of explaining transubstantiation to discussing the vicosum substantiae as it relates to the nature of composite substance in general. While Leibniz will continue to discuss the role of the vicosum substantiae in transubstantiation, in the remaining four years of the correspondence he uses the vicosum substantiae more and more as a general explanation of the nature of composite or corporeal substance. Leibniz claims that, if corporeal substances are to be something real beyond the monads, then there will have to be something superadded by God to the aggregate of monads. And he goes on to propose the following distinction:

... either bodies are mere phenomena, and so extension will also be only a phenomenon and the monads alone will be real, the union will be provided by the operation of the perceiving mind on the phenomena, or, if faith compels us to accept corporeal substances, we must say that the substance consists in that unifying [unamnbus] reality that adds something complete (and therefore substantial), though in flux, to those things that are to be united. (GP II 435/MG 198)

Leibniz does not commit himself at all to a position here. Given his views in general, however, we can assume that he leans much more strongly towards the first option, in which bodies are nothing but phenomena and only monads are real. But Leibniz leaves open the other option: if our faith urges us to consider bodies as substances, then we will have to have some kind of real union that adds something absolute or complete to the monads, and transubstantiation will consist in the change of this superadded thing. In other words, for Leibniz there will be a distinction between the phenomenal unity of a body of some kind and real unity, and the latter will represent the formation of an unusum per se where there would otherwise be only an aggregate. Leibniz continues thus:

If that substantial bond of monads [monadum vicosum substantiae] did not exist, all bodies, together with all of their qualities, would be nothing but well-founded phenomena, like a rainbow or an image in a mirror, in a word, continual dreams perfectly in agreement with one another, and in this alone would consist the reality of those phenomena. [...] Therefore, if a body is a substance, it is a making real of the phenomena over and above their agreement. (GP II 435–36/MG 198–99)—my emphasis

11 The subtitle of Blondel’s book on the vicosum substantiae evinces the same kind of reading: “a sketch of a higher realism.”
It is in this passage that we see Leibniz first use the phrase “monadum substantiale vinculum” in the context of a discussion concerning composite substance and here that we see the explicit claim that without such a substantial bond all bodies would be well-founded phenomena. But, Leibniz claims, if a body is to be a substance, then it is the “realization” of the phenomena occurring beyond their agreement.

While Leibniz argues that only monads will be real, strictly speaking, because they form true unities, at the same time he acknowledges the possibility of explaining some kind of unity beyond the merely phenomenal unity. In his correspondence with De Volder and elsewhere in his later writings, Leibniz argues that a plurality of monads can form an automaton, an organism, or perhaps an unam per se, by virtue of the relations between a dominant monad and its subordinate monads. But here Leibniz discusses the possibility of a real union superadded to the monads that would make of them one thing, and he expresses the process of making a composite being a substance as the “realization,” or making real, of the phenomena. And I take it that Leibniz means by the realization of the phenomena a process in which what appears to be one thing (phenomenal unity) is made into an unam per se (real unity).

In a crucial text appended to his letter of February 1712, Leibniz adds further details to his treatment of the nature of composite or corporeal substances.

But over and above these real relations [i.e., duration, position, interaction] one more perfect relation can be conceived, a relation through which one new substance arises from many substances. And this will not be a simple resultant, that is, it will not be built up from true or real relations alone, but will add, besides, a certain new substantiality, that is, a substantial bond... It is sufficient that this thing unite monads that are under the domination of one monad, those which make up the main body, that is, one machine of nature. And in this consists the metaphysical bond between the soul and the body, which constitute one suppositum, to which the union of natures in Christ is analogous. And these are what constitute a per se unity, that is, one suppositum. (GP II 438–39/AG 1999–2001)

Here we find the view that the vinculum substantiale will be a “new substantiality” over and above the monads and will make of them an organic whole, an unam per se, or a suppositum. Further, according to Leibniz, the vinculum substantiale will unify monads that are under the domination of one particular mo-

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14 See, for example, his letter to De Volder of 20 June 1709. “Therefore I distinguish: (1) the primitive enselche or soul; (2) the matter, namely, the primary matter or primitive passive power; (3) the monad made up of these two things; (4) the mass [massa] or secondary matter, or the organic machine in which immemorably subordinate monads come together; and (5) the animal, that is, the corporeal substance, which the dominating monad makes into one machine” (GP II 272/AG 177—my emphasis).
The vinculum substantiale, then, plays a crucial role in guaranteeing the unity and reality of composite substances: without the vinculum substantiale, bodies would be mere phenomena; without it, composites possess unity only by virtue of the relations between dominant and subordinate monads.

4. The nature of the vinculum substantiale

To this point, I have tried only to present a picture of what Leibniz thinks the vinculum substantiale does—namely, it offers an explanation of transsubstantiation, being that thing beyond the monads that is destroyed and replaced in the service of the Eucharist, and it makes composite substances real unities and therefore more than mere phenomenal aggregates. In this section, however, I shall try to explain what Leibniz thinks the vinculum substantiale is.

But this is a difficult project. Leibniz does not frame the issue in a consistent way throughout the correspondence, and this problem was one that he recognized. In a letter to Des Bosses from 30 June 1715, Leibniz says, “I fear that what I have written to you on this subject at different times is not sufficiently coherent, since I have not dealt with this argument concerning the elevation of phenomena to reality except on the occasion of your letters” (GP II 490). Leibniz overstates the issue here slightly, for he certainly was concerned with the nature of composite beings in other writings. But it is true that the “realization” of phenomena is something that is confined to the correspondence with Des Bosses and that Leibniz’s claims about the nature of the vinculum substantiale are not entirely coherent.

I want to argue that there are four rough models for, or possible interpretations of, Leibniz’s conception of the vinculum substantiale. To understand the differences possible, simply consider first the two different English translations normally given: “substantial chain” and “substantial bond.” There are perhaps two models suggested by the “substantial bond”: one can think of the vinculum substantiale as either the entire bound substance or as the bond or relation that exists between monads in a composite being. A third model of the vinculum substantiale is as some substantial thing superadded to the monads in a composite substance; this is perhaps most closely akin to the idea of a “substantial chain.” And, finally, the vinculum substantiale could be considered to be like a substantial form.

The main task, however, is to try to disentangle the two interpretations of the vinculum substantiale that take the vinculum to be something substantial—

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5 Des Bosses turns the debate about the vinculum substantiale into a debate about the relation between dominant and subordinate monads and the role of the vinculum in guaranteeing this relation. Indeed, it becomes a distinct feature of Leibniz’s later letters to Des Bosses that the vinculum substantiale is present only in an aggregate of monads or a composite that possesses a dominant monad.
equivalent to either the entire bound composite substance or some independent, substance-like thing. In other words, is the vinculum substantiale substantial because, when the monads of a composite substance are unified in such a way that they form an unum per se, this composite is a genuine substance, or is the vinculum substantiale substantial because it is a separate, absolute, and substance-like thing? It must be admitted that there is some difficulty in determining whether Leibniz means to say that the vinculum substantiale—considered as a bond of monads—represents some new substantiality beyond the monads—that is, whether he means to say the monads, as a bonded group, constitute a new substance—or he means to say that the vinculum is itself a new or another substantial thing beyond, or in addition to, the monads. Texts in the correspondence with Des Bosses can be brought forward to support either view.

But, first, we ought to consider briefly a simple alternative: namely, one might say that the vinculum substantiale is “substantial” in the way that a substantial form is substantial. And, in fact, we can see some intimations of the affinity of the vinculum substantiale and substantial form in Leibniz’s February 1712 letter to Des Bosses:

If a corporeal substance is something real, over and above monads, just as a line is held to be something over and above points, then we will have to say that corporeal substance consists in a certain union, or better, in a real unifying thing that God superadd to the monads. Primary matter, namely, that which is required for extension and antityp, that is, for diffusion and resistance, arises from the union of the passive power of the monads, and from the union of the monadic entelechies arises substantial form. But what can arise in this way can also be destroyed, and it will be destroyed when the union ceases to exist, unless it is miraculously preserved by God. (GP II 435/AG 198)

In other words, there will be a real thing, serving to unify the monads, that is superadded to the monads by God. The unification of the component of the monad that is associated with passive power will create primary matter; and the unification of the entelechies will create a substantial form. Nevertheless, the vinculum substantiale will certainly not be equivalent to a substantial form, simply because, on the view presented here, it serves to create or establish the substantial form.

In a letter to Des Bosses from 21 July 1715, however, Leibniz does seem to state explicitly that the vinculum substantiale is similar to the substantial form of a composite substance and is the principle of action of the substance. Here he says, “This vinculum will be the principle of action of the composite substance; and whoever admits this—as does the entire school unless I am mistaken—admits this vinculum” (GP II 509/L.613a). And, later, responding to Des Bosses’ argument that the vinculum substantiale could be an accident, Leibniz says the following:
Whatever is not a modification can be called a substance. But a modification is connected essentially to that whose modification it is. So there can be no modification without a subject; for example, no sitting without a sitter. But substantial can also be defined in another way—as the *source of modifications*. Assuming this, we may ask whether there can be a thing which is neither a modification nor a source of modifications—such as the Scholastics think of as accidents, which they say, are in a subject naturally but not essentially, since they can be without a subject by the absolute power of God. But I do not yet see how such a thing can be explained if it is different from my *vinculum substantiale*, which is truly in the subject, though not as an accident but as what the Scholastics call a substantial form, or a source of modifications—if you like, after the manner of an echo. (GP II 305–307.4–314.14)

The similarity with the substantial form is due in large part to the role of the *vinculum substantiale* as a unifying entity, and Leibniz argues here that the *vinculum* will be real and substantial insofar as it is the source of modifications, in much the same way that the substantial form is the source of modifications on the Scholastic view. In other words, it seems that the *vinculum substantiale* will be substantial in much the same way as a substantial form.

But, ultimately, the *vinculum substantiale* acts as a substantial form only insofar as it is the principle of unity and the principle of action of a substance. The *vinculum* will nevertheless differ from a substantial form because the substantial form will always be the union of the entelechies of the composite substance, a union brought about by the *vinculum substantiale*.

It is more likely to be the case that the *vinculum substantiale* represents the entire composite or corporeal substance. In other words, the *vinculum substantiale* is itself a corporeal substance or a body in the natural world. This picture of the *vinculum substantiale* is favored by Robinet, who says the following in his main work on Leibniz’s metaphysics:

This bond of monads alludes to another structure: a unity that is *per se* of the multiplicity of the monads aggregated in a body, if this aggregate is not a pure phenomenon. It is *the union in the secondary matter* that is the same; secondary matter that is the object of the perceptions of the dominant monad that expresses the subordinate monads. The unity of this expression will not only be a mental product; it is a real thing, a metaphysical thing, whose structure is different from the former: *vinculum substantiale* + monad + monad + monad . . . + = secondary matter.

And, indeed, there seem to be instances in which Leibniz conflates the notions of composite substance or corporeal substance and the *vinculum substantiale*. He

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14 N.B. "un vinculo substantiali?"  
15 And, of course, the principles of action and unity are the same for Leibniz.  
16 Consider the following: "Primary matter, namely, that which is required for extension and antitype, that is, for diffusion and resistance, arises from the union of the passive power of the monads, and from the union of the monadic entelechies arises substantial form." (GP II 335/AG 198). Here it is clear that the *vinculum substantiale* will effect the union of monadic entelechies.  
17 Robinet, Architetonique, 88.
will say, for example, "corporeal substances or substantial bonds of monads" (GP II 482). And, similarly, Leibniz will claim that it is the composite substance that reifies or realizes the phenomena (GP II 510/MG 203), a role that we had said was reserved for the vinculum substantiale. Further, in his letter of January 1716, Leibniz notes an affinity between his conception of the vinculum substantiale and the Scholastic conceptions of substance and, by extension, of the suppositum of matter and form or of mind and body. He says, "I think that I am absolutely of the same opinion as the Scholastics, for whom the complete thing resulting from primary matter and substantial form, the primitive active and passive powers of the composite, I think is in fact the vinculum substantiale that I urge" (GP 511). In this passage the vinculum substantiale is not described as that thing superadded to the monads that guarantees their unity, despite its being described elsewhere as that which adds something substantial. Rather, the vinculum substantiale is here described as the complete being, the composite of matter and form, or the composite of monads in a corporeal substance.

One might therefore conclude that when Leibniz describes the vinculum substantiale as a "new substantality" (GP II 488/MG 199) or as "something substantial beyond monads" (GP II 511), he means that the vinculum substantiale will be the substance composed of many monads. Contrary to Leibniz’s frequent claims that there are only monads and their aggregates in the world, the vinculum substantiale will be a new substantality, a composite substance, having the same claim to reality as any of its constituent monads. And the vinculum substantiale will "realize" the phenomena because it will be, qua corporeal substance, a body possessing more than phenomenal unity.

Yet I should like to argue that the model or interpretation of the vinculum substantiale that fits best with Leibniz’s different claims in the correspondence with Des Bosses is that of the vinculum substantiale as some independent, substance-like thing. And the principal reason for holding this interpretation is that it makes sense of Leibniz’s use of the vinculum substantiale with respect to both transubstantiation and composite substance. As we saw in §2, Leibniz argues that transubstantiation can be explained by having a vinculum substantiale of monads, that is, something that can bond the monads of the bread together and then, in the service of the Eucharist, be destroyed and replaced by another vinculum. And Leibniz argues strongly that this vinculum be considered a substance.

Responding to Leibniz on 20 May 1712, Des Bosses asserts that the absolute something ["absolutum aliquid"] that is added to substances in order to realize the phenomena ought not to be considered a substance but rather an accident because an accident is something that presupposes a complete substance and the absolutum aliquid that Leibniz proposes seems to presuppose a complete substance. Des Bosses concludes, "Now we shall have in bodies something absolute, distinct from monads, that is not a substance, and thus since
body superadds nothing to monads except that absolute thing, only an accident is superadded” (GP II 442). The implication of this argument for the case of transubstantiation would seem then to be that the absolute something superadded to the monads, since it cannot itself be a substance, cannot be that thing which is changed during transubstantiation.

But Leibniz is not willing at this point to accept Des Bosses’ proposal that the thing that unifies a composite (or that makes possible the change of substances in transubstantiation) be an accident. According to Leibniz (or, at least, according to the view that he presents here for Des Bosses), the *vinculum substantiale* has to be a substance-like thing distinct from the monads of a composite. And the *vinculum substantiale* must be a substance in order to account for transubstantiation. After all, with transubstantiation, there must be an actual change of substances; there must be, as Leibniz suggests, some *external* thing that bonds the monads together and that is destroyed and replaced. Transubstantiation can simply not be explained if we consider the *vinculum substantiale* as being equivalent to the composite substance.

For those who suggest that Leibniz could not or should not have held the view that there was a *vinculum substantiale* because it is inconsistent with his more commonly expressed view that there are only monads, or simple substances, and their perceptions, one should point out that Leibniz clearly had an opportunity to recant, to say that the thing that realized the phenomena was not truly a substance, and thus to maintain a sparse ontology. But Leibniz did not do this; nor did Leibniz claim that the *vinculum substantiale* was actually the relation between monads in a composite substance; he held instead that which realizes the phenomena must be something substantial or a substance-like thing.

Now there is additional textual support for the idea of the *vinculum substantiale* as some kind of independent substance-like thing. In April of 1715, Leibniz writes: “for the rest it will not be necessary to assume a *vinculum substantiale* except in bodies which have a dominant monad, or which are united per se like organic bodies, and this *vinculum substantiale* will always adhere to this monad” (GP II 496/L611*). The idea that a particular monad could adhere to or be affixed to the *vinculum substantiale* suggests that the *vinculum* is a separate substance-like thing beyond the monads. It would be difficult to render this view consistent with the view that the *vinculum substantiale* is simply the complete bonded set of monads. If, for example, one were to say that the dominant monad adheres to the *vinculum substantiale qua* the entire composite substance, then one would be forced to explain how the dominant monad is distinct from the composite substance, a difficult proposition given the fact that Leibniz generally speaks of composite substances as resulting from the relation of domination and subordination among monads. On the
other hand, we can still say that the vinculum substantiale is a separate being and that, at the same time, through its superaddition to a set of monads, the vinculum substantiale guarantees the unity of the composite substance and provides the composite of monads with a new substantiality. In a passage that shows a similar kind of thinking, Leibniz makes the following claim:

A vinculum substantiale superadded to the monads is in my opinion something absolute, such that although it corresponds accurately, in the course of nature, to the affections of the monads, that is, to their perceptions and appetites, and can therefore be taken to be within the monad in whose body its body is, it can nevertheless be independent of the monads in a supernatural sense and can be removed and adapted to other monads while its former monads remain. (GP II 474/A 1688)

Here again we see the view that the vinculum substantiale will be something absolute that can—supernaturally, at least—exist independently of monads. Indeed, this view is precisely that required for Leibniz’s account of transubstantiation. If the vinculum were merely a relation or the entire bonded composite substance, then it could not be destroyed and replaced with a new vinculum substantiale in the service of the Eucharist. And, in his last letter to Des Bosses, Leibniz again suggests that the vinculum is somehow independent of the monads that it unites. He says,

I do not say that there is a vinculum midway between matter and form, but that the substantial form and primary matter of the composite, in the Scholastic sense, that is, the primary power, active and passive, are in the vinculum, just as they are in the essence of the composite. However, this vinculum substantiale is naturally, not essentially, a vinculum. For it requires monads, but it does not involve them essentially, since it can exist without monads, and monads without it. (GP II 516/AG 202)

The idea that the vinculum can exist without monads is significant because it implies that the vinculum is in some sense something absolute and substantial in its own right and suggests a difference between the vinculum substantiale and a suppositum of monads. The vinculum substantiale is independent of the elements that it binds together, whereas the suppositum of monads is the complete composite substance can only be said to arise from the existence of these elements.

Throughout the correspondence with Des Bosses, Leibniz claims that the vinculum substantiale is responsible for the existence or presence of a suppositum or a composite substance. Although, as mentioned above, Leibniz occasionally runs the notions of the vinculum substantiale and composite substance together, in a way suggesting their equivalence, he generally seems to claim that it is the vinculum substantiale that brings a genuine composite substance into existence. In other words, the dominant view of the correspondence is that the vinculum substantiale brings it about that a group of monads will form a composite being or a suppositum and is itself some independent substance-like thing.
I claimed that there are four models for, or possible interpretations of, the *vinculum substantiale*. Thus far we have considered three, all of which take the *vinculum substantiale* to be, in some sense, substantial. But an alternative has been suggested by Christiane Fremont, who suggests in the first part of her book on the Leibniz–Des Bosses correspondence that the *vinculum substantiale* be understood as the relation that arises between the monads of a composite. She says, The bond . . . is . . . a specific relation between certain monads, not at all necessary and universal but contingent and particular. The bond is the existence itself of an interexpression so strong between certain monads that it produces a specific unity, composite substance; body. What is the substantial bond? It is the specification and materialization of harmony: the incarnation.18

In other words, the monads of a composite, when they exist together as a genuine unity, bear a specific relation to one another, and this specific relation between monads is itself the *vinculum substantiale* of monads. More than this, however, Fremont suggests that the quality or strength of the “interexpression” of monads causes the materialization or the reification of the body itself.

Yet, in Leibniz’s writings, it is difficult to find any passage that supports the idea of the *vinculum substantiale* as a relation. The only passage that could possibly be adduced as support for Fremont’s interpretation is one I have already quoted, from a supplementary note to Leibniz’s letter of February 1712.19 There Leibniz claims that there is a “more perfect” relation through which a new substance arises from many substances. Here we would have to understand the new, or more perfect, relation as being itself the *vinculum substantiale*, when, in fact, the text suggests quite clearly that somehow the *vinculum substantiale* is itself the result of some kind of perfect relation between monads.

The view of the *vinculum substantiale* as equivalent to the composite substance or the entire bound substance seems ultimately unlikely since it conflicts with Leibniz’s consistent view of the character of the *vinculum substantiale* from the requisite monads and similarly with Leibniz’s frequent claims that the *vinculum substantiale* is that which brings about a *subposition*. The related view of the *vinculum substantiale* as a particular relation that exists between monads within a composite substance similarly faces difficulties. First, if one were to take the *vinculum substantiale* as a relation that exists between monads, one would be hard-pressed to explain how a relation could be the principle of action of a composite substance.20 Second, the view of the *vinculum substantiale*

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19 See above, p. 209.
20 Naturally, if one takes the *vinculum substantiale* to be something substantial or a quasi-substance (or even as a substantial form), then one would not have such a problem.
as a relation runs into difficulties because of Leibniz's statements that the 
vinculum substantiale is something beyond the monads or something that has
independent existence. To say that the vinculum substantiale has independent
existence and that the vinculum substantiale is a relation would be to make
Leibniz a realist with respect to relations. And this he most certainly was not.
The third reason that this reading is false is that Leibniz quite explicitly distin-
guishes the vinculum substantiale from the relations that exist within a composite
substance. For example, in his final letter to Des Bosses, Leibniz says,

For orders, or relations which join two monads, are not in one monad or the other, but
equally well in both at the same time, that is, really in neither, but in the mind alone.
You will not understand this relation unless you add a real vinculum, that is, something
substantial which is the subject of the predicates and modifications joining them to-
gether. (GP II 517/AG 501a)

In other words, Leibniz tells Des Bosses that he (Des Bosses) will not be able to
understand the relation between two conjoined monads unless he adds a
vinculum reale or something substantial to the aggregate, suggesting that the
vinculum substantiale is indeed some separate thing necessary for explaining a
relation.

5. CONCLUSION: TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND THE
RUSSELL-DISMISSAL

While Leibniz does at times treat the vinculum substantiale as the complete com-
posite substance, the dominant model of the vinculum substantiale is one in which
the vinculum substantiale is some kind of independent, substance-like thing. And
this is clearly the result of Leibniz's explanation of transubstantiation, for one of
the requirements of transubstantiation is that there be a change of substances. It
is important to note that Leibniz insists that the vinculum substantiale is the thing
that is substantial and that undergoes the change. The vincula substantiales of the
bread and wine are changed in the service of the Eucharist; and these vincula are
distinct entities apart from the monads of the bread and wine, which would
otherwise exist àe quia per aggregationem. If, for example, the vinculum substantiale
were simply a relation, then it could not, strictly speaking, be destroyed and
replaced by another vinculum substantiale without, at the same time, changing the
monads or simple substances. This view is certainly not unproblematic, but it
should be clear to the reader that the vinculum substantiale represents, in Leib-
niz's view, a substantial thing added to a group of monads and whose addition
guarantees the real union of the monads of a composite substance.

Although the nature of the vinculum substantiale is to a large degree deter-
mined by the debate with Des Bosses on transubstantiation, we ought to be wary
of drawing strong conclusions about the role of the vinculum substantiale in the
explanation of transubstantiation and about the general importance of transubstantiation. Some scholars have tried to argue that transubstantiation comes to occupy a central place in the philosophy of Leibniz. For example, Christiane Fremont says, "Christology is essential to Leibnizianism" and the following: "—it is inevitable that Leibniz finishes his life in meditating over transubstantiation... The philosophy of Leibniz is through and through Christian." Such statements strike me as being more than slight exaggerations. Leibniz brings up the issue of transubstantiation rarely in the final years of his correspondence with Des Bosses, and he uses the concept of the vinculum substantiale primarily to explain the general problem of the nature of composite substances. Of course, the issue of transubstantiation and the issue of the nature of composite substance are closely related, and one cannot truly have a discussion of transubstantiation without a discussion of the nature of corporeal substance. But one can have a discussion of the nature of corporeal substance without having a discussion of transubstantiation, and this is precisely what happens in the correspondence between Leibniz and Des Bosses. Christiane Fremont is right when she says that "one really understands what the vinculum is only in relation to the mystery of the eucharist," for Leibniz's explanation of the "mystère eucharistique" does contribute to what I take to be the main model of the vinculum substantiale. Nevertheless, my view, the "mystère eucharistique" is only a small part of the whole story of the vinculum substantiale—at least of the story of the role of the vinculum.

In this paper I have considered several views concerning the nature of the vinculum substantiale. I hope to have shown that one ought not to consider the vinculum substantiale as the relation that obtains between the monads of a composite substance, as Christiane Fremont does—to do so would contradict Leibniz's statements that the vinculum substantiale is the principle of activity of a composite substance and that the vinculum substantiale can exist independently of the monads. And, although Leibniz sometimes treats the vinculum substantiale as a substantial form, insofar as it is to be the principle of action and unity of a composite substance, he generally holds the vinculum substantiale to be something more. In the end, the only rival conceptions of the vinculum substantiale are as a suppositum, now understood as the entire composite substance or entire 'bonded' being, and as the substantial thing beyond the constituent monads. While the former model for the vinculum substantiale does appear in the correspondence with Des Bosses, it is the latter conception that is the

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13 Fremont, L'Être et la relation, 97.
15 Fremont, L'Être et la relation, 166.
Substance of the Vinculum Substantiale

Dominant one in the correspondence. Indeed the role that the vinculum played in Leibniz's account of transubstantiation required that it be something substantial and distinct from the monads, for otherwise there could be no transubstantiation. In other words, if we are to take the vinculum as being equivalent to the entire composite substance, then there can no longer be transubstantiation. So, while there are many passages that can be put forward as support for either of these interpretations, I should like to suggest that the interpretation that I am arguing for is consistent with virtually all of Leibniz's assertions concerning the vinculum substantiale, while the other interpretation is inconsistent with Leibniz's claims of the independence of the vinculum substantiale from the monads of the composite substance.

This sketch of Leibniz's vinculum substantiale ought therefore to be helpful for the following reasons. First, we have seen that Leibniz's doctrine of the vinculum substantiale is not concerned exclusively with transubstantiation, but with the nature of composite substance in general. Indeed, it is interesting and important to consider Leibniz's doctrine of the vinculum substantiale precisely because it represents an attempt on Leibniz's part to explain how bodies can be more than phenomenal unities or how composites of monads can count as real substances. Second, we have seen that of the several different interpretations concerning the nature of the vinculum substantiale the interpretation that can be made consistent with the majority of Leibniz's claims is that which holds the vinculum substantiale to be some independent substance-like thing. Third, contrary to Russell's tendency to dismiss the entire discussion of transubstantiation, we are aided by looking precisely at this discussion, for it gives us the key to the nature of the vinculum substantiale. And fourth, when we do look at the discussion with Des Bosses concerning the nature of transubstantiation, we see that Des Bosses argues against the substantiality of the vinculum substantiale and so argues against the very view that Russell would have us believe was being concealed to Des Bosses.

Of course, if I am right about all this, then I think we are in the position of saying that the idea of the vinculum substantiale is deeply flawed and deeply unsatisfactory. We now would seem to have some kind of thing that is like a substance, insofar as it is independent and insofar as it can be the source of...

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One might be tempted to argue that these two different models are invoked by Leibniz to explain two distinct problems. Leibniz could be said to use the model of the vinculum substantiale as a separate, substance-like thing in his explanation of transubstantiation and the model of the vinculum substantiale as complete "bond" of monads in his explanation of composite substance. This explanation is, however, too simplistic, for Leibniz uses the former conception of the vinculum substantiale often in the final years of the correspondence, when the primary issue is the nature of composite substance in general.
actions and modifications, but that is nowhere described as having one of the characteristics of Leibnizian substances—perception. Further, in order to unify the various monads in a composite substance, this substance-like thing would have to be capable of exercising real causal powers on other substances. Yet such causal efficacy is inconsistent with Leibniz’s most strongly held views concerning the relations of substances. Ultimately, we see that one model that Leibniz seems to take somewhat seriously in his attempt to provide a “realistic” account of composite substance leads us into difficult ontological territory, and we are left an even stronger reason for thinking that Leibniz does indeed abandon the notion of real, corporeal substances, that are per se unities.

Should we then follow all those who have dismissed Leibniz’s doctrine of the vinculum substantiarum? Yes, but now we can do so with a good reason. 

University of Kentucky

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55 This model of the vinculum substantiarum will also be unsatisfactory because it allows us to fall easily into a Leibnizian “Third-Man” problem. If the monads of a composite are united by a vinculum substantia, what unites the vinculum substantia to the monads?

56 That is, seeing exactly how Leibniz might explain the unity and reality of corporeal substances can only confirm our conviction that such “corporeal substances” must indeed be rejected in Leibniz’s mature metaphysics.

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