

G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe, Reihe II, Band 2, "Philosophischer Briefwechsel," 1686-1694.* Ed. Leibniz-Forschungsstelle der Universität Münster (Martin Schneider et al.). Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2009. Pp. CXI, 1001.

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We have had to wait 85 years for the appearance of the second volume of Leibniz' *Philosophical Correspondence*¹—the *Urfassung* of Band 1 was published at Darmstadt as long ago as 1926 by the venerable founders of the Academy Edition, Ritter-Kabitz-Hochstetter—but the wait has been eminently worthwhile: for we are now given a superb edition of Leibniz' philosophical letters stretching from 1686 (the year of the "Discourse on Metaphysics") to 1694 (the year before the "New System" of substances and the advent of the terms "monad" and "pre-established harmony"). And this of course means that the great central ornament of Volume 2 is a definitive version of the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence, 1686-1690—including a little-known Leibniz-letter of September 1687 (A II, 2, No. 56) which emerged from the Hannover archives only a little more than a decade ago, and which is a "first version" of the celebrated October 9 letter which will be treated ahead.

Given that "Philosophical Correspondence vol. 2" consists of nearly 300 items covering 1,001 pages (plus a massive "Introduction" of more than a hundred pages), it seems reasonable—recalling that Leibniz was by profession a *jurisconsult* and "intimate counselor of justice"²—to focus the attention of a brief review on Leibniz' practical philosophy of "wise charity" and "universal benevolence" (*iustitia est caritas sapientis seu benevolentia universalis*); for even the letters to Arnauld have this practical focus in large measure—especially the great final letter of March 1690. (Those who want a more general reading of the letters will rightly turn to Sleigh's wonderful commentary.³)

A final prefatory note: the editors of A II, 2 at the Leibniz-Forschungsstelle Münster have had the excellent idea of re-publishing the "philosophically relevant" passages of numerous Leibniz-letters which originally appeared in Reihe I of the Academy Edition (Allgemeiner Politischer und Historischer Briefwechsel)—especially the letters to Landgraf Ernst of Hessen-Rheinfels, to Bossuet's crony Mme de Brinon, and to Bossuet himself. Since Leibniz' *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* are divided into eight series, and since some of the joints of the *corpus*

are oddly carved (however inevitably), many basically philosophical letters are “lost” to those who think (not merely unreasonably) that the “general political and historical correspondence” has more biographical than philosophical significance. But thanks to Münster’s wise decision, we now have the Hessen-Rheinfels letters (for example) where they belong, or at least where they “also” belong: with the Leibniz- Arnauld letters.

And this Münster-decision also sets a helpful *precedent* (which Leibniz the lawyer would have appreciated): Since Münster has post-war *jurisdictio* over Leibniz’ philosophical writings, that Forschungsstelle will eventually publish (in Reihe VI) Leibniz’ greatest single contribution to political philosophy, the remarkable *Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice*⁴ (1703-1704)—which will mean (or ‘til now would have meant) that the *Méditation* could not be included at all in Leibniz’ *Politische Schriften* (Reihe IV, under the *jurisdictio* of Berlin/Potsdam). But it would of course be lamentable for Leibniz’ most important theoretical contribution to political justice *not* to be (also) in Reihe IV: with the new “Münster-precedent” of reasonable re-publication there can now be double appearance of works which fall between the carvings of problematical joints. The *Méditation* can now appear in Series VI and in Series IV—a just and satisfying outcome.

And *en revanche*, the *Philosophical Papers* (Reihe VI) will now be able to re-print (for example) the great Platonizing essay, “What is Independent of the Senses and of Matter”—lately published in “General Correspondence vol. 21” (Berlin 2009)⁵ simply because the essay is (technically) a 1702 letter to Queen Sophie-Charlotte of Prussia (Leibniz’ old pupil). This reprinting of one of Leibniz’ greatest philosophical works (“letter” though it nominally be) can come about when Reihe VI reaches Leibniz’ writings from 1702—perhaps in what may become “VI, 5” (in imitation of the magnificent “VI, 4” given us lately by Heinrich Schepers⁶). In any case the Academy-Edition as a whole will be greatly strengthened by this wise and welcome Münster-precedent of selective republication.

I. The Leibniz-Arnauld Letters

Leibniz’ two great epistolary contributions to the theory of “substance” (later “monad”) are his letters to Arnauld (1686-90) and then to des Bosses (1706-16);⁷ A II, 2 now offers the first fully critical edition of the earlier set—as will be seen after some introductory remarks.

That Leibniz thought his theory of substance or “monadology” essential to the

understanding of justice and morality is quite clear: as he said in the *New Essays* (1704), “True ethics is to metaphysics what practice is to theory, because upon the doctrine of substances in general depends the knowledge of spirits and particularly of God and the soul, which gives a proper meaning to justice and virtue.”⁸ And Leibniz meant that claim to have wide currency, even in the English-speaking world; only the death of Locke kept him from publishing the *New Essays*.

Just as, for Leibniz, each monad or substance “expresses” or “represents” the universe from its point of view, so too monadology itself expresses or represents the Leibnizian moral universe: the whole universal jurisprudence of wise charity is built into Leibniz’ conception of (rational) monads who “see” demi-Platonic eternal moral verities and who strive to act (from benevolent motives) to realize those truths. Leibniz’ “monadology”—beginning with the “Discourse on Metaphysics” (1686) and the related correspondence with Antoine Arnauld (1686-1690), and culminating in the *Monadology* itself (1714)—is a theory of justice which only needs to be teased out of metaphysical and theological surroundings, much as Socrates teased “geometric” knowledge of virtue out of Meno’s slave.⁹ Even if Leibniz’ official writings on justice vanished, one could find his ethical views “represented” in monadology. For “on the knowledge of substance, and in consequence of the soul, depends the knowledge of virtue and of justice” (to Pierre Coste, 1713)¹⁰.

Leibniz always takes care to bring out the moral-political significance of his concept of “substance”, even in the correspondence with Arnauld: he is, to be sure, concerned as a metaphysician with substance as such, but always wants to show that without (naturally immortal) substances or persons there can be no moral concepts, no “subjects” of universal justice, no “citizens” of the divine monarchy or City of God. That is one reason (among many) that Leibniz is hostile to Hobbes (read as an Epicurean anti-Platonist): if as in *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, “all substance is body,” and if mere body cannot conceive moral ideas—because “body” cannot conceive anything at all—then “universal jurisprudence” is ruled out by bad metaphysics, by an inadequate conception of substance.

Here, of course, Leibniz is thinking of a passage such as the one in *Leviathan*, chapter 34, in which Hobbes says that “substance and body signify the same thing,” and that therefore the phrase “incorporeal substance” strives vainly to link up “words which, when they are joined together, destroy one another, as if a man should say, an Incorporeal Body.”¹¹ Or, alternatively, Leibniz is thinking of the passage in the savagely funny chapter 46 of *Leviathan* (“Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions”), which follows an assault on scholastic “Aristoteleity” with

the insistence that the Graeco-Christian term “substantial form” is nothing but the decayed jargon of “School Divinity”:

The world (I mean not the earth only. . . but the Universe, that is, the whole mass of things that are) is corporeal, that is to say, Body: and hath the dimensions of magnitude, namely, length, breadth and depth Nor does it follow from thence, that Spirits are nothing: for they have dimensions, and are therefore really bodies.¹²

The opening chapter of *Leviathan*, which represents all “conceptions” as “movements” in the brain caused by the “pressure” of outward “objects,” is for Leibniz completely inadequate; mind or *esprit* vanishes, or at least is unaccountable. Hobbes speaks, Leibniz complains, “as if it were possible to derive memory, intellect, will and consciousness from [bodily] magnitude, shape and motion alone” (*Apologia Catholicae Veritatis*, c. 1685).¹³ Of course Hobbes uses moral ideas such as “ought” and “obligation”—saying in *Leviathan*, chapter 14, that once a man has “transferred” his right to a sovereign beneficiary he is “said to be obliged” not to “make void that voluntary act of his own,” that he “ought,” and that it is his “duty,” to keep covenants; but in Leibniz’ view Hobbes is not entitled to those terms, since the Hobbesian notion of substance makes them inconceivable within his system. Strictly speaking, for Leibniz, Hobbes views mind itself as an epiphenomenon—literally as a set of impressions made by the “pressure” of objects. But how (Leibniz would ask) can a pressing object “cause” the conceivability of “oughtness” or “obligation,” or provide the idea of “moral necessity”? Even if so-called sense-perception (of a tree or rock) might be accounted for in this Hobbesian way—though for Leibniz there is no “empirical” perception¹⁴—how would “pressure” of objects generate moral notions? For Leibniz, as for Plato and Kant, only reason can “give” ideas such as moral necessity; no empirical experience can do so, as Plato’s *Phaedo* urges; it is in that moral sense that Plato, Leibniz, and Kant are all “idealists.”¹⁵

The moral-political significance of Leibniz’ theory of “substance” is nowhere brought out more clearly than in his correspondence with the great Jansenist theologian and Pascal-colleague Antoine Arnauld concerning the “Discourse on Metaphysics”—and that is especially true of two of Leibniz’ letters, one from 1687 summing up the first phase of this exchange, and a final one from March 1690 in which “substance” is so subordinated to justice and wise charity that it seems to be mainly the *conditio sine qua non* of morality and benevolence.

Leibniz’ letter to Arnauld of October 9, 1687 (A II, 2, No. 57) begins by

appealing to the authority of Plato: “regarding the [substantial] forms of the souls which I consider to be indivisible and indestructible, I am not the first to hold this opinion. Parmenides, of whom Plato speaks with respect . . . held that there was neither generation nor corruption except in appearance. Aristotle takes the same position in *De Caelo*.” After trying to meet a number of Arnauldian difficulties and objections in earlier letters, Leibniz goes on to stress the moral importance of rightly-conceived substance:

With regard to spirits, that is to say, substances which think and which are able to recognize God and to discover eternal truths, I hold that God governs them according to laws different from those with which he governs the rest of substances; for while all the forms of substances express the whole universe, it can be said that animal substances express the world rather than God, while spirits express God rather than the world. God governs animal substances according to the material laws of force and of the transfer of motion, but spirits according to the spiritual laws of justice, of which the others are incapable.¹⁶

It is for this reason, Leibniz goes on to say, that with regard to animals God operates “as a worker or a machinist,” but that with respect to minds he “performs the functions of a prince or of a legislator”—a function which is “infinitely higher.”¹⁷

If, then, for Leibniz, God is the “author” of the being (the real temporal existence) of rational substances, that is not what matters most: what matters most is the moral relations between the supreme mind and finite minds.

[God] assumes another aspect with regard to spirits who conceive of him as endowed with will and with moral qualities: because he is, himself, a spirit and, like one among us, to the point of entering with us into a social relation, where he is the head. It is this universal society or republic of minds under this sovereign monarch which is the noblest part of the universe, composed of so many little gods under this one great God; for it can be said that created spirits differ from God only in degree, only as the finite differs from the infinite, and it can truly be said that the whole universe has been made only to contribute to the beautifying and to the happiness of this City of God.

With that passing reminiscence of Augustine, Leibniz now goes on, in this 1687 letter to Arnauld, to urge that in the City of God it is “justice or love” which links finite substances with the supreme substance.

This is why everything is so constructed that the laws of force or the purely material laws work together in the whole universe to carry out the laws of

justice or of love, so that nothing will be able to injure the souls that are in the hands of God, and so that everything should result in the greatest good of those who love him; this is why, furthermore, it must be that spirits keep their personalities and their moral qualities so that the City of God shall lose no person and they must in particular preserve some sort of memory of consciousness or the power to know what they are, upon which depends all their morality, penalties, and chastisement.

It is for this moral reason, Leibniz adds, that minds must be “exempt” from those “transformations of the universe” which would make them “unrecognizable to themselves” and which would “morally speaking, make another person of them.”¹⁸

That final phrase, “make another person of them,” is just what the Leibnizian notion of substance rules out: each individuated rational monad knows the eternal moral verities and has memory of its own good and bad actions, so that it can be the subject of universal justice.

II. Leibniz’ Final Letter to Arnauld (1690)

By the time he wrote his very last letter to Arnauld, from Venice in March 1690, at the end of his “*Iter Italicum*” (Robinet¹⁹), Leibniz had gotten beyond any tentativeness or defensiveness in his statement of what “substance” really is: he is no longer terribly worried about accommodating Arnauld (as in earlier letters), but is concerned to offer a terse, laconic summary of his views—in a manner which foreshadows the equally terse and laconic *Monadology*. He has arrived at a definitive position, and therefore offers a string of definitions. After presenting a very compressed proto-monadology, Leibniz makes it clear that it is “rational substances” or “intellects” or souls that matter most; and he crowns this with a foretaste of the doctrine of the *Codex Iuris gentium* (which he had begun to prepare for 1693 publication)—the doctrine that justice is *caritas sapientis*, “the charity of the wise.” More than any other short work, this 1690 letter to Arnauld (A II, 2, No. 78) shows that, for Leibniz, moral and political philosophy cannot be undertaken at all without an adequate idea of substance.

First Leibniz speaks of substance in a general and now-familiar way:

Each of these substances contains in its own nature the law of the continuous progression of its own workings and all that has happened to it and all that will happen to it.

Excepting the dependence upon God, all these activities come from its own nature.

Each substance expresses the whole universe, some substances, however, more distinctly than others, each one . . . according to its own point of view.²⁰

But then Leibniz gives “substance” a moral and jurisprudential turn—and this “moral” part of the account is as long as the account of substance-in-general. (It must then be the case that he thought –despite the fears of Arnauld—that he had sufficiently “saved” freedom to make it possible for him to insist on justice, charity and benevolence as virtues that *ought* to be practiced by self-determining agents.²¹)

Intellects, or souls which are capable of reflection and of knowledge of the eternal truths and God, have many privileges which exempt them from the transformation of bodies.

In regard to them moral laws must be added to physical laws. . . .

They, taken together, constitute the Republic of the Universe, with God as the monarch.

There is perfect justice and order observed in this City of God, and there is no evil action without its chastisement, nor any good action without its proportionate reward.

The better things are understood, the more they are found beautiful and conformable to the desires which a wise man might form.²²

We must “always be content with the ordering of the past,” Leibniz goes on to say, “because it has absolutely conformed to the will of God, which can be known by the events”; but at the same time we must “try to make the future, insofar as it depends upon us, conform to the presumptive will of God or to his commandments”—above all the commandments enjoining love for God and one’s neighbor. In this way we shall learn “to beautify our Sparta and to labor in well-doing, without, however, being cast down when unsuccessful, in the firm belief that God will know how to find the most fitting times for changes to the better.”

Those who are not content with the ordering of things cannot boast of loving God properly.

Justice is nothing else than love felt by the wise.

Charity is universal benevolence whose fulfillment the wise carry out conformably to the dictates of reason so as to obtain the greatest good.

Wisdom is the science of happiness or of the means of attaining the lasting contentment which consists in the continual achievement of greater perfection.²³

Almost the whole of Leibniz' thought is compressed into the final page of the last letter to Arnauld, as for him the whole universe is compressed into each monad. The monadology, the theodicy, the universal jurisprudence of wise charity and *benevolentia universalis*, the moral psychology of happiness based on feelings of "perfection"—all are minutely, embryonically present in this 1690 writing.

It is worth remembering that while the Leibniz-Arnauld correspondence ended in March 1690, it had its bare beginning in 1671—a half-year before Leibniz left Mainz for his four-year Paris sojourn. In a letter to Arnauld of November 1671, Leibniz—who had been laboring for several years on the *Elementa Iuris Naturalis*—had already begun to work up the *iustitia universalis* of *caritas*, *sapientia*, and *benevolentia* with which he ended his farewell missive from Venice (and which then became the heart of the *Codex Iuris Gentium*):

I define the good or just man as one who loves everyone; love, as pleasure taken in the happiness of another, sorrow in the unhappiness of another From this I deduce all the theorems of the right and the equitable . . . Thence it appears that the just man, the man who loves everyone, strives to aid all men, even when he is unable, just as necessarily the rock tends to fall, even when it is hanging. I show that all obligation is vindicated in the highest striving [*conatus*]; that it is the same thing to love all men and to love God, the seat of universal harmony: indeed that it is the same thing to love truly, or to be wise, and to love God, above all things, that is, to be just.²⁴

Later in this 1671 letter, Leibniz comes up with a very ingenious reading of "aid to all men" which insists that such aid has mathematically measureable "multiplying" effects. (Here the great mathematician that Leibniz was about to become is intimidated.) It is the Plato who deplored ignorance of geometry, and who made Socrates rescue Meno's slave from such ignorance, who dominates here:

To aid [others] proceeds not from the principle of addition but from that of multiplication. . . . Indeed all which is given [to someone] will be multiplied by its reflection on many others, and in consequence in aiding one one aids several This difference between addition and multiplication has a great usefulness even in the doctrine of justice. To aid is to multiply and to harm is to divide. The reason for this is that the one who is aided is a mind, and that a mind can apply all things to all other things while using them—which

in itself is to augment or multiply them. If it be the case that one [person] is wise to the value of three and powerful to the value of four, the total value of this person will be twelve and not seven; for wisdom can utilize power of any degree whatever.²⁵

This is an amazing tour de force of “applied” mathematics, resting on “Platonic” foundations of “numbers,” wise love, and “universal harmony”: these will also be the future basis (forty years on) of “the justice of God,” *theos-dike*, *Théodicée*—whose 300th birthday we have just been celebrating.²⁶

III. Leibniz’ Letters to Landgraf Ernst of Hessen-Rheinfels

The first fruit of the “Münster-precedent” of republishing “philosophically relevant” letters from “General Correspondence” in A II, 2 is the (re)appearance of Leibniz’ *Briefwechsel* with Landgraf Ernst—that convert to a Jansenizing version of Catholicism who helpfully conveyed a *précis* of the “Discourse on Metaphysics” to Arnauld, thereby re-establishing the Leibniz-Arnauld epistolary *rapport* which had been in abeyance since 1671. (Since Leibniz was—in some sense—a Protestant, the fact that Jansenism was—in some sense—“Calvinistic” was not *automatically* distressing.)²⁷

Though Landgraf Ernst was the ally and confidant of Arnauld—they even shared the same Jansenist agent at the Vatican, “Antonio Alberti” (Amable de Turreil), to whom Leibniz wrote (A II, 2, No. 74) concerning freedom (“nothing happens without some reason . . . all those who reason about morality and politics . . . use this same principle, that there is always a reason or cause which inclines the will”²⁸)—Leibniz nonetheless felt free to complain to Landgraf Ernst of the excessive harshness of some Arnauldian doctrines. In a letter to Ernst of September 13, 1690 (A II, 2, No. 84), Leibniz urges that Arnauld’s notion of the eternal damnation of innocent pagans comes perilously close to the supralapsarian “despotism” which he later deplored in *Théodicée* 175-178 and in the *Causa Dei*: After all, Arnauld had claimed in *Première Apologie pour M. Jansénius* that God, by an “absolute and immutable decree . . . chose, from all eternity, without any regard for merit, a certain number of men” (pre)destined for “the common mass of perdition.”²⁹ Of this Leibniz wrote to Landgraf Ernst that “I am not entirely of the sentiment of M. Arnauld, who . . . finds it strange that so many millions of pagans have not been condemned [to damnation]; as for me I would find it much more strange if they had been.” And Leibniz goes on to say that “I do not know why we are so prone

to believe that people are damned or plunged in eternal miseries”—a view which is “little compatible with the goodness and the justice of God” (again an anticipation of *theos-dike*). Leibniz then broadens this complaint about Arnauld into a foretaste of *iustitia caritas sapientis* in the soon-to-appear *Codex Iuris Gentium*:

To say with [Arnauld] that the justice of God is other than that of men, is just like saying that the arithmetic and geometry of men is false in heaven. Justice has its eternal and unshakeable ideas, and its nature is to bring about the general good insofar as is possible: if that is not the objective of God, one cannot say that he is just according to my definitions, which are in conformity to common notions [*les notions communes*]: namely that *justitia est caritas sapientis*, that is to say a charity which is conformed to wisdom, and that charity is *benevolentia generalis*, such that he who is just advances the good of others as far as he can, without injuring wisdom. And since God is just, one must say that he has regard for the good of all reasonable creatures insofar as this is permitted by the perfection of the universe or the universal harmony which is the supreme law of the creator.³⁰

That last sentence, of course, anticipates the great 1697 essay, “Radical Origination of Things”—and also, once again, looks forward to the *Théodicée*. And the use of the Euclidean-geometrical term *notion commune* in connection with *iustitia* shows that Leibniz merely *wrote down* the “Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice” in 1703.³¹

Lest anyone should miss his argument that justice, like arithmetic and geometry, is rationally demonstrative, “eternal” and “unshakeable”—hence not merely an Arnauldian “absolute decree”—Leibniz wrote a variant-version of his letter to Landgraf Ernst (apparently on the same day) in which he insisted that

...one cannot escape by saying, with M. Arnauld, that we must not judge God through the ideas which we have of justice. For it is necessary that one have an idea or general notion of justice, when one says that God is just; otherwise this would be to attribute only a word to him. For myself I believe that, just as the arithmetic and geometry of God is the same as that of men, except that it is infinitely more extensive, in the same way natural jurisprudence and every other truth is the same in heaven and on earth. One must not imagine that God is capable of doing that which would be tyranny in men.³²

And worries about divine “tyranny” and “despotism”—whether in Descartes, Hobbes or hyper-Jansenists—would then increasingly concern Leibniz for the rest of his life: for example in the great “Unvorgreifliches Bedencken” of 1698 (soon to

be published in full, including the “First Version,” in A IV, 7, *Politische Schriften*). In that work, which the distinguished *émigré* Leibniz-scholar Paul Schrecker rightly called “un vrai trésor de philosophie et de théologie,”³³ Leibniz refers *four times* to a passage from Juvenal’s *Satires* (no. VI) which apparently obsessed him—the Juvenal passage in which a tyrannically unjust Roman matron willfully crucifies an innocent slave merely because she *wants* to (while saying “Hoc volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas”³⁴). (Since Leibniz defined Roman legal justice as *la raison écrite*³⁵, the unjust matron’s lethal substitution of *voluntas* for *ratio* was especially terrible.) The notion that “will” takes the place of “reason” horrified Leibniz—whether he was thinking of Pontius Pilate’s *will* to judicially murder Christ (*caritas* incarnate) while saying “what is truth?,”³⁶ or of God’s supposed “will” (according to some “despotic” supralapsarians) to damn even the innocent as an expression of his *plenitudo potestatis* and “absolute” decree (*Théodicée* 175–178). Hence Leibniz begins his most important writing on justice, “Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice,” by insisting, with Plato’s *Euthyphro*, that justice and goodness are uncreated eternal verities which come from changeless reason, not from will or decree or *fiat* or power.³⁷

But Leibniz’ definitive pitting of Platonic “eternity” against tyrannical “will” comes of course in a famous page from the *Préface* to the *Théodicée*, in which he says that the defenders of despotic *voluntas*

...do not see that, properly speaking, God’s justice is thus overthrown. For what idea shall we form of such a justice as has only will for its rule, that is to say, where the will is not guided by the rules of good and even tends directly towards evil? Unless it be the idea contained in that tyrannical definition by Thrasymachus in Plato, which designated as *just* that which pleases the stronger. Such indeed is the position taken up, albeit unwittingly, by those who rest all obligation upon constraint, and in consequence take power as the gauge of right. But one will soon abandon maxims so strange and so unfit to make men good and charitable through the imitation of God.³⁸

The *Théodicée*, then, simply pulls together strands which go far back into Leibniz’ thought, from the “Discourse on Metaphysics” (and the related letters to Arnauld and Ernst), to the “Méditation” on justice; Pierre Bayle was only the immediate Malebranchian “occasion” of this late *Summa Theologica*.

IV. Leibniz's Letters to Mme. de Brinon

Perhaps the most important result of the Münster-decision to republish letters from Leibniz' "General Correspondence" is the new availability in A II, 2 of Leibniz' remarkable *Brief* of May 1691 to Mme de Brinon—Abbess of the Cloister of Maubuisson, ally of Bishop Bossuet, and (above all) constant would-be "converter" of Leibniz to Roman Catholicism. This letter of Leibniz' is one of the most important and eloquent statements of his moral philosophy based on "disinterested" love, wise charity, and *benevolentia*; and it was written *before* the breaking out of the fratricidal quarrel over disinterested or "pure" love between Bossuet and Fénelon which agitated France for a decade (and which ended with the Vatican's condemnation of Fénelonian "quietism"³⁹). Since this important letter (A II, 2, No. 113) has never been translated, the "philosophically relevant" part is now worth giving in full.

I remember [Leibniz wrote] that when I was concerned in earlier times to establish clear and expressive notions in morality [*la morale*], I examined a question which is difficult enough—namely how it is possible that friendship or benevolence can be detached from all interest; since if it is manifest on other grounds that our own good, real or imaginary, is the end of all our voluntary actions, and that it is in this that the indispensable nature of the will consists. But when I had recognized that "to love" is nothing else than to find one's own pleasure or satisfaction in the felicity or in the perfection of another, the difficulty then dissipated, and it was easy for me to understand how the good of another is our own, without our loving through [mere] interest. For everything that we want through the sole satisfaction that we receive from it, without having in the view any utility that we can derive from it—that we want for itself and without interest.⁴⁰

With this intimation of his moral "perfectionism," best brought out by John Rawls in his *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*⁴¹—a perfectionism which also rules out any Benthamizing proto-utilitarianism, as Albert Heinekamp has shown⁴²—Leibniz goes on to say that

...we love God above all things, when we find all our happiness in the knowledge we can have of his perfections and of his sovereign felicity—just as, when we love a reasonable creature, or when we have a true benevolence for such a one, it is because we find in the advantageous state or in the felicity of the loved object an increase in our own felicity, and that we take part in this

because of the satisfaction we find therein.

Leibniz next moves on to his notion of “charity”—derived partly from Platonic “wise love” in the *Symposium*, partly from Ciceronian *caritas naturalis*, partly from St. Paul (“the greatest of these is charity”)—which then underpins his *iurisprudentia universalis* of *caritas sapientis*:

Furthermore, charity is nothing other than a general friendship [cf. Cicero: *amicitia = caritas*] which extends to all—but with a distinction, since it must be regulated by justice according to the degrees of perfection which one can find or introduce into objects. The more one is brought by natural goodness or by habit to find one’s pleasure in the happiness of another [*d’autrui*], the more one is disposed toward that sublime virtue which is called justice, since that justice is nothing other than a charity which is conformed to wisdom, and since true wisdom is indeed the science of felicity or of perfection; and since God is the eternal and immutable source of all perfection and of all true happiness, it follows that there is no affection more noble, more solid and more durable, than that which attaches itself to God, or which spreads to our neighbor out of consideration for God.⁴³

And this is close to what Leibniz (in *Nouveaux Essais* IV, 7) calls “demonstrative” moral reasoning: God, the *ens perfectissimum*, exists *ex necessitatis*, (through the Anselmian “ontological” proof, and the Augustinian proof from the “eternal verities”⁴⁴); love as a *sentiment de perfection* begins with God but “spreads,” as charity, to one’s neighbor; and when charity is “wise”—accorded to “degrees of perfection”—it becomes *iustitia universalis*. All of this is in, or at least intimated in, the 1691 letter to Mme de Brinon. (In this same *caritas*-colored vein, Leibniz wrote in July 1691 to Mme de Brinon—a letter published by Foucher de Careil in 1859, but not re-printed in A II, 2—that “you are right, Madame, to judge that I am Catholic at heart, and that I am even such quite openly . . . The essence of Catholicity is not external communication with Rome, otherwise those who are unjustly excommunicated would cease to be Catholics despite themselves . . . The true and essential communion, which makes us members of the body of Jesus Christ, is charity.”)⁴⁵

One can note briefly another letter to Mme de Brinon of September 1692 (A II, 2, No. 172) which nicely amplifies the earlier one, but which gives it a more openly political and jurisprudential turn:

To love justice, to relieve evils, to favor virtue, to glorify God through knowledge of his marvels (with respect to both nature and grace)—these are

the true titles of genealogy of the children of God. The proofs of true nobility are within our own consciences. Howsoever one may be a prince, one is degraded by wickedness, by injustice, by hardness of heart (which makes one contemptuous of the cries of the miserable), and by that softness which makes one think only of pleasure.⁴⁶

This later letter is strongly reminiscent of Leibniz' "On Generosity" (c.1686-87), of which a splendid version was published by Donald Rutherford in this *Review* in 2003.⁴⁷ And it also strongly resembles Leibniz' animadversions against Charles II of England in *Lettre sur l'éducation d'un prince* (1685).⁴⁸ In any case, Leibniz' letters to Mme de Brinon—eloquent and elegant, for a recipient used to the grace and *finesse* of Fénelon, Bossuet, Pascal and Malebranche—would alone justify the Münster-decision to republish letters from the "General Political and Historical Correspondence" which philosophers may now see for the first time.

V. Leibniz and Bossuet

Finally (and in conclusion) one can turn to a pair of Leibniz-letters to Bishop Bossuet: this time concerning not the "usual" Bossuet-Leibniz topic—ecumenical religious reconciliation through charity and latitudinarian accommodativeness—but instead Leibniz' accelerating *Platonism* (which would eventually lead to the great "What is Independent of the Senses and of Matter" in 1702).

In July 1694 (A II, 2, No. 274) Leibniz sent to Bossuet from Hannover his own French translation of an article, *De Primae Philosophiae Emendatione et de Notione Substantiae*, which he had published a few months earlier in the Leipzig *Acta Eruditorum*; the French title, slightly more revealing of Leibniz' purposes than the Latin, is *Sur l'avancement de la métaphysique réelle et particulièrement sur la nature de la substance par la force*. In the French version (never translated into English), Leibniz returns to the "substance" *motif* of the "Discourse on Metaphysics" and the Arnauld-correspondence (and anticipates the 1695 *Système Nouveau*); but above all he looks forward to "What is Independent" by praising "the pains which Plato took to pull the mind out of slavery to the senses"⁴⁹—an apparent reference to Leibniz' beloved *Phaedo*, which he had translated in 1676 and which he praised (A II, 2, No. 136) in a letter to Paul Pellisson ("the *Phaedo* of Plato pleased me very much ... by leading philosophers who are too materialistic to something superior")⁵⁰. (This sentence is a miniaturized replica of the Myth of the Cave [*Republic* Bk. VII], with its "ascent" from material illusions to "ideas.")

from dark to light.)

But it is another Leibniz-letter to Bossuet (A II, 2, No. 145) which contains a very remarkable sentence that is Platonizing *in excelsis*: “One can say that there is harmony, geometry, metaphysics and (so to speak) morality everywhere.”⁵¹ This might almost be a recovered line from Socrates’ speech to Meno’s slave, in which “geometrical” necessity illuminates ardently-disputed “virtue”; it would be Plato at his most Pythagorean. To be sure, Leibniz himself often draws together mathematical/geometrical and practical notions: “Now consist justice, goodness, beauty, no less than mathematical things, in equality and proportion, and are therefore no less *aeternae et necessariae veritatis*” (“Unvorgreifliches Bedencken,” 1698⁵²). Since, however, Leibniz usually insists on a distinction between *kinds* of “necessity”—“metaphysical-geometrical” on the one hand, and “moral” on the other—and fears falling into fatal “Spinozism” without that distinction (not least in the *Théodicée*); and since one cannot *derive* the “morally necessary” notions of *caritas* and *benevolentia* from (what Leibniz calls) “mathematical things,” one needs the notion that wise *love* must be mathematically equal or proportional to degrees of attained perfection (leaving aside the problematical role of “grace” in an already complicated moral theory⁵³). One needs, in short, not just Platonizing geometrism but also Augustine’s notion that “ordered” love must be proportional to desert or moral merit, as in *De Doctrina Christiana* XXVII, 28: “He lives in justice and sanctity who is an unprejudiced assessor of the intrinsic value of things. He is a man who has an ordinate love ... he neither loves more what should beloved less, loves equally what should be loved less or more, nor loves less or more what should be loved equally.”⁵⁴ In that passage from Augustine’s early, Plato-tinted period, Leibniz’ drawing together of Platonizing mathematics, Platonizing “higher” love, Christian *caritas* and “ordered” perfectionism is strongly anticipated. But then of course the early Augustine of *De Doctrina Christiana* (c. 395) is the bridge from Plato to Leibniz, and more broadly from late antiquity to early modernity—as can be made more fully and completely clear on some other occasion.

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Notes

¹ G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Reihe II, Band 2, “Philosophischer Briefwechsel,” 1686-1694. Ed. Leibniz Forschungsstelle der Universität Münster. Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2009. Pp. CXI, 1001 (hereafter “A II, 2”).

² René Sève, *Le droit de la raison* (Paris 1994), pp. 1-10; Gaston Grua, *La justice humaine selon Leibniz* (Paris 1953), pp. 82-84.

³ Robert C. Sleigh, Jr., *Leibniz and Arnauld: A Commentary on their Correspondence* (New Haven 1990), passim.

⁴ Leibniz, “Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice,” in *Rechtsphilosophisches aus Leibnizens Ungedruckten Schriften*, ed. G. Mollat (Leipzig 1885), pp. 53 ff. The only complete English translation is in *The Political Writings of Leibniz* ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge 1972), pp. 41 ff.

⁵ Reviewed at length by the present reviewer in *The Leibniz Review*, vol. 18 (pp. 171 ff.) and vol. 19 (pp. 93 ff.).

⁶ Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, op. cit., Reihe VI, Bd. 4 (ed. Heinrich Schepers et al.) (Berlin 2002).

⁷ See Brandon Look and Donald Rutherford (eds.), *The Leibniz-Des Bosses Correspondence* (New Haven 2007); fully and excellently reviewed by Philip Beeley in this *Review*, vol. 18, pp. 193-206.

⁸ Leibniz, *Nouveaux Essais* IV, viii, pt. 9.

⁹ Plato, *Meno*, 82b ff.; cf Leibniz, *DM* prop. 26.

¹⁰ Leibniz to Pierre Coste (1713), Ger. III, p. 428.

¹¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. M. Oakeshott (Oxford 1946), ch. 34, p. 256.

¹² *Ibid.*, ch. 46, pp. 439-440.

¹³ In Leibniz, *Politische Schriften* (A IV, 6) ed. Hartmut Rudolph, Wenchao Li et al. (Berlin 2007), pp. 714 ff.; reviewed by the present reviewer in *The Leibniz Review* vol. 17, pp. 194-201.

¹⁴ Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and Grace*, prop. 2, in *Monadology*, ed. R. Latta (Oxford 1898).

¹⁵ Cf Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London 1929), A 313/B370 ff.; see also the present reviewer’s piece in *The Leibniz Review* vol. 18, op. cit.

¹⁶ Leibniz to Arnauld, October 9 1687, A II, 2, No. 57.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

- ¹⁹ A. Robinet, *G.W. Leibniz: Iter Italicum*, (Florence 1988), *passim*.
- ²⁰ Leibniz to Arnauld, March 1690, A II, 2, No. 78.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Leibniz to Arnauld (1671), Ger. I, pp. 43-44.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ See Paul Rateau, *La Question du mal chez Leibniz: Fondements et élaboration de la Theodicée* (Paris 2008); see the excellent review of Rateau by Mogens Laerke in this *Review*, vol. 19, pp. 77 ff.
- ²⁷ For Leibniz' main defense of moderate (e.g. "Arian") Calvinism, and critique of hyper-Calvinism (the "absolute decree"), see "Unvorgreifliches Bedencken" (1698), in Grua (ed.), *Textes inédits* (Paris 1948), vol. I, pp. 428 ff.
- ²⁸ Leibniz to "Antonio Alberti," A II, 2, No. 74.
- ²⁹ Arnauld, *Première apologie pour M. Jansénius* (Paris 1644), p. 23.
- ³⁰ Leibniz to Landgraf Ernst, A II, 2, No. 84.
- ³¹ See the reviewer's essay for the 300th anniversary of the "Méditation" in (2003) in *The Leibniz Review* vol.13.
- ³² A II, 2, No. 84 (*Anhang*).
- ³³ Paul Schrecker, *G.W. Leibniz: Lettres et fragments inédits* (Paris 1934), "Introduction," p. 50.
- ³⁴ Juvenal, *Satirae*, No. 6, lines 223-224.
- ³⁵ Leibniz, on Jean Domat, in *Textes inédits* op. cit., vol. II, p. 648.
- ³⁶ Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, in *Politische Schriften* vol. 6 (op. cit.), p. 400 ("Pilatus ... quid sit veritas").
- ³⁷ Plato, *Euthyphro*, 9e-10e; see also the reviewer's essay on Leibniz/Euthyphro in *Festschrift für Hans Poser* (Berlin 2003).
- ³⁸ Leibniz, *T* (Haggard), p. 59 (also Ger. VI).
- ³⁹ See the reviewer's *Leibniz' Universal Jurisprudence: Justice as the Charity of the Wise* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), pp. 144 ff.
- ⁴⁰ Leibniz to Marie de Brinon, A II, 2, No. 113.
- ⁴¹ Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, ed. Barbara Herman (Cambridge, Mass. 2000), pp. 104 ff.
- ⁴² Albert Heinekamp, "Das Glück als Höchstes Zweck in Leibniz' Philosophie," in *The Leibniz Renaissance* (Florence 1989), pp. 99 ff.
- ⁴³ A II, 2, No. 113 (op. cit.). For Cicero's equating of *amicitia* and *caritas*, see *De*

Natura Deorum I, 42-43.

⁴⁴ Leibniz, *Nouveaux Essais*, op. cit. IV, 7.

⁴⁵ Leibniz to Marie de Brinon, in *Oeuvres*, ed. A. Foucher de Careil (Paris 1859), vol. I, p. 238.

⁴⁶ A II, 2, No. 172.

⁴⁷ Donald Rutherford, "Leibniz' 'On Generosity'," The *Leibniz Review* vol. 12.

⁴⁸ Leibniz, *Lettre sur l'éducation d'un prince*, treated in Riley, *Leibniz' Universal Jurisprudence*, op. cit., pp 225 ff.

⁴⁹ Leibniz to Bossuet, A II, 2, No. 274.

⁵⁰ Leibniz to Pellisson, A II, 2, No. 136.

⁵¹ Leibniz to Bossuet, A II, 2, No. 145.

⁵² Leibniz, "Unvorgreifliches Bedencken," op. cit., pp. 432-433. For a brilliant study of Leibniz' Platonism, see Paul Schrecker, "Leibniz and the Timaeus," in *Review of Metaphysics* vol. IV, No. 4, June 1951, pp. 495 ff.

⁵³ See Riley, *Leibniz' Universal Jurisprudence*, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

⁵⁴ Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book I, (c. 395), XXVII, 28.