

G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe, Erste Reihe, Allgemeiner politischer und historischer Briefwechsel, Band 18*, hrsg. vom Leibniz-Archiv der Niedersächsischen Landesbibliothek Hannover (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005).

Reviewed by Jérémie Griard, Université de Montréal¹

The Academy Edition of Leibniz's complete works has accustomed us to an exhaustiveness whose richness has not yet been fully plumbed by researchers. Volume I, 18 of the correspondence between January and August 1700 is no exception. 484 letters are brought together, including 190 by Leibniz himself, 291 which are addressed to him, and 3 which are not addressed but transmitted to him as a notice by his correspondents. The various subjects broached in these letters are in keeping with his various correspondents – nearly 130 of them. A complete review of such a volume would mean a presentation of each of these respective correspondences which were kept up in parallel, and which often echo each other. Such an attempt would go far beyond the scope of a usual book review usually. The extent of the contents of this volume compels one to keep to only a few lines of approach, i.e. the main ones revealing crucial times on a historic level and following the continuity of Leibniz's activities.

I. Continuation of the *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus*

In the *Leibniz Review* issue published in December 2004, Patrick Riley presented volume IV, 5 of the political writings from 1692 to 1694.² Among these texts, Riley underlined with much discernment the importance of the preface to the *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus* published in 1693.³ Appearing thanks to the gathering of authentic acts concluded between the princes from the end of the 11th century until the end of the 15th century (which were found either by Leibniz himself or by some intermediaries he turned up), the *Codex* is actually the result of another project. For three years, from 1687 to 1690, Leibniz, the historiographer of the house of Brunswick, conducted research in order to establish the prestige of this house through historic proofs. This was done to enable John Frederick to gain the hoped-for status of Elector. Although fate did not give him the opportunity, his successor, Ernest Augustus, collected the fruit of these efforts and was made Elector of the Empire in May, 1692. Since the works accumulated during these years of research were available, only the will to make them public was missing. Similar projects were in the works, but Leibniz considered them as less original than his own efforts; yet they convinced him of the necessity of publishing this work. The story of this col-

lection doesn't end here. Seven years after publishing the *Codex*, at the beginning of 1700, the year we are interested in, Leibniz published the *Mantissa Codici Juris Gentium*, that is to say a *Supplement to the Code of International Law*. Using the same network of intermediaries who enabled him to gather the documents of the *Codex*, he continued to receive others from them after the publication of the first volume. Disagreeing once more with the Dutch editors who re-used the content of his first work but who refused to let him participate to its achievement, Leibniz decided not to communicate any new documents to them and decided to publish them separately in the *Mantissa*. As a result, the *Codex* and the *Mantissa* are at the heart of numerous letters exchanged between Leibniz and (among other people) Thomas Burnett of Kemney, Christoph Schrader, Johann Georg Eckhart, Gottfried Freytag, Friedrich August Hackmann, Johann Gottfried Moerlin, Georg Ludwig von Offeln, Johann Friedrich Pfeffinger, François Pinsson, Johann Thiele Reinerding, George Stepany, Burkhard Gotthelf Struve, and also Friedrich von Walter.

While the *Codex* arranged various documents chronologically – from 1097 for the earliest one until 1499 for the latest one– the *Mantissa* follows a totally different order. Indeed, the order is not chronological anymore, but methodical. In the first part, Leibniz ranks the longest documents such as the two Manifestos regarding the rights of France and England to some provinces of the French Kingdom, the Ceremonial about the vacancy of the Roman See of Burchard and the concords between the Kings of France and the popes, from Saint Louis to Francis I. In the second part, which includes 54 pieces, shorter documents are collected. Most of them concern the Empire and the papacy. While the diversity of documents in the *Codex*'s preface implies all the richer philosophical reflections (since they demand different justifications), the *Mantissa* preface, owing to a lesser diversity of documents, offers only a limited philosophical interest. Indeed, Leibniz didn't feel much concerned about reproducing philosophical reflections which had already been treated in the previous preface, and prefers showing throughout the text-selection the necessity and utility of the Protestant Reformation. In that, indeed, lies one of the most relevant and specific components of this volume of correspondence: namely, the renewed consideration of a possible reconciliation between Roman Catholics and Reformationed Christians, re-thought through the aid of his correspondences.

II. The irenic correspondence

In 1698 Leibniz, after a second interruption, resumed his irenic correspondence with Bossuet. This third attempt was to be the last one and ended with Leibniz's reply of February, 5th 1702 to Bossuet's 62 reasons in favor of the Council of Trent

– to which the same Bossuet permitted no sequel. This concern about disarming the quarrel between Reformation and Counter-Reformation occurs through the attention paid to the Council of Trent. The goal is to denounce its misuses so as to reduce the influence of this instrument used in the Counter-Reformation, which, as such, seems to ratify the irreconcilable positions between churches. At the time when the *Mantissa Codici Juris Gentium* was published with its texts regarding the rights of popes and their relationship throughout the centuries with several European sovereigns, this last attempt to gather Christians in a dialogue with Bossuet supplements the *Mantissa*-background that the preface only partly presents. Leibniz thinks the preliminary condition to any irenism is the reconciliation between Christians and Protestants concerning the Holy texts. He did all that he could to prove to Bossuet the possibility of such an agreement. In his letter of May, 14th (N. 368),⁴ Leibniz fired the first salvo of sixty-four arguments against the Council of Trent (concerning innovation in the Church about articles of faith). The letter of May, 24th (N. 374)⁵ adds sixty-two arguments so Leibniz can advance in total 126 arguments to oppose the Council of Trent, by using these new arguments to denounce the new Catholic doctrine on the canon of the Old Testament. If Leibniz seems to crush Bossuet thanks to his erudition, by gathering so many reflections to oppose him, it is not simply because Bossuet would be an adversary who will care more about the quantity than the quality of the arguments, but rather because Leibniz tried to snare the supporters of the Council of Trent with their own trap. Indeed, Leibniz tried to show they place themselves outside the Christian tradition – which then compels him to recount that tradition in a quasi-exhaustive way, so as to take advantage of the objections raised in Bossuet's previous letter. He concludes his letter as follows:

It is time, Monseigneur, that I came back to you, and even that I finish – because there is nothing in your second letter that might stop us, except the objections I raised at the beginning of my first reply. Besides I found almost everything in keeping with the Protestant tradition, if I don't point out some details, and it is easy to notice that what you tell so well about authority and about the constant doctrine of the Catholic Church is fully in favor of Protestants and absolutely contrary to great Innovators such as those who belonged to the very disapproved faction in France which led to the inexcusable anathema of Trent.⁶

“Authority and the constant doctrine of the Catholic Church is fully in favor of Protestants and absolutely contrary to [the] Innovators [of the Council of Trent].” This sentence is a quite original summary of Leibniz thesis. The reconciliation of the Churches (as Leibniz envisages it) is not a search for a compromise in which each will give up some of its specific characteristics to find a common minimum. Leibniz turns the situation upside down. Those who create these anathemas excom-

municate themselves: Protestants would be the real heirs to the Catholic tradition. If the Protestant Reformation was followed for Catholics by a Counter-Reformation (that is also called a “Catholic Reformation”), Leibniz apparently thinks this Catholic Reformation should also be followed by a counter-Reformation, that is to say a “counter-Counter-Reformation.” Therefore, although he tries to reconcile Catholics and Protestants, we can see that Leibniz engaged on the side of the Protestants and shares their views, exactly in the way Bossuet does for Catholics. Since both try to win each other’s attention by showing the opponent is wrong, one understands better how these two minds, however brilliant, could never join together. There is indeed a dialogue that will lead to a conversion: that of Philalèthe to Theophile’s thesis in the *New Essays concerning Human Understanding* – which Leibniz wrote a few years later. But this invented dialogue, which is the dialogue between Leibniz and Locke, is only a success because Leibniz makes his adversary speak and meticulously organizes his own victory.⁷ We can justifiably doubt the result of what a real dialogue between Leibniz and Locke about Locke’s theses in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* would have been. But we can find one criticism of the *Essay* and the *Treatises of Government* theses, before any dialogue was written, in the letter to Thomas Burnett of Kemney of February, 2nd/12th 1700 (N. 211).⁸

III. A masterpiece of volume I, 18: the letter to Burnett of February, 2nd/12th 1700

In this masterpiece of volume I, 18, Leibniz comments on the controversy between Stillingfleet and Locke. This is for him the opportunity to recall what he means by clear knowledge, distinct knowledge and adequate knowledge:

Each time we have a good definition, we have a distinct idea, for instance when I say green is a mixture of blue and yellow. But this knowledge is neither perfect nor adequate; for this we should carry on with the analysis and have the definition of blue and yellow that we only expect from Mr. Newton. You can also see with this example the difference between clear and distinct. The knowledge that we have about green color which is more compound, is not only clear, but also distinct, since it comes with a definition or analysis by which the knowledge is solved in some requisites. But the knowledge of blue color is only clear, and not distinct. It is clear because we can recognize what is blue or not, without hesitation; but it is not distinct because we do not know distinctly what this thing we experience consists of, without understanding. Therefore you can see one thing can be clear in the sense, without being distinct regarding understanding. The distinct knowledge demands we

know the requisites of the requisites of the thing, but it does not demand the requisites of the requisites right from the beginning, since this would be an adequate knowledge.⁹

We can also find in this letter a very interesting short treatise in Latin about the analysis of truths.¹⁰

This same controversy between Stillingfleet and Locke is also an opportunity for Leibniz to explain explicitly his view on the question of thinking matter. Once more, Leibniz presented his view very clearly:

In bodies I distinguish corporeal substance from matter and I distinguish primary matter from secondary matter. Secondary matter is an aggregate or combination of several corporeal substances, as a flock is composed of several animals. But each animal and each plant is also a corporeal substance and has in itself the principle of unity: that is why it really is a substance and not an aggregate. This principle of unity is what we call Soul, or something which has an analogy with soul. Besides the principle of unity, the corporeal substance has its mass or its secondary matter which is again an aggregate of other smaller corporeal substances, and this goes on to infinity. Nevertheless, primitive matter, or matter taken in itself, is what we conceive in bodies, apart from all principles of unity, that is to say what is passive, hence the two positions: *resistentia, et resistentia vel inertia*. In fact, one body cannot be penetrated and yields to another, but it yields with difficulty and with weakening of the global movement of the one pushing. Therefore we can say that matter in itself, besides the extent, includes a primitive passive power. But the principle of unity has the primitive active power, or the primitive force that never disappears and always perseveres in a precise order of its internal modifications which represent the outside ones. The result of all this is what is essentially passive cannot receive the modification of thought without receiving at the same time any active substantial principle: as a result matter taken in itself cannot think; but there is nothing preventing the active principles or principles of unity, that are everywhere in matter and already include a perception way from being high at this degree of perception, that we call thought. Therefore, although matter in itself cannot think, there is nothing preventing corporeal substances from thinking.¹¹

Even more than the exposition of philosophical theses about knowledge or metaphysics, it is probably Leibniz's reflections about Locke's political philosophy which make this letter so important. Too incomplete to express clearly Leibniz's view, these reflections are however developed enough to push us to supplement them with other texts in order to reconstitute Leibniz's political thought.

Four points in this letter must hold our attention. These four points can be con-

sidered as an entry into Leibniz's political thought that could be then characterized by a more Aristotelian than Hobbesian conception about the state of nature, by a Platonic preference for aristocracy rather than for democracy, by the artificial character of the State (this time going against Aristotle's view), and finally by a restriction of the right to resist established power.

Leibniz confided his opinion to Burnett in these words:

I have not yet had the opportunity to read the whole book entitled *Two Treatises of Government*, against Mr. Filmer's principles. However, I found there a great soundness and a solidity of reasoning. Yet there are some parts which might demand further discussion, such as among other things what is said about the state of nature and about the equality of the rights of men. This equality would be obvious if every person had the same advantages, but as it is not the case, Aristotle seems to have here a clearer view of things than Mr. Hobbes.¹²

Leibniz refuses the Hobbesian equality between persons in state of nature, which would only be for the English philosopher an equality in the ability to harm each other. Unlike Locke, Leibniz accepts neither the existence of a pure state of nature, nor the equality of rights that would be suitable there. For Leibniz, people are always involved in social relationships that were built according to personal qualities, thus making natural societies irrespective of any civil society. But the fact that Leibniz gladly turns to Aristotle's views to contradict Hobbes (and Locke at the same time) on this point does not mean he fully agrees with the Aristotelian view. Although he rejects equality in the ability to harm each other, Leibniz does not consider people as human beings born for a civil society which would form itself as an extension of natural societies, as Aristotle would think: "But the imperfection of human nature implies that one does not want to follow reason, which forced the wisest men to resort to force and skill to establish a bearable order [...]"¹³ This time, against Aristotle, Leibniz seems to agree with Hobbes and Locke about the artificial character of the State. Without this force and this skill, there is no bearable order, that is to say no civil society, which could have been formed. According to Leibniz, the State is not a natural society.

At the end of his life, he will get back to this standpoint, halfway between Aristotle and Hobbes:

The Iroquois and the Hurons, the savages bordering on New France and New England, overturned the too-universal political maxims of Aristotle and Hobbes; they showed by their surprising behavior that there are whole peoples who can live without magistrates and quarrels, and as a consequence that men are neither sufficiently carried along by their good nature, nor sufficiently forced by their wickedness to appeal a government and to renounce their liberty. Against Hobbes, "there are whole peoples who can live without magistrates and

quarrels,” and the state of nature is not a state of war of all against all; “human beings are [...] not sufficiently forced by their wickedness [...] to renounce their liberty.”

But their equal kindness does not substitute itself for their equal wickedness. Aristotle is not a reply to Hobbes’ criticism, since “human beings are not sufficiently carried along by their good nature [...] to do without a government.”

Not every man is naturally good, as Aristotle would suggest, or naturally wicked, as Hobbes would maintain. Some are good, others are wicked and this is the point where Aristotle and Hobbes made a mistake with their “too-universal political maxims.” So Leibniz remembers from Aristotle the inequality of rights between men, but gives up the idea of their equality when faced with the formation of a State. To represent in a few words Leibniz’s view on this subject, we could say the following: all men are different, some are good, others are wicked, and it is thanks to an artifice (to coexist peacefully with the bad) that the good manage to establish a State. This conception inevitably leads to an aristocratic conception of power:

If several men were in the same ship out at sea, it would not be in accordance with reason or nature, that those who know nothing about sea-going should claim to be pilots, so that government belongs to the wisest men according to natural reason.¹⁴

This very Platonic conception leaves no space for democracy and as a result no space for Locke’s theses. Inequality between men is natural and necessary for order, as this excerpt from *Essais de Théodicée* shows: “Inequality of conditions is not to be counted among disorders, and Mr. Jacquelot is right to ask those who want everything to be perfect: Why are rocks not covered in leaves and flowers? Why are ants not peacocks? And if equality had to be everywhere, the poor would submit requests to the rich, the servant to the master. Organ pipes shall not be equal.”¹⁵

This aristocratic view of power goes with an institutional conservatism which radically contrasts Leibniz with Locke. Indeed, if order is established in civil society only by the best ones, or, in other words (to avoid giving a wrong presentation of Leibniz’s thought), if order is only established by the least wicked men, it is easier to understand why “when order is established, no one should overthrow it if not in case of extreme necessity or if one is not sure to succeed *pro salute publica* in a way that won’t cause greater ills.”¹⁶ Here one can find the clear expression of the Leibnizian conception of the right to resist. In most cases, Leibniz refuses the exercise of such a right. However, it is not forbidden to use it. He just limits it to a last resort, to an “extreme necessity.” As a general rule, a revolution brings more ills than those who give the pretext. The only case where one can depart from this rule is when the situation is such, when the *salus publica* itself is in jeopardy, that the ills of revolution would be lesser evils.

IV. The announcement of new exchanges

Besides the guiding lines of Leibniz's political thought, we can also find in volume I, 18 new concerns which are to become more and more important afterwards. Thus Leibniz, trying to handle carefully his Hanoverian employer, Georg Ludwig, told him about his business in Berlin, stressing the secondary importance of the position that had just been offered to him...

While I'm courting here (or rather in Luzenburg) Madame the Electress, Monseigneur the Elector consults me about the Society of Science that he has founded and I shall make it a point of honor to bear the title of director or president, even if absent and away, contributing to it just with a few opinions.¹⁷

Although this is less delightful than the creation of the Berlin Society of Science, 1700 is also the year when the scene of a new European tragedy was set up: the War of the Spanish Succession. The health of the King of Spain, Charles II, the political maneuvers of the French diplomats who managed to make him revise his testament, the standpoint of the Emperor who could only refuse such a will, hold Leibniz contemporaries' attention. At the end of August 1700, Brosseau and Spanheim confided their anxiety to Leibniz:

I won't tell you anything about the treaty concluded between France, England and Holland for the division of Spain; you know more about the consequences than I do, and whether the carrying out will be easier (Letter from Brosseau);¹⁸

Concerning the great matter of the Spanish Succession, the crisis came from the time given to the Emperor to declare it, so the resolution, from what we can already presume, is only functional if we confine ourselves to the rule that forbids one to deal with the last will of a living man.) (Letter from Spanheim)¹⁹

It is in volume I, 19 from September 1700 to May 1701, that this correspondence about what will take place in the War of the Spanish Succession will continue.

Jérémie Griard
Département de Philosophie
Université de Montréal
C. P. 6128, succ. Centre-ville
Montréal, Québec H3C 3J7 CANADA
jeremie.griard@umontreal.ca

Notes

¹ Many thanks to F.-X. Reimeringer for his kind help in preparing this review. I am deeply grateful to Patrick Riley for his help in preparing the translation.

² G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Reihe IV, Band 5, reviewed by Patrick Riley, *Leibniz Review*, 14, pp. 65-88.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75.

⁴ Leibniz to Bossuet, May 14th 1700, N. 368, A I, 18, pp. 625-649.

⁵ Leibniz to Bossuet, May 24th 1700, N. 374, A I, 18, pp. 656-680.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 679.

⁷ On modifications by Leibniz of Locke's assertions in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, see Marc Parmentier, "Leibniz lecteur de Locke" in F. Duchesneau and J. Griard, ed., *Leibniz selon les Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain* (Montréal: Bellarmin; Paris: Vrin, 2006), pp. 11-18.

⁸ Leibniz to Thomas Burnett of Kemney, February 2nd/12th 1700, N. 211, A I, 18, pp.367-389.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 370-371.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 373-375.

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 375-376.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 380.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Essais de Théodicée*, § 246, GP VI, p. 263.

¹⁶ Leibniz to Thomas Burnett of Kemney, February 2nd/12th 1700, A I, 18, p.380.

¹⁷ Leibniz to Georg Ludwig, June 29th 1700, N. 92, A I, 18, p. 135.

¹⁸ Brosseau to Leibniz, August 16th 1700, N. 465, A I, 18, p. 805.

¹⁹ Spanheim to Leibniz, August 23rd 1700, N. 478, A I, 18, p. 827.