

G.W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe. Reihe I, “Allgemeiner Politischer und Historischer Briefwechsel,” Band 19 (September 1700-May 1701). Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2005.*

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The latest volume in the Academy-Edition of Leibniz’ *Allgemeiner Politischer und Historischer Briefwechsel* (hereafter “General Correspondence vol. 19”)¹, covering letters from the period September 1700 to May 1701, adds in valuable ways to our knowledge of Leibniz’ practical philosophy—moral, political, jurisprudential, and religious—in five main areas:

1. An extremely important letter of May 1701 to Leibniz’ colleague F.A. Hackmann (published obscurely in 1915)² provides insight into one of Leibniz’ greatest political-jurisprudential writings, the *Observationes de Principio Iuris* of 1700—a writing as little-known (in the Anglophone world) as it is remarkable;

2. An important letter of February 1701 from Leibniz’ Scottish correspondent Thomas Burnett of Kemney throws helpful light on Leibniz’ worries about the moral and theological inadequacies of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and looks forward to the *Nouveaux Essais* of 1704;

3. Several letters to “China-experts” (mainly Jesuits) enlarge our view of Leibniz’ *Novissima Sinica* (with its assertion of Chinese moral superiority), which he had recently re-published in 1699;

4. A number of letters make reference to the *Unvorgreifliches Bedencken*, begun with Abbot Molanus in 1698 to heal the rift between Lutherans and Calvinists—a work which insists that hyper-Calvinist notions of groundless “election” by extrarational *fiat* make God into a “tyrant” toying arbitrarily with “underlings”;

5. A number of letters deal with quarrels over two monarchical “successions” (Britain and Spain), and urge European unity against the would-be “universal monarchy” of bellicose Louis XIV (“Mars Christianissimus”).

These five areas, diverse as they are, are coherently held together by Leibniz’ *jurisprudentia universalis*, by his self-characterization as a charitable *philanthropos* devoted to “the general good of the human race.”³

I. *Observationes de Principio Iuris*

During the period 1700-1706, Leibniz wrote his three most important mature pieces on justice as “wise charity” and “universal benevolence”—a justice also conceived as a demi-Platonic “eternal moral verity” akin to the necessary truths of mathematics and geometry (as in *Meno*), not as the mere artificial product of power-based sovereign “command” and “will,” as in Hobbes’ *De Cive* and *Leviathan*.⁴ These three late justice-essays are (in order) the *Observationes de Principio Iuris* (1700), the *Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice* (1703), and the *Monitè* on the principles of Pufendorf (1706).⁵ The *Méditation* and the *Monitè* are reasonably well-known; but the (almost) equally important *Observationes* are very little-known indeed (and have never been fully translated into English). It is therefore a matter of considerable political-jurisprudential consequence that Leibniz’ letter of 8 May 1701 to his colleague-assistant Friedrich August Hackmann [*General Correspondence* vol. 19, No. 350, pp 652-654] provides his only substantial epistolary amplification of the *Observationes*. (Hackmann [1670-1734] was Leibniz’ research-assistant, 1698-1703, for the history of the house of Braunschweig-Lüneburg; he served briefly in 1729 as professor of natural law at Halle, before being expelled, like Christian Wolff, for unorthodoxy.)

Leibniz’ *Observationes de Principio Iuris* were anonymously published in July 1700 in the *Monatlicher Auszug* (as we learn from his letter of 31 July 1700 to J.G. Eckhart, the editor of the *Monthly Extract* [A I, 18, No. 117⁶]); but the manuscript of the *Observationes* was also circulating in Berlin intellectual circles during 1700-1701 (as we know from letters of Philippe Naudé to Leibniz [April 1701, in Grua, *Textes inédits*, vol. II, pp. 661-662⁷]).

The *Observationes* are a commentary on Samuel Cocceji’s *Disputatio de principio Iuris naturalis unico, vero et adaequato*—the same Cocceji who later served as Chancellor of Prussia under Frederick the Great.⁸ While Cocceji’s name is no longer familiar in the history of philosophy and jurisprudence, what matters is that Leibniz’ *Observations* on Cocceji offer one of his more striking critiques of Hobbes and Hobbism, anticipating the 1703 equating of Hobbes with Thrasymachus (justice as “power” and “command”) in the *Méditation* on justice.⁹

In his “new” 1701 letter to Hackmann, written almost a year after the anonymous review, Leibniz says (a little coyly) that he has “seen something” of Cocceji’s “new *Principio juris naturae*,” but that he is “firmly opposed” to the work and will “stick sooner with the old” principles of justice, which hold that “rightfulness

[*Gerechtigkeit*] flows not merely from the fear of punishment and coercion” (cf. Hobbes’ “the passion to be reckoned upon is fear”¹⁰) but “from a higher source [*Ursprung*].” After urging that Holy Scripture is “at one” [*einig*] with this higher source “when it says that *Justo non est lex posita*” (St. Paul, 1 *Timothy* 1, 9)—the source is “higher” and Scripture then *agrees* with it—Leibniz goes on to say that in his own *Preface* to the *Codex Iuris Gentium* (1693) “and in later clarifications” (*Mantissa*, 1700), a principle “diametrically opposed” to Coccejanism is followed, one which “draws justice out of wisdom and charity [*ex sapientia et caritate*],” so that justice “is therefore in reality charity governed by wisdom [*caritas ad normam sapientis*]”¹¹—a Christian-Platonic and Ciceronian (*De Finibus*)¹² principle “from which flow afterwards certain degrees of justice [*gewisse gradus juris*], namely strict law [*jus strictum*], equity [*aequitas*], and probity [*probitas*], and to which correspond the three precepts of the [Roman] jurisconsults—*neminem laedere* [to harm no-one], *suum cuique tribuere* [to render to each] and *honeste vivere* [to live honorably].”¹³

This is an utterly typical and characteristic Leibnizian synthesizing fusion of Platonic *sapientia*, Pauline-Johannine *caritas*, and Ciceronian-Roman *jurisprudencia* (“*la raison écrite*”¹⁴), in arriving at a “higher” justice in which “fear,” “power,” and “will” are radically subordinated to wise love (hence Leibniz’ *dictum* in a 1695 letter to Kettwig that “I recognize that men, out of mutual fear and necessity,” must constitute a “custodial” power for society: nonetheless, this comes about finally “from love sooner than fear” [*sed praeter metum amor*].”¹⁵) Well before the 1693 *Codex*, indeed, which defines justice precisely as (wise) love, as *caritas sapientis*, Leibniz had fused *jus naturae* or “natural right/law” (“*caritas non differt a jure naturae*”) with Christian “*bruderliche liebe, gemeine liebe inter omnes homines*” and with Cicero’s claim in *De Officiis* I, 17, 57 (against the “monstrously” uncharitable Marc Antony) that “*omnes omnium caritates patria una complexa est*”—the usual drawing together of Graeco-Roman-Christian foundations into a general “Mediterranean” ethos [on Prasch’s *De Lege Caritatis*, 1688].¹⁶

Leibniz’ reverse movement from early semi-Hobbiism to mature demi-Platonism—temporally backwards but philosophically forwards—leads him away from his youthful claim (*Nova Methodus*, 1667) that Thrasymachus was right to equate justice with the will of the powerful (#75)¹⁷ and steadily towards the opening of the 1703 *Méditation* on justice, which begins with a close paraphrase of Plato’s *Euthyphro* (justice is not “willed” *ex plenitudo potestatis*, but known and loved for its mathematical eternity and necessity). But to see exactly how Leibniz moved

from Hobbesian power to Platonic love between 1670 and 1700—after what André Robinet has aptly called the *crise de 1670*¹⁸—a fuller view of his unfolding will be helpful.

Like Plato, Leibniz believed that it would be unjust if the best and wisest men did not rule; here he fell back on justice as a relation, as a mathematical “proportion,” and took the Platonic view that social justice should be the most accurate possible transcript of “nature” (including natural inequalities). In a letter to the Scottish nobleman Thomas Burnett (1700) he sketched out this position, while criticizing (with infinite circumspection) the Hobbesian/Lockean theory of equal natural rights.

I have still not had the leisure to read the entire book entitled *Two Treatises of Government*, against the principles of Mr. Filmer. I did notice, however, a great justice and solidity in the reasoning. There are, nevertheless, some passages, perhaps, which demand a more ample discussion, as among others what is said of the state of nature, and of the equality of rights of men. This equality would be certain, if all men had the same [natural] advantages; but this not being so at all, it seems that Aristotle is more correct here than Mr. Hobbes. If several men found themselves in a single ship on the open sea, it would not be in the least comfortable to either reason or nature, that those who understand nothing of sea-going claim to be pilots [Plato, *Gorgias* 511-512]; such that, following natural reason, government belongs to the wisest.¹⁹

Since equal natural rights to governance are, for Leibniz, illusory (as in *Gorgias*), he made very little use—at least in his mature works—of social contract theory, which presupposes an equal right in all contractors to found legitimate states. Indeed the key idea in social contract theory is that legitimate government is the artificial creation of the “voluntary agreement” of free and equal adult moral agents:²⁰ but for Leibniz, as for Hume in a different way, the legitimacy of the state has nothing to do with its historical origins. A “contract,” therefore, is not important; but justice, charity, welfare, benevolence and the promotion of the common good are. Probably Leibniz denigrated the social contract precisely because Hobbes had made so much of it: since the “state of nature” which supposedly preceded the Hobbesian contract posited an Epicurean moral vacuum in which there is no justice without sovereign-ordained positive law²¹—a doctrine which Leibniz increasingly detested—he may have felt that contract theory was dangerous; if justice as wise charity is eternal and natural, then it is not *artificially* produced in time by a Hobbesian “covenant” (of which “will” is the *essence*). Contractarianism also, in Leibniz’ view, introduced

too great a measure of artifice into social relations; Hobbes, he complained in the *New Essays*, was not aware that “the best men, free of all malice, would unite the better to obtain their [common] end, as birds flock together to travel in company.”²² And the reason that Hobbes was not aware of this truth is clear: “His initial step was false, namely to seek the origins of justice in the fear of evil rather than in the concern for the good, as if men had to be wicked in order to be able to be just.”²³

If Hobbes was “not aware” of what the “best” men might spontaneously do, without being legally constrained, that is because, in Leibniz’ view, Hobbes’ dark politics is an all-too-faithful reflection of a dark psychology. One of Leibniz’ most telling critiques of that tenebrous psychology is to be found in parts 219 and 220 of the *Theodicy*—not surprisingly, since the whole work can be read (reasonably) as the supreme anti-*Leviathan*. (*Leviathan* quotes God from the Book of Job: “Hast thou an arm like mine?”²⁴; Leibniz worries not about the “arm” but about the *mind* of God.)

Leibniz begins by insisting that “there is incomparably more moral good than moral evil in the world”—even in the merely “best” world full of physical, metaphysical and moral evil. Here Leibniz finds an occasion to criticize “people of a malicious disposition” who “find wickedness everywhere,” such as Timon of Athens (who became “somewhat misanthropic through misfortunes”)—people who “poison the best actions by the interpretations which they give to them.” Some people, Leibniz goes on, are true misanthropes (like Timon) who “draw evil conclusions by which their conduct is tainted”; but others “only do it to show off their own acumen.” That fault of cynically showing off has been found by some in Tacitus’ jaundiced histories, Leibniz says; but (more interestingly) Descartes has found such rhetorical misanthropy in Hobbes’ *De Cive*:

For although M. Descartes acknowledges that this book is by a man of talent, he observes therein some very dangerous principles and maxims, in the assumption there made that all men are wicked, or the provision of them with motives for being so.²⁵

Leibniz goes on to say that Jacob Thomasius (his old philosophy teacher in Leipzig) liked to say that “the primary cause of errors in this book by Mr. Hobbes was that he took *statum legalem pro naturali* [the legal condition for the natural one], that is to say that the corrupt state served him as a gauge and rule, whereas it is the state most befitting human nature that Aristotle had in view.” For according to Aristotle, Leibniz continues, “that is termed natural which conforms most closely to the perfection of the nature of the thing [*Politics* I, 1252b], but Mr. Hobbes applies

the term *natural state* to that which has least art, perhaps not taking into account that human nature in its perfection carries art with it.”²⁶

Here it is worth pointing out that even Leibniz’ youthful “Hobbism” in the late 1660s and early 1670s had been very equivocal. Leibniz’ own letter to Hobbes of July 1670 says that he has found “great illumination” [*lucem accensam*] in Hobbes’ civil philosophy which will be useful in “undertaking a work on rational jurisprudence”; but at the same time the young German tells the elderly Englishman that “there cannot exist a state of pure nature between men, outside of all commonwealths, since God is the common monarch of all men”²⁷—and that Leibnizian universalism runs counter to Hobbes’ national “sovereignty,” which ends at the English Channel, and which is viewed as a local salvation from the state of nature. (For Hobbes, as for John of Gaunt in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, it is “this England” that matters.)

Only a year later in June 1671, one finds Leibniz saying—in a recently discovered (1988) letter to the Dutch physician and statesman Lambert van Velthuysen of Utrecht—that Hobbes’ notions of “supreme civil power,” of “indivisible sovereignty,” and of “absolute obedience” cannot be found on earth as we know it (*in orbe terrarum*), that Hobbes’ theories can only be true of the universe, “whose governor (*rector*) God is.” (Earthly life as we know it, Leibniz declares, can involve no more than “society with security [*societatem cum securitate*].” But in any case this letter of 1671 shows Leibniz already moving away from considerations of sovereignty and absolute obedience, and towards his mature defining of right and law in terms of wise love or charity:

The good man I define as he who loves everyone [*qui amat omnes*]. To love is to be pleased by the felicity of others. Right is what is possible for a good man. Obligation is what is necessary for a good man. From these definitions it is for me to demonstrate the whole of natural right theoretically.²⁸

Here Hobbes is left completely behind: the negative notion of mutual forbearance from violence (*neminem laedere*) gives way to the positive procuring of good. The ripe doctrine of the 1693 *Codex Iuris Genium* is already there, in embryo. And it is equally clearly there in a letter from the same period in which Leibniz laments Hobbes’ (mis)use of brilliant talents to defend nothing more than a negative peace: “That most ingenious Hobbes could have spared us the necessity to reconsider the whole science of right, if he had not chosen as his principle the preservation of peace; this principle, which is narrower than that of justice, does not permit one to demonstrate all the theorems of natural right, but only certain ones [e.g. *neminem*

laedere], while justice itself must be demonstrated by beginning with a much more universal principle.”²⁹ And what could be more universal than a *jurisprudence universelle* resting on *caritas sapientis*?

Within a decade of the letter to Hobbes, by the early 1680s, Leibniz was combining a rejection of any Hobbesian “state of nature” with a positive insistence on justice as “the charity of the wise”: in a passage published only in the 1980s, three centuries after it was written, Leibniz urges that

By the existence of God is suspended every state of nature which is rough [*statum naturas rudis*] and bestial, of man left to himself, as well as the right of all against all; and the wise man can thus give free exercise to charity with safety, and bear witness to a good which is a refuge against evils.³⁰

And in roughly the same period the centrality of a love governed by appreciation of “degrees of perfection” is already in place. “We cannot love some men” in particular, Leibniz argues, “if we do not love all men”; we “cannot love several men if we do not love all humanity”; we cannot “love the human race if we do not love God.” “He who loves God,” he goes on to insist, “loves all men, but each in proportion as he expresses the divine virtues in himself.” For “one cannot love God without loving one’s brother, one cannot have wisdom without having charity; that is the touchstone of true virtue.”³¹ That passage shows that by the early 1680s Leibniz’ “universal jurisprudence” was substantially complete. And so what Leibniz said against any Hobbesian “state of nature” ungoverned by natural justice remained constant to the end of his life: in his 1712 observations on Hobbes in the *Remarks on Shaftesbury’s Characteristics* he insisted that “our illustrious author refutes with reason those who believe that there is no obligation at all in the state of nature, and outside of government—for, obligations by pacts having to form the right of government itself, according to the author of these principles, it is manifest that the obligation is anterior to the government which it must form.”³²

That 1712 passage merely elaborates what Leibniz had said slightly earlier, in notes on Cudworth and Hobbes from 1704—notes in which Leibniz urges that if there is no natural justice before sovereign-ordained law, even “Hobbism” itself cannot work. If it is not a principle of natural law that *Pacta sunt servanda*, “agreements ought to be kept,” then the sovereign will have no law-making authority derived from “covenants” (*pacta*) of which human will is the “essence.” “If nature,” Leibniz says in the 1704 notes, “does not require that agreements be kept [*si natura non jubet pacta servari*],” the outcome will not be “sovereignty” but rather nothing: “Nothing comes from nothing; if nothing is naturally just, neither will it

be artificially so.”³³ But if, on the other hand, natural justice is already there—as eternal, divine, *la raison écrite*—then the Hobbesian argument that justice is sovereign-commanded positive law is wrong (or at least superfluous). Justice need not be ordained *ex plenitudo potestatis* if it is (as in Plato’s *Euthyphro*) an “eternal verity.” And if it is just there, quasi-Platonically, necessarily and universally, one avoids the (for Leibniz grotesque) consequence that there would be as many kinds of Hobbesian justice as there are varieties of positive law—the state of affairs famously described by Pascal in the *Pensées*: “truth on this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other.”³⁴

Leibniz’ 1704 notes on Hobbes echo a larger and more important manuscript from 1700: indeed in his already-mentioned *Observations on the “Principle of Justice”* (by Samuel Cocceji) there is a characteristic commentary on Hobbesian justice—Hobbes becomes Thrasymachus once again—and, tacitly, even on Lockean justice, since Cocceji had adopted the more-or-less Lockean principle (*Second Treatise* #6) that God *qua* creator has the right to give “natural law” for the governance and the protection of what he has created.

Cocceji, Leibniz says in section VI of the *Observations*, “affirms that the natural law is the command of the creator . . . that the will of the creator obligates the creature.” But, Leibniz thinks, this will not do: “if indeed we suppose that the creature can dispose of enough power, once produced, to be no longer constrained by the creator, it will have to be considered as emancipated”—in the same way that “sons can arrive at a degree of power such that they can no longer be constrained by the parents who brought them into the world.” Soon enough, in any case, on Leibniz’ view, “Lockean” creation collapses into purest Hobbism: “But the illustrious author [Cocceji] seems to derive law from coercion alone. And thus, since generation does not give law”—sons can grow up—“neither will creation give it, but only power.” But “if omnipotence is, above all, the power to do harm (in virtue of which it is said that certain people adore the devil),” one will soon have to revert to the doctrine that Plato strove so hard to overturn—one will soon have to “go back to the tyrannical principle enunciated by Thrasymachus in Plato: that will be just which is pleasing to the most powerful. Neither is Hobbes far from this, who bases justice on power.” But since, Leibniz recalls, a Hobbesian acknowledges only God’s “irresistible” power, not his moral and intellectual perfections—the “arm” dominating the mind once again—“supposing that there is a malignant God such as the Manicheans admitted, his power would suffice to make just even the worst of things, which is repugnant to our conception of natural justice.”³⁵

This passage is not as charitable as it is effective: to link Hobbes to adoration of the devil and to Manicheanism is more striking than just. All the same, in Leibniz' view, Hobbesians are wrong in overstressing God's power. In a more moderate paragraph of the *Observationes* which anticipates the *Theodicy* of ten years later, Leibniz insists that

Justice is founded on higher and better principles—not solely on the will of God but also on his intelligence; not on his mere power but also on his wisdom. Justice is based not on the will, but on the charity of the knower. Wherefore justice has been defined by a jurisconsult as “the charity of the wise” . . . And if we suppose, *per impossibile*, that an evil genius seized supreme power, he would not cease to be wicked and unjust and tyrannical through the fact that he could not be resisted.³⁶

One cannot derive the concept of right from the mere possession of unwise power—as Leibniz invariably says, whether he is speaking of God or man. And this is why Leibniz says, in his 1701 letter to Hackmann on the *Observationes*, that he “hopes” that “no damaging opinions” flow out of Cocceji's ἐτερολογία—not just out of his “heterodoxy” but out of his “hetero-reason” (!), a Leibnizian neologism (“*General Correspondence*, Vol. 19,” p. 654).

Fortunately, Leibniz goes on to urge in the *Observations*, the Hobbesian (and even the Cartesian) conception of God is self-destructive; here logic and St. Anselm replace devil-worship and Manichaeism. “If, for constraint, the will of the powerful is sufficient,” Leibniz says, “there is no reason to require goodness in the supreme legislator.” And then he suggests that “certain Cartesians say that the truth itself is constructed by the will of God, and that the number four is ‘even’ because God commands it.” But if that were true “the very existence of God would have to be arbitrary”—that is, if even the ontological proof is not an eternal verity, a necessary truth.³⁷ For Leibniz God cannot “create” the proof of his own existence *ex plenitudo potestatis*, any more than the “fullness” of power can fabricate justice *ex nihilo*. In the 1700 *Observations*, Hobbes, Locke, and Descartes are converted into one single three-part radical voluntarist, an unholy trinity—not very fairly, but certainly very strikingly.

Leibniz never retracted, but instead magnified his criticisms of Cocceji's *Principio Iuris* in later years. To the same Philippe Naudé of Berlin who had seen and praised Leibniz' *Observations* on Cocceji in 1701, Leibniz wrote in late 1707 that “you will perhaps remember a discourse in Latin [the *Observationes*] which I sent to you in other times concerning the principles of right [*droit*] by a certain

learned professor [Cocceji], in which I remarked upon the same defect [that one now finds] in the extreme supralapsarians, who derive justice from the sole power of an arbitrary will—instead of which justice is at bottom nothing other than the goodness of the wise [*la bonté du sage*].” And finally, linking up bad jurisprudence with bad theology, Leibniz adds that “I also would not wish to say . . . with some Cartesians that the ideas of things come from the will of God . . . *sans raison, quod staret pro ratione voluntas*” [Grua II, 502-3].

Leibniz’ anti-Coccejianism continued (literally) to the point of death: only his demise on November 14, 1716 kept him from answering (adversely) a letter from H. E. Kestner (19 September 1716) lauding the *illustris Coccejus*—the very Cocceji whom Kestner had already praised in 1712 (together with Buddaeus, Pufendorf and Christian Thomasius) for making the “will of God” the basis of justice. (In response Leibniz told Kestner in summer 1716 that the “right reason” of the “Roman jurisconsults” best reveals “eternal equity” [Leibniz-Kestner Correspondence, 1708-1716, in Grua II, 681-699].

Six years after the *Observations*, Leibniz brought all of his Hobbes criticism to its final perfection in his magisterial *Opinion [Monita] on the Principles of Pufendorf* (1706)—a work which became celebrated owing to Barbeyrac’s French translation (and hostile commentary).

[Pufendorf] defines law as “a command by which the superior obliges the subject to conform his actions to what the law itself prescribes” If we admit this, no one will do his duty spontaneously; also there will be no duty when there is no superior to compel its observance; nor will there be any duties for those who do not have a superior. And since, according to the author, duty and acts prescribed by justice coincide (because his whole natural jurisprudence is contained in the doctrine of duty), it follows that all law is prescribed by a superior. This paradox, brought out by Hobbes above all, who seemed to deny to the state of nature, that is [a condition] in which there are no superiors, all binding justice whatsoever (although even he is inconsistent), is a view to which I am astonished that anyone could have adhered.³⁸

And then Leibniz’ demi-Platonism and anti-Cartesianism are brought into play one last time, in a passage which echoes the *Euthyphro*-loving “Meditation on the Common Notion of Justice” (written two or three years earlier).

Neither the norm of conduct itself, nor the essence of the just, depends on [God’s] free decision, but rather on eternal truths, objects of the divine intellect, which constitute, so to speak, the essence of divinity itself. . . Justice, indeed,

would not be an essential attribute of God, if he himself established justice and law by his free will. And, indeed, justice follows certain rules of equality and of proportion [which are] no less founded in the immutable nature of things, and in the divine ideas, than are the principles of arithmetic and geometry.

And therefore no reasonable person will maintain, Leibniz concludes, “that justice and goodness originate in the divine will, without at the same time maintaining that truth originates in it as well—an unheard-of paradox by which Descartes showed how great can be the errors of great men.”³⁹ If one adds that “proportion” refers not just to Platonic geometry but to the notion that “wise” love or charity must be proportional to degrees of perfection in others, then the whole of Leibniz’ universal jurisprudence is present in the 1706 *Opinion on Pufendorf*--whose 300th anniversary we mark this year, even if Leibniz thought that Pufendorf himself was “not much of a lawyer and even less of a philosopher”⁴⁰ (probably because Pufendorf “was not sufficiently versed in Roman jurisprudence” [A I, 19, p. 395]).

II: Against Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Through the 1690s Leibniz had been following the bitter controversy between Locke and Edward Stillingfleet, Anglican Bishop of Worcester—a controversy in which Stillingfleet had focused on the (alleged) moral and religious dangerousness of the *Essay*, leading to four large “replies” by Locke.⁴¹ In February 1701, Leibniz received a letter from his Scottish correspondent Thomas Burnett of Kemney (*General Correspondence* vol. 19, No. 131), informing him that “I have taken care to send [to Locke] your paper with your latest remarks on the *Essay*” (i.e. Leibniz’ *Remarques sur la seconde réplique de Locke*, early 1700), “by a safe hand,” but that Locke “declines with all address to enter into any argumentation or reasoning with anyone, but principally with you” (!)—possibly because Damaris Cudworth, Lady Masham (Locke’s benefactress) “told me that [Locke] has not been well since his return from the country” and is “much tormented” by illness. (Locke died at the Cudworth-Masham country house, “Oates”, in 1704—which means that, by a huge irony, he died under the aegis of the daughter of Ralph Cudworth, the greatest of the “Cambridge Platonists,” and the virulent opponent of all British “empiricism.”⁴²)

Leibniz’ *Remarques sur la seconde réplique de Locke* share (in some measure) Bishop Stillingfleet’s worries about the practical implications of the *Essay*—much as Leibniz’ remarks on Hobbes’ *Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* share some of Bishop

Bramhall's worries about "Hobbism."⁴³ For while Leibniz says in the *Remarques* that "in recognizing that man is a substance endowed with a soul which reasons and with a suitable organic body, we [also] recognize that God can give, join, or unite to matter certain substantial perfections which differ from each other," he nonetheless laments that Locke "seems to add that it is properly matter *itself* which can think, or that thought could be a modification of matter. . . and infers therefrom that the soul could be material and mortal by its nature, but immortal by grace, which would [supposedly] suffice for the great purpose of religion and of morality." But immortality by supernatural "grace" (not by "nature"), Leibniz says, is "a sentiment which I would like to be able to avoid"⁴⁴; and he accomplishes this "avoiding" most famously in the original *Préface* to the *Nouveaux Essais* (once again *contra* Locke), where he says that Locke's notion of non-natural immortality by revealed grace alone "destroys" what is philosophically "most important" by being "*directement opposé à la philosophie Platonicienne*"—that is to the *Phaedo* and its notion of the natural immortality of the soul, a natural immortality in which the *psyche* can eternally receive justice⁴⁵ (as in the true myth of a final judgment at the end of the *Gorgias*). Thus Leibniz' objection to Locke is more moral-jurisprudential than epistemological ("understanding"): "You [Locke] were more conversant with speculative philosophers, and I was more inclined to ethics" (*Nouveaux Essais*). "I find it very bad," Leibniz says in a letter of 1713, "that celebrated people . . . teach that one knows the immortality of the soul, as well as the pains and rewards which await us beyond this life, only through revelation. The Pythagoreans and the Platonists understood this rightly . . . All doctrines of morals, of justice, of duties which are based on the goods of this life, can be only very imperfect. Take away the [natural] immortality of the soul, and the doctrine of providence is useless, and has no more power to obligate men than the gods of Epicurus, which are without providence."⁴⁶

Locke's weak version of grace-caused, non-natural, Scripture-revealed, non-Platonic immortality, in a word, is harmful to "universal jurisprudence"—as Leibniz makes clear in a letter to Jaquelot from 1704: "Locke too much weakened the generous philosophy of the Platonists" which had demonstrated natural immortality, and this "can abase us and do harm to morality."⁴⁷ Hence Leibniz' insistence, at the end of the Burnett-forwarded *Remarques*, that "one must say that action, life, feeling, thought are affections of [the soul], and not *modifications* of [matter]," as in the "too-material philosophy [of Locke]."⁴⁸

It is precisely *la philosophie trop materielle* (of both Locke and Hobbes) which, according to Leibniz' *Remarques* on the *Essay*, makes impossible the "recognition" of man as "a substance [naturally] endowed with a soul which reasons"; but, for Leibniz, a correct notion of "substance" or monad is morally-jurisprudentially central: "on the knowledge of substance, and in consequence of the soul, depends the knowledge of virtue and of justice."⁴⁹ And this comes out very clearly in a remarkable Leibniz-letter written within a few months of the *Remarques* on Locke—a joint letter to Electress Sophie of Hannover and to Queen Sophie-Charlotte of Prussia.

In this letter of June 1700 [A I, 18, pp. 114-115], composed with the *Remarques* on Locke freshly in mind, Leibniz begins with "this simple substance, this unity of substance, or this monad," then says that these "unities"—cf. Pythagoras' "the *psyche* is a self-moving *number*"—which are "rational souls" ("*le moi en nous*") reason by means of "universal, necessary and eternal truths" which come from "the internal and divine light of ideas," leading to "a society between them and God." Leibniz then offers in the margin of the letter a table of "square numbers" as evidence of "universal, necessary and eternal truths"—as he would soon do again in *Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice* (1703)—and finally says that "the souls which are capable of these reasonings are called minds [*esprits*], and one can say with justice that they are made in the image of God, and that there is a society between God and them—such that God is, with respect to them, not only what an architect is to his building, but still more what a Prince is to his subjects."⁵⁰ And this *parallel* between mathematical necessity and the necessity of justice (and wise princely government) is utterly characteristic of Leibniz' *Meno*-like demi-Platonism. The "unity" of mathematics, the "unity" of substance, and the "unity" of just rule are at once an equation and a Trinity.

III. The Letters Concerning *Novissima Sinica*

Several of the most significant letters in "*General Correspondence* Vol. 19" deal with Leibniz' *Novissima Sinica*, which he first published in 1697 and then re-issued (somewhat enlarged) in 1699.⁵¹ The *Latest News from China* is practically important in Leibniz' thought because the work insists that the Chinese are "loving" and "charitable" in everyday social relations *despite* the (obvious) absence of Christian teaching and of "grace"⁵²—not surprisingly, given Leibniz' view that justice-as-*caritas* is ordained universally by reason itself (not just by Scripture)⁵³,

and given his insistence that pre-Christian Plato and Cicero (in the *Symposium* and in the *Tusculan Disputations*) thought that “the wise will experience love” as the basis of social relations.⁵⁴ And *Novissima Sinica* is also practically important because it argues that the geometry-obsessed, Euclid-studying Chinese emperor is (in effect) the successor of Plato in linking up geometry with justice and virtue as “eternal truths” (in the manner of the *Meno*):

Now geometry ought not to be regarded as the sphere of workmen but of philosophers; for, since every virtue flows from wisdom, and the spirit of wisdom is truth, those who thoroughly investigate the demonstrations of geometers have perceived the nature of eternal truth, and are able to tell the certain from the uncertain. Other mortals waver amid guesses, and, not knowing the truth, almost ask, with [Pontius] Pilate, what it is. But there is no doubt that the monarch of the Chinese saw very plainly what in our part of the world Plato formerly taught [in the *Meno*], that no one can be educated in the mysteries of the sciences except through geometry. . . . The strength of our geometry, as soon as it was tested by the King, was so much to his liking that he easily came to believe that those who had learned thus to reason might teach correctly in *other things* [e.g. morality].⁵⁵

This insistence that all “necessary” and “eternal” truths are logically alike—and that unwise and uncharitable Pontius Pilate was ignorant of this, leading to the judicial murder of *caritas*—comes out most strikingly in “*General Correspondence* vol. 19,” No. 202—a letter to the Jesuit Father Joachim Bouvet which links up Leibnizian calculus, the doctrine of creation, Christian theology, Augustinian philosophy, and Chinese charitable moral practice in a single, gigantically over-arching equation or definition. Beginning with modest claims about “the new numerical calculus which I have invented, not for vulgar practice but for the theory of science,” Leibniz goes on to say (less modestly) that “this calculus gives an admirable representation of the Creation”—since “by following this method all the numbers are written by a mixture of unity and of zero, rather as all the creatures come uniquely from God and from nothing,” so that there is “nothing in mathematics which seems to me finer for the use of religion,” and so that one can even say, “not in vain, that essences are like numbers, and all the imperfections of things consist only in negations (from which it results that St. Augustine said quite well [in *De Libero Arbitrio*] that evil comes from nothingness).” Following a lengthy, multi-page exhibition of the workings of his new calculus, Leibniz finally says:

But my principal aim, mon Reverend Père, has been to furnish you with a new confirmation of the Christian religion with respect to the sublime issue of the Creation, through a discovery which will be in my opinion of great weight with Chinese philosophers and perhaps with the Emperor himself who loves and understands the science of numbers. To say simply that all numbers are formed by combinations of unity with nothing, and that [this] ‘nothing’ suffices to diversify them—that seems as credible as to say that God has made all things out of nothing, without making use of any primitive matter, and that there are only these two first principles, God and nothing: the God of perfections, and the nothing of imperfections or absence of essence It may be that this great monarch [of China] will not be displeased to learn that a European of your acquaintance, who is infinitely interested in what concerns China and its dealings in Enlightenment with Europe, has made this discovery [in calculus] . . . and perhaps this will bring this Prince to order that I be sent fine items of Chinese knowledge . . . with respect to some extraordinary experiments in physics or to certain discoveries in medicine.

Leibniz then adds that “you will understand that I shall not profit at all for myself alone, and that the public will get all the good from it, but that since I am the Director of a new society of sciences [the Berlin Academy] . . . I will not be displeased to be useful to it by presenting it with some uncommon things.”⁵⁶

An astonishing letter! In it everything that matters to Leibniz—calculus (and *cal-culemus*), geometry, theology, charity, Augustine, creation, academies, science—is brought together in what he himself calls a “unity.” The letter to Bouvet is one of the great *tours de force* in the whole Leibnizian *corpus*, and shows that if Locke had been concerned with *human* understanding, Leibniz dealt with understanding or mind as such—including calculus as a “representation of the Creation” (i.e. the “understanding” of God).

Less bold and sweeping and synthesizing than the letter to Bouvet, but still quite remarkable, is Leibniz’ letter (No. 205) to Father Charles le Gobien, S.J. (author of *Histoire des isles Marianes*, 1700)—a letter which notes that some Catholics want to condemn the Chinese, but observes drily that “it would seem to me strange that a tribunal in Europe [the Papacy], following the accusation of some Europeans [the Dominicans] returned from a distant country (about which it is doubtful they were sufficiently informed), should undertake to condemn for idolatry and for atheism even the Emperor and the sages of the greatest empire in the world, without understanding them and without sufficiently understanding the language,

the customs and the affairs of this country, so different from our own.” Many people would say, Leibniz goes on, that such an anti-Chinese judgment would be “a nullity, except that condemning the Chinese for idolatry among us would only condemn us to banishment among them.” And finally Leibniz adds, in a way that shows why his services as a “politic” diplomat were highly valued in Hannover, Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg, that:

If one gave an opportunity to the Chinese *savants* to explain themselves, perhaps they would do so in a satisfactory manner . . . why, then, close the door on them, embitter them, and virtually oblige them to be obstinate in a bad cause (if unhappily they were such)—instead of furnishing them with a gentle and honorable means to escape under the pretext that the dogmas of their ancestors agreed with those of Christianity? I have already claimed elsewhere that St. Paul gave an advantageous interpretation of the unknown God of the Athenians [in *Acts of the Apostles*], without troubling himself whether this was the exact sense of the authors of the inscription [on the altar in Athens].⁵⁷

This letter is a brilliant effort in diplomacy: if St. Paul, who had insisted that “the greatest of these is charity” [I *Corinthians* xiii] could offer a generously latitudinarian “reading” of an unknown Greek divinity, why should Leibniz not say that the most ancient and venerable Chinese philosophy might be congruent with “natural” religion? (And in fact he did say roughly this in a work from the last year of his life [1716]—*The Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese*, written for the French Platonist Rémond.)⁵⁸

IV. The Correspondence over *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*

A number of letters in “*General Correspondence* vol. 19” deal with the great irenical work *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*, which Leibniz began in 1698 with Abbot G. W. Molanus (of the Lutheran Abbey of Loccum, near Hannover)—a work which started as a response to the *Kurtze Vorstellung* of Daniel Ernst Jablonski, Calvinist preacher to the court in Berlin, but which finally turned into a remarkable treatise on philosophical theology that the eminent émigré Leibniz-scholar Paul Schrecker rightly called “*un vrai trésor de philosophie et de théologie*” (1934).⁵⁹

Though the *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken* or “Unprejudiced Thoughts” aim at Lutheran-Calvinist reconciliation (as a small part of Leibniz’ grander hope for the charitable re-unification of Christendom)⁶⁰, Leibniz’ contribution to the treatise tends to view both Calvin and Descartes as partisans of a radical (and arbitrary)

“voluntarism” in which God “elects” the saved by non-rational *fiat* or decree (Calvin) and/or “makes” logical, moral and mathematical truth by pure “will” or genesis (Descartes).

Leibniz’ insistence on anti-voluntarism is clear not just in his 1703 “Meditation on the Common Notion of Justice” and in the later *Theodicy*, but in the slightly earlier *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken* (c. 1698-1704), which he wrote partly to counter the hyper-Calvinist view that God creates everything *ex nihilo* through his “fullness of power” (*plenitudo potestatis*) and creative “will” alone. One must consider, Leibniz says in the “Unprejudiced Thoughts,” “whether the will of God really makes right [*das Recht*] and whether something is good and right simply because God wills it, or whether God wills it because it is good and right in itself [*an sich gut und recht ist*].”⁶¹ (This is a paraphrase of Plato’s *Euthyphro*, 9e-10e.) The radical voluntarist view of justice as a divine “product” Leibniz ascribes to a number of now-obscure Calvinist theologians, but also to those *absonderlich* Cartesians “who teach that two times two makes four and three time three makes nine, for no other reason [*Ursach*] than that God wills it.” But such a radically voluntarist position, for Leibniz, is as calamitous morally and jurisprudentially as it is mathematically: for on such a view “the *aeternae veritates* would have no certainty in themselves, and even the *bonitas et justitia dei* would be only extrinsic denominations, and in fact would be groundless, if their truth derived from God’s will alone. *Si tantum staret pro ratione voluntas.*” Those who say, Leibniz adds, that “God wills the evil of punishment without regard to the evil of sin,” the he wills to “eternally damn” men even before “any of their sins come into play” (in so-called supralapsarianism) forget that such a view “in no way abides with God’s justice, goodness, and charity.” For if God’s decree were “quite absolute” (as in Calvin’s “absolute decree”) and had “no *causam impulsivam* whatsoever, then God would be an acceptor of persons, through election, and would deal with men as a tyrant with his underlings . . . for no other reason than *sic volo sic jubeo*”⁶²—the infamous phrase uttered by the unjust woman in Juvenal’s sixth *Satire* as she judicially murders an innocent slave.⁶³

Leibniz goes on to say, in the *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*, that “the eternal truths of goodness and justice, of ratio and proportion” as well as all other “necessary truths” have “their ground in the eternal being of God himself: not, however, in his free decree [*nicht aber in den liberis decretis*].” And finally he plays the “ontological proof” trump card: if *all* truths were divinely caused *ex nihilo*, then the truth about the necessary existence of God himself (as *ens perfectissimum*) would be “a product of

the free will of God, which is absurd in the highest degree [*absurdissimum*].”⁶⁴ (In that passage St. Anselm vanquishes Calvin and Descartes—as he would vanquish them again in the *Observationes de Principio Iuris* less than two years later). For, as Leroy Loemker has urged, Leibniz saw “the God of Descartes as tyrannical,” and took “the view that moral principles are important as metaphysical truths of fact which rest directly on the reasonable nature of God, not on his will” (Letter to Patrick Riley, February 1974).

In “*General Correspondence* vol. 19” several letters from Leibniz to Molanus himself refer in passing to *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken* (especially Nos. 177 and 257); but Leibniz’ most important elaboration of the work appears in a letter to Heinrich Ludolf Benthem (No. 368, May 1701), which claims that Calvinism can be made “not dangerous” [*nicht gefährlich*] only if it finds a non-voluntarist way to “save” the “*attributa divina, nemlich bonitas, sapientia et justitia*” —for without goodness and wisdom there can be no justice as *caritas sapientis*. Saying that in our present state (“through a glass darkly”) we cannot comprehend why God elects some but not all (“many are called but few are chosen”), Leibniz nonetheless insists that Calvinists—if they hope for eventual *rapprochement* not just with Lutherans but even with Catholics—must see that a just God (who creates the “best”) chooses the saved “*nicht ex mero quodam placito velut tyrannico, sed ex principiis summae sapientiae et justitiae*,” that is, not through a “*decretum absolutum*” which is “*independens ab omni ratione*.”⁶⁵ For “choice without reason” would be the *stat pro ratione voluntas* which Leibniz always calls “the motto of a tyrant,”⁶⁶ and which (in the late correspondence with Clarke/Newton) he calls “Epicurean”⁶⁷—the very doctrine which he joins Cicero (*De Natura Deorum*) in condemning as morally fatal and providence-destroying. “One must not imagine that God is capable of doing that which would be called tyranny in men.”⁶⁸

Or, as Leibniz put it in an early (1698) letter to Molanus:

God does not act through absolute power alone, without reason, as would a tyrant, and it is always his supreme wisdom which makes him choose the best—though the reasons for this depth of his counsel may be unknown to us. Thus the love of God and the respect which we owe him is not injured at all; his wisdom, his goodness, and his justice remain in their entirety, as well as his power and his supreme right . . . This sovereign master does not act without reason, or by some obscure movement of his power alone, which would be the act of a tyrant, but through reasons (however unknown to us) which his

perfections furnish to him: in a word, sovereign wisdom has as much of a role as sovereign power.⁶⁹

V. Two monarchical “Successions”

Numerous letters in “*General Correspondence* vol. 19” deal with two monarchical “successions” in which Leibniz was strongly interested—those of post-Stuart England and of Hapsburg Spain. Leibniz had an immediate personal interest in the Hannoverian succession in England, since his patroness and friend Electress Sophie of Hannover lived almost long enough to succeed Queen Anne in 1714; and in that same year he wrote the “*Monadologie*” for Prince Eugene in Vienna, as his Hapsburg connections grew ever stronger (and his influence in Berlin, even at the Academy, waned).⁷⁰ But Leibniz’ “political” connections were also *philosophical*: he would not have written the “*Monadologie*” for just any retired Austrian general, and for Sophie’s daughter Queen Sophie-Charlotte of Prussia he wrote the extraordinary “What is Independent of Sense and Matter” (1702), which anticipates the *Nouveaux Essais*—and then completed the *Théodicée*, “the justice of God,” as a posthumous tribute to her.⁷¹

The truth is that Leibniz saw these (geographically separated) “successions” in England and Spain as linked by the same thing—by the expansionist France of bellicose Louis XIV (“Mars Christianissimus”); for he feared that the would-be “universal monarchy” of uncharitable Louis would “engulf” Protestant England and Hapsburg Spain, if France restored James II in England and placed Louis’ grandson on the Spanish throne.⁷² The inter-related connection of these successions (*via* France) is at it clearest in “*General Correspondance* vol. 19,” No. 24, “*Considerations sur le droit de la maison de Brunsvic [Hannover], à l’égard de la succession d’ Angleterre*”—a piece which shows that Leibniz thought as systematically and architectonically in politics as in philosophy.

It seems that the [English] republican faction [left over from Cromwell, Milton, Sidney and Harrington], will now be less to be feared than earlier, and that the great revolution in Spain [following the death of Charles II of Hapsburg], however harmful and dangerous it may be for the whole of Europe in general, may lift or at least diminish one of the greatest obstacles [to a Hannoverian succession] on the English side. For those [Englishmen] who are capable of concocting republican imaginings will now judge, if they have only a little common sense, that the execution of their ideas is impossible, now that France

and Spain are linked up. For unless almost the whole of the rest of Europe takes the opposite side, there is no means, humanly speaking, of stopping the re-establishment of King James [II] or his son [Bonnie Prince Charlie], which would serve to put all of Europe in the power of France.⁷³

In any case, Leibniz would soon say to Thomas Burnett of Kemney (July 1701) that “when one loves true liberty, one is not a republican on that account, since a reasonable liberty is found to be more assured when the king and the assemblies are linked by good laws, than when arbitrary power in in the king or in the multitude” [A I 20, Berlin 2006, No. 185, pp. 284ff.]. And this same letter to Burnett goes on to make one of Leibniz’ most important claims in political philosophy: “The end of political science with respect to the doctrine of forms of government, must be to make the empire of reason flourish. The end of monarchy is to make a hero of eminent wisdom and virtue reign . . . ; the end of aristocracy is to give government to the most wise and the most expert; the end of democracy or polity is to get the people themselves to agree to what is best for them [*ce qui est de leur bien*]. And if there were, at once, a great hero, very wise senators, and very reasonable citizens, that would constitute a mixture of the three forms. Arbitrary power is that which is directly opposed to the empire of reason” [ibid.].

James II was not restored, though the British Hannoverians (under George II) fought the Stuart dynasty brutally until 1746 (in Scotland); but Leibniz’ fears regarding Spain were fully realized in the War of Spanish Succession (1703-1713)—a Bourbon war against the Hapsburgs which led him to write one of his most brilliant occasional political essays, the *Manifesto for the Defense of the Rights of Charles III of Spain* (1703), in which he insisted that newly-installed French power in Iberia would lead to moral-political-religious calamity:

The [Spanish] nobility is impoverished to the last degree, vexed by quarrelling and investigations, obliged to use itself up in service to the king and to sacrifice its welfare and its blood to the ambition of a conqueror Those who occupy civil positions, especially lucrative ones, having once enriched themselves at the expense of the community because they were given free rein, are now squeezed like sponges The people are trampled upon without mercy, and reduced to bread and water by tithes, taxes, imposts, head-taxes, [by being required to supply] winter quarters and passage for war-makers, by monopolies, by changes in money. . . and by a thousand other inventions; and all of this is only to serve the insatiability of a Court which cares not at all

about the subjects which it already has, and which seeks only to augment the number of miserable people by extending its estates.⁷⁴

“The worst thing of all,” Leibniz laments in the 1703 *Manifesto*, “is that atheism walks today with its head up in France, that pretended great wits are in fashion there, and that piety is turned to ridicule.” Even Spanish austerity will be powerless to arrest this “venom” which “spreads with the French spirit”; “wherever this genius puts its foot and makes itself superior, it brings it with it.” To submit to French domination “is to open the door to dissoluteness and to libertinage, [and] one can be sure as well that piety cannot reign where justice is trampled under foot.” (For is not “live piously” or charitably the highest maxim of justice itself, as Leibniz had argued in the *Codex* (1693) and in the 1703 *Méditation* on justice—from the same year as the *Manifesto*?)

Leibniz ends the *Manifesto for Charles III* with a rousing rhetorical passage which is quite stirring:

Let us imagine Spain, and the provinces under her rule, under the yoke of the French, [with] morals corrupted, religion and piety scorned, honest men insulted, the people reduced to ammunition-bags, the great diminished and threadbare, foreigners masters of the power and the riches of the country, the king governing *à l’Ottomane*, his favorites, officers, soldiers and other minister of his power exercising harshly that which Samuel foretold for the people of Israel—dishonoring families, seizing whatever they find to their liking and not answering complaints except by laughing or new affronts Those who are not touched by the picture of these horrible inevitable misfortunes are worthy of still greater evils, and do not deserve to bear the glorious name of “Spaniard.”⁷⁵

And even in his tract called *Peace of Utrecht Inexcusable*, at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1713), Leibniz was still capable of imaging the comparable evils which would befall England if the French-backed Stuarts recovered their power:

. . . If the wolf comes in sheep’s clothing; if he pretends to accommodate himself to your laws; if bad citizens, traitors to their country, bring the people to receive him, he will ruin your liberty by degrees: no more triennial parliament, no more ancient city-charters, no more *habeas corpus*, no more judges of integrity; everything full of false testimony, juries corrupted, tramps for bishops, courtesans for juriconsults, satellites of arbitrary power.⁷⁶

Here the key word is *arbitrary*: for Leibniz liked arbitrariness no more in James II or Louis XIV than in the “willful” God who had been (mis)conceived by the Calvinists and the Cartesians—who had described “tyranny” and called it *justice*.

VI. Conclusion

Now that Leibniz’ practical philosophy has been illuminated by the finest letters in “*General Correspondence* vol. 19,” students of the great Hannoverian’s moral-political-jurisprudential thought can look forward to the appearance of *Politische Schriften* vol. 6 in the not-too-distant future—a volume with which Dr. Hartmut Rudolph will take honorable and deserved leave of the “Leibniz-Edition Potsdam,” which he has guided with wisdom, charity and benevolence for more than a decade. The growing appreciation of Leibniz as a practical philosopher depends in no small part on the superb volumes that Rudolph and his Potsdam colleagues have been giving us.⁷⁷

Leibniz did not write (and labor) in vain when he insisted that the just person will be “wisely loving” and universally benevolent: in that he eloquently re-stated a tradition founded by Plato, Cicero, St. John, the young Augustine, and Dante, and agreed with what is best in his contemporaries Pascal, Malebranche, and Fénelon. (And his view is also that of Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*, if only he knew it⁷⁸). But he also looked forward: “In the world of justice and love . . . let us never subordinate to a duty which is abstruse, remote and uncertain, an explicit and immediate duty to deal justly and to love mercy . . . a predominance of altruistic over egoistic instincts [will never] attempt to dry up the fountain-head of disinterested feeling.”⁷⁹ That is Marcel Proust, writing in 1900 in a language at once neo-Leibnizian and proto-Freudian (“altruism vs. egoism”⁸⁰); but the continuity between Plato and Proust in making *caritas* and *philia* “wise” through *sentiments de perfection* and affection for “eternal verity” places Leibniz precisely on an infinitely graded *continuum* (suitably enough!) which stretches spatially from Athens to Rome to Hannover to Proust’s Paris and to Freud’s Vienna, and temporally from the death of Socrates to the end-of-life triumph of Freud over cruelty and *malevolentia*.

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Notes

¹This is one of the last Academy Edition volumes produced with the knowledgeable devotion of Dr. Sabine Sellschopp, who retires shortly.

²In P. Ritter's *Korrespondenz zwischen Leibniz und Hackmann* (Berlin 1915).

³Leibniz, letter to Des Billettes, in Loemker 2nd ed., p. 775.

⁴On Hobbes' notion of justice as "law" and "command," see P. Riley, *A Treatise on Law*, vol. 10: *The Philosophers' Philosophy of Law from Grotius to Rawls* (Dordrecht and Berlin, 2007), ch. 3.

⁵The *Méditation* and the *Monitè* can be found in English in P. Riley (trans. and ed.), *Leibniz: Political Writings*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, U.K., 1988).

⁶Leibniz, letter to Eckhart, A I, 18, No. 117.

⁷Philippe Naudé, letter to Leibniz, in Grua (ed.) *Textes inédits* vol. II, pp. 661-662.

⁸On Samuel Cocceji, see the brief life in Vittorio Mathieu, "Nota Bibliografica" pp. 66-67, in *Scritti Politici e di diritto naturale di Leibniz* (Torino 1951).

⁹Leibniz, *Méditation* on justice, in *Political Writings* (ed. Riley), op. cit., pp. 58-62.

¹⁰Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. M. Oakeshott (Oxford 1946), ch. 14.

¹¹Leibniz, letter to Hackmann, "*General Correspondence* vol. 19," pp. 652-654.

¹²Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass., 1914), Book V, xxiii, pp. 467-469: "There is nothing more glorious . . . than that actual affection [*caritas*] which exists between man and man This sentiment . . . is termed justice."

¹³Same as 11 (*supra*).

¹⁴Leibniz calls Roman law "*la raison écrite*" in his notes on Jean Domat's *Les lois civiles dans leur ordre naturel*, in Grua, *Textes inédits*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 652.

¹⁵Leibniz, letter to N. Kettwig (November 1695), in Grua, *Textes inédits*, op. cit., vol. II, p. 653.

¹⁶Leibniz, notes on Prasch's *De Lege Caritatis Commentatio*, in Grua, *Textes*

inédits, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 633-634.

¹⁷ Leibniz, *Nova Methodus* (1667), pars 75, in L. Dutens (ed.), *Leibniti . . . Opera Omnia* (Geneva 1768), vol. IV, iii, p. 275.

¹⁸ André Robinet, *Leibniz: Le meilleur des mondes* (Paris 1994), p. 120.

¹⁹ Leibniz, letter to Thomas Burnett (1700), Ger. III. p. 264.

²⁰ P. Riley, *Will and Political Legitimacy*, ch. 1, “How Coherent is the Social Contract Tradition?” (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), and P. Riley, “Social Contract Theory in the 18th Century,” in *Cambridge History of 18th Century Political Thought*, ed. R. Wokler and M. Goldie (Cambridge, U.K., 2006). (The recent death of Robert Wokler was a terrible blow to Enlightenment-studies.)

²¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. M. Oakshott (Oxford 1946), ch. 15, p. 94: “Before the names of just and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power . . . and such power there is none before the erection of a commonwealth . . . where there is no commonwealth, there nothing is unjust.”

²² Leibniz, *NE III*, ch. 1, A VI, 6, p. 334.

²³ Leibniz, letter to Thomas Smith (1695), in A I, 12, p. 259. This is certainly one of Leibniz’ most insightful comments on the psychological basis of “Hobbism.”

²⁴ Book of Job (KJV), ch. 40.

²⁵ Leibniz, *Theodicy*, trans. Huggard, II, 219-220, pp. 264-265.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Leibniz, letter to Hobbes (July 1670), in Loemker, 2nd ed., p. 106.

²⁸ Leibniz, letter to Lambert van Velthuysen (June 1671), in *Studia Leibnitiana*, 22, no. 2 (1990): pp. 151 ff. (intro. Albert Heinekamp); quotation at 161.

²⁹ Leibniz, cited in *Voraus Edition* to A VI, 4, ed. H. Schepers et. al., p. 1385; also cited in A. Robinet, *Leibniz: le meilleur des mondes*, (Paris 1994), p. 93.

³⁰ Leibniz, in *Voraus Edition*, op. cit., p. 1145.

³¹ Cited in Robinet, *Le meilleur des mondes*, op. cit., p. 120.

³² Leibniz, *Remarks on Shaftesbury’s Characteristics*, in P. Riley (ed.), *Leibniz: Political Writings*, op. cit., p. 196.

³³ “Ex nihilo nihil fit; si nulla est naturalis justitia, nec erit artificialis.” Leibniz, notes on Cudworth, in *Textes inédits*, op. cit., Vol I, p. 329.

³⁴ Pascal, *Pensées*, no. 294 (Brunschvicg numbering), trans. Trotter, p. 83. For Pascal as skeptic and Pyrrhonist, see, for example, S. M. Mason, *Montesquieu’s Idea of Justice* (the Hague, 1975), p. xxii ff.

³⁵ Leibniz, *Observations on the Principle of Justice* (1700), in Dutens iv, iii, pp. 370ff.

- ³⁶ Leibniz, *Observations* (1700), sec. vi, in Dutens iv, iii, pp. 370ff.
- ³⁷ Leibniz, *Observations* (1700), sec. vii, in Dutens IV, iii, pp. 370ff.
- ³⁸ Leibniz, *Opinion [Monitâ] on the Principles of Pufendorf* (1706), in Riley, *Leibniz: Political Writings*, op. cit., sec. iv, p. 70.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- ⁴⁰ Cited in René Sève, *Leibniz et l'école moderne du droit naturel* (Paris 1989), pp. 101 ff.
- ⁴¹ Locke, *Works*, Longman et al. ed., (London 1811), vols 3-6.
- ⁴² See Leibniz' letter of 10 July 1704 to Damaris Cudworth: "The intellectual system of the late Monsieur Cudworth pleases me extremely . . . and I hold, as he does, that justice is natural, and not at all arbitrary." And then, *contra* Locke, he adds: "I am for those who believe that the source of necessary truths is innate in our mind" (in Klopp, *Die Werke von Leibniz*, vol. X, pp. 287-289).
- ⁴³ For Leibniz, Hobbes' insistence that "all substance is body" makes all ideas (including moral ones) inconceivable: "[Hobbes speaks] as if it were possible to derive memory, intellect, will and consciousness from [bodily] magnitude, shape and motion alone" (*De Schismate* A IV, 3, p. 258).
- ⁴⁴ Leibniz, *Remarques sur la seconde réplique de Locke* (1700) A VI, 6, pp. 42 ff.
- ⁴⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, 80a ff.; Leibniz, *NE* ("Préface," draft), A VI, 6, p. 48n.
- ⁴⁶ Leibniz, letter to Bierling, in Dutens (op. cit.), vol. V, p. 390.
- ⁴⁷ Leibniz, letter to Jaquelot (1704), in Ger. III, p. 473.
- ⁴⁸ Leibniz, *Remarques*, op. cit., pp. 42 ff.
- ⁴⁹ Leibniz, letter to Pierre Coste (1712), Ger. III, p. 428.
- ⁵⁰ Leibniz, to Sophie and Sophie-Charlotte, A I, 18, pp. 114-115.
- ⁵¹ See Wenchao Li and Hans Poser (eds.), *Das Neueste über China: G.W. Leibnizens Novissima Sinica von 1697*, Internationales Symposium Berlin, 4-7 Oktober 1997 (*Studia Leibnitiana*, Supplementa 33, Stuttgart 2000).
- ⁵² Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, "Praefatio," in *Writings on China*, ed. D. Cook and H. Rosemont (Lasalle 1994), pp. 7ff.
- ⁵³ Leibniz, *T*, "Preliminary Dissertation."
- ⁵⁴ Cicero, *Quaestiones Tusculanae* IV, xxxiv, echoing Plato's *Symposium* 204a-206c. (For the Cicero-Leibniz connection see P. Riley, review of A IV, 5 (Berlin 2004), in *The Leibniz Review*, vol. 14, December 2004.)
- ⁵⁵ Leibniz, *Novissima Sinica*, "Praefatio," op. cit., Cook-Rosemont ed. pp. 49-50.
- ⁵⁶ Leibniz, "General Correspondence vol. 19," op. cit., No. 202, pp. 408-410.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 205, pp. 420-421.

- ⁵⁸ Leibniz, *Discours sur la Théologie Naturelle des Chinois*, ed. Wenchao Li and Hans Poser (Hannover: Leibniz-Archiv Band 13, 2002). (A splendid edition with all relevant writings appended.)
- ⁵⁹ Paul Schrecker, *Leibniz: Lettres et fragments inédits* (Paris 1934), pp. 17 ff.
- ⁶⁰ Jean Baruzi, *Leibniz et l'organisation religieuse de la terre* (Paris 1907)—still the classic treatment of this topic.
- ⁶¹ Leibniz, *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*, in Grua, *Textes inédits*, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 430 ff.; for a commentary see P. Riley, “Leibniz’ *Monitè* on Pufendorf, 1706-2006,” in *VIII Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress*, “Einheit in der Vielheit,” Hannover 24-29 July 2006, ed. H. Breger et al., “Vorträge 2. Teil,” pp. 845-847.
- ⁶² Leibniz, *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*, op. cit., pp. 430 ff.
- ⁶³ Juvenal, *Satires*, No. VI, 223-224—a pair of lines which Leibniz quotes three times in *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken* alone.
- ⁶⁴ Leibniz, *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken*, op. cit. p. 435.
- ⁶⁵ Leibniz, “*General Correspondence* vol. 19,” op. cit., No. 368, pp. 683-684.
- ⁶⁶ Leibniz, *Méditation* on justice, op. cit., *Political Writings* (Riley ed.), p. 46.
- ⁶⁷ In *Monadology*, ed. and trans. R. Latta (Oxford 1898), p. 349.
- ⁶⁸ Leibniz, letter to Landgraf Ernst of Hessen-Rheinfels, in Grua, *Textes inédits*, vol. I, p. 242.
- ⁶⁹ Leibniz, letter to Molanus (1698), A I, 17, p. 609.
- ⁷⁰ See R. Latta, *Monadology* (Oxford 1898), “Life of Leibniz,” pp. 14-16.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷² See P. Riley, *Leibniz’ Universal Jurisprudence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), ch. 6.
- ⁷³ “*General Correspondence* vol. 19,” No. 24, pp. 42 ff., esp. p. 45. In a letter to Thomas Burnett (February 1700), Leibniz says that Milton has “*outré les choses touchant le Gouvernement*” (A I 18, p. 379).
- ⁷⁴ Leibniz, *Manifesto for the Defense of the Rights of Charles III*, in *Political Writings*, ed. Riley, op. cit., pp. 159-160.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.
- ⁷⁶ In A. Foucher de Careil (ed.), *Oeuvres de Leibniz* (Paris 1859-1875), vol. IV, *passim*.
- ⁷⁷ A IV, 6, *Politische Schriften* Band 6, has been announced for publication in 2007-2008.
- ⁷⁸ On the Leibniz-Shakespeare connection, see P. Riley, review of *Politische Schriften* Band 5 (A IV, 5), in *The Leibniz Review*, vol. 14, 2004, pp. 81-84.
- ⁷⁹ Marcel Proust, *On Art and Literature*, trans. S. T. Warner (New York 1984 [orig.

ed. Paris 1954]), pp. 378-380 (on Tolstoy).

⁸⁰ Cf. Freud's claim in "Thoughts for the Time on War and Death" (1915) that "civilization is the fruit of the renunciation" of "egoism" through the "admixture" of "aim-inhibited erotic components" such as friendship, altruism and community (in *Civilization, War and Death*, ed. J. Rickman, London 1958, p. 78). For Freud's notion of love as "sublimated," aim-inhibited erotism, see his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, in *Works*, "Standard Edition," ed. J. Strachey (London 1974), vol. XI, p. 74.