

Leibniz and François Lamy's *De la Connaissance de soi-même*

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As Leibniz had hoped, the publication of his 'Système nouveau de la nature et de la communication des substances...' in 1695 provoked discussion of his metaphysics. Amongst the reactions was that of the French Benedictine, François Lamy (1636-1711), in his *De la Connaissance de soi-même* (published under the title, '*De la Connoissance de soi-même*').¹ It is not unusual to find the different editions of this work being confused, to the detriment of a proper understanding of the relation between Lamy's texts and Leibniz's. No doubt the rarity of copies of *De la Connaissance* is at least partly responsible for this confusion, and it is because of that rarity that Lamy's discussion of Leibniz is made available and reprinted here.

De la Connaissance de soi-même was first published in Paris (André Pralard) between 1694 and 1698, in five volumes (*tômes*) (1 in 1694, 2 and 3 in 1697, 4 and 5 in 1698); each volume has its own title page bearing the volume number. The title pages give no indication of authorship; though the first volume contains a letter of dedication signed 'F.F.L' (i.e. Frère François Lamy), and also has a concluding 'Approbation des Docteurs de Sorbonne' which attributes the work to 'le Révérend Père Dom F.L.'. The edition divides internally into three treatises (*traités*): the first in volume 1, the second in volumes 1 and 2, the third in volumes 3, 4, and 5.

The publication of volumes 4 and 5 in 1698 was noted by the *Journal des Savants* on 25 August of that year. Commenting that they have a 'close connection' with its earlier parts, the anonymous reviewer proposed to analyse the whole work. He did this, through successive weekly issues of the *Journal*. By 8 September he had reached part 2 of the second treatise (at the end of volume 1) 'Where the question of the union of the mind with the body is examined'. He explained (in this and the following issue) that his author denies that the mind and the body have any power to act on each other, and argues for occasionalism. The author, the reviewer said, holds that these two substances can only be united by a 'supernatural relation between their diverse manners of being, which can only come from the purely arbitrary institution of the author of nature'.²

Leibniz read at any rate the 8 September and 15 September parts of this review, for they are quoted in the manuscript Gerhardt entitles 'Supplement to the explanation of the new system regarding the soul and the body, sent to Paris on the oc-

casion of a book entitled *Knowledge of the Self*.³ Though the *De la Connaissance* passages in question were set in print and out in the world in 1694, four years previously, Leibniz commented that their author would have avoided all problems had he considered ‘a new system published not long ago’, i.e. his own ‘New System’ of 1695!

A second, and now six-volumed, edition (‘Seconde Édition, retouchée & augmentée considérablement’) of *De la Connaissance de soi-même* was published in 1699 (André Pralard, Paris). The dedicatory letter and ‘Approbation’ are carried over from the first edition, with the approbation now appearing at the end of the second volume. The title-pages now attribute the work to ‘un Religieux Bénédictin de la Congrégation de Saint Maur’. The six volumes are arranged thus: vol. 1. First treatise (*traité*); vol. 2. Second treatise; vol. 3. Third treatise, first and second parts (*partie*); vol. 4. Third Treatise, third and fourth parts; vol. 5. Continuation of fourth part, and Clarifications of these treatises; vol. 6 Continuation of clarifications.

Though each of the six volumes has its own title page giving the volume number, only the first two have the title page description ‘Seconde Édition, retouchée et augmentée’. On the other hand, and inviting confusion, volumes 3, 4, 5, and 6 (as identified by the title page) refer to themselves internally (for example, on their contents pages) as volumes 2, 3, 4, and 5. Thus the difference between the two editions lies only in the replacement of the first edition volume 1 by new second edition volumes 1 and 2, the first edition volumes 2 to 5 being bodily taken over and renumbered (3 to 6) on new title pages.

The additional material which expands volume 1 of the first edition into volumes 1 and 2 of the second edition partly results from the fact that this second edition, coming four years after the year of the ‘New System’ and not one year before, *does* now consider that work of Leibniz’s. It makes reference also to the so-called ‘Third Explanation of the New System’ of 1696⁴ and his ‘Explanation of Bayle’s difficulties’ of 1698.⁵ This second edition was reprinted in 1701 (Paris, Nicolas le Clerc), with title pages which now openly attribute the work to ‘le R.P. Dom François Lamy, Bénédictin de la Congrégation de S. Maur’.

Lamy’s discussion of Leibniz occurs in the ‘Fifth reflections’ (‘on the way in which God brings about the union between mind and body’) which are in the second part of the second treatise, in volume 2. He introduces the discussion by noting, at the end of his ‘Fourth reflections’, the suggestion of ‘a famous philosopher ... Mons. Leibniz’, that an occasionalist theory of the sort which he has been favouring up till then, demeans, rather than honours God. This, says Lamy, ‘is

what I must consider in some reflections', and so follow the Fifth reflections; reflections which are later summarised (in the third person and with reference to 'l'auteur' and to 'nôtre Filosofo') in the 'Analysis or abridgement' of the second treatise, which concludes volume 2. It is these portions of the second edition of Lamy's *De la Connaissance de soi-même* which are reprinted below.⁶

Leibniz came to know of Lamy's second edition discussion of his 'New System' through Pierre Bayle, whose *Dictionary* note L of 1702 directed its readers to 'treatise 2 of *Knowledge of the Self*, p. 226, 1699 edition'. Including a reply to Bayle which he dispatched on 29 May of that year he reported to Bernoulli that 'I am sorry that I have not yet been able to see the objections of Dom François Lamy in (so Mons. Bayle tells me) the second treatise of his *Knowledge of the Self* (1699 edition), otherwise I would have already sent my replies'.⁷ But before the year was out he had seen what Lamy had to say, for a manuscript dated 30 November discusses it.⁸

Though Leibniz intended that what he wrote about Lamy on the basis of the *Journal des Savants* review of the first edition of *De la Connaissance* should be published, it never was. An undischpatched, undated letter to Bayle refers to 'a paper that I sent to Mons. Cousin, the President, for his journal, in which I made use of the account which that journal had given of the first edition of the Father's book.... [A]s far as I know [that paper] has not been published'. Leibniz conjectured that the paper may nevertheless have been communicated to Lamy and thus may have 'provided the occasion for what he said about my system in the second edition' (which, he again says, he has not yet read).⁹

It is evident, then, that from the point of view of Leibniz studies the distinction between the first and the second edition of Lamy's *De la Connaissance* is crucial. It is not till the second edition of 1699 that the 'New System' is discussed. Leibniz himself was quite clear about this, but twentieth-century commentary and bibliography, whenever it has ventured any detail on this matter, has tended to be curiously confused.

One exception to this confusion is Leroy Loemker who, though he makes no mention of different editions, does give 1699 as the relevant date for the attack on Leibniz.¹⁰ Emile Ravier is aware that it is only in a second edition that Lamy discusses Leibniz, but there are various oddities in his note on this.¹¹ One is that he leapfrogs over the appearance of the second edition in 1699 and neglects to say that his date of 1701 is the date of a reprinting; others are that both the first edition (which he implies was complete in 1694) and the second edition are described as being in four volumes rather than in five and six respectively.

In their note on Lamy in the first edition of their translation of Leibniz's *New Essays* Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett quote a passage from the summary 'Analysis' of Lamy's 'Fifth reflections' on Leibniz.¹² But though the passage must somehow have been drawn from it, no mention is made of the second edition of 1699 and the quotation is referred to the first edition of 1694-8. With similar confusion, W.H. Barber writes,

In 1709 there appeared in the *Journal des Savants* an article by Leibniz in reply to Lamy's book *De la connaissance de soi-même*, the third volume of which had contained an attack on the Leibnizian system. Although the book appeared in the years 1694-98, Leibniz seems not to have read it until 1702.¹³ But, we have seen, the 1694-98 edition (the one Barber refers to here and the only one he records in his bibliography) of Lamy's book contains no mention of Leibniz, and what Leibniz read in 1702 was from the second edition of 1699 (or its 1701 reprinting). Moreover, the attack on Leibniz occurs, we have also seen, in the second rather than the third volume. Perhaps this mistake about the volume comes from a misreading of a letter from Leibniz to Coste: 'The Reverend Father Lamy ... who is known for his book 'de la Connaissance de soi meme' ... attacked self-love in the third volume (*tôme*) of this book. ... I mention in passing, sir, that the Reverend Father Lamy has also written in this same book (*livre*) against my system'.¹⁴ Leibniz says here only that the attack on him occurs in the same 'book' as the discussion of self-love, but one could perhaps take him to say that it occurs in the same 'volume'. (In fact Leibniz is mistaken about its being volume 3 which contains the discussion of self-love; admittedly, going by the contents pages he is right, but as explained earlier, those pages—taken over as they are, from first edition volume 3—in fact list the contents of second edition volume 4.)

With the intention of making Lamy's response to Leibniz's 'New System' more easily available, reproduced below are the relevant passages from volume 2 of the second edition of *De la Connaissance de soi-même*. The ultimate source of the reproduction is the six-volumed set of the 1701 reprinting (cat. no. 6133.558.328) which, not many years ago (Fall Semester 1992), was freely available for borrowing from open access shelves in the Firestone Library of Princeton University. It is sad that the set is now untraceable since it appears to have been unique so far as institutional libraries go.¹⁵ Fortunately the library did have occasion to make and does retain a good master microfilm (MICROFILM 1321) of the volumes. (Copies can be made for a fee on request to Interlibrary Services, Firestone Library). It is this master microfilm which has been used—with grateful acknowledgements to the Firestone Library of Princeton University—for the

present reproduction.

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Notes

¹ Further details on some of the following may be found in Roger S. Woolhouse & Richard Francks, "Leibniz, Lamy, and 'the way of pre-established harmony'", *Studia Leibnitiana*, band 26/1 (1994), pp. 76-90, and in WF, pp. 133-42.

² *Journal des Savants* 35 (8 September 1698), pp. 417-8.

³ GP IV, 572-77; trans. in WF, pp. 138-42.

⁴ 'Extrait d'une lettre de Mr. de Leibniz sur son Hypothèse de Philosophie', *Journal des Savants* 38 (19 November 1696), pp. 451-455 (item 44 of 'Articles by Leibniz, or containing references to him, in French Periodicals, 1670-1716', in W.H. Barber, *Leibniz in France, from Arnauld to Voltaire* (Oxford, 1955); item 148 of 'Les articles dans les journaux savants, 1675-1716', in Emile Ravier, *Bibliographie des oeuvres de Leibniz* (Paris, 1937); partially translated in WF, pp. 65-67.)

⁵ 'Lettre de Mr. Leibnits ... contenant un Eclaircissement des difficultez que Monsieur Bayle a trouvées ...', *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savants* 13 (July 1698), pp. 329-342 (item 51 in Barber, *loc. cit.*; item 153 in Ravier, *loc. cit.*; trans. in WF, pp. 79-86).

⁶ English translation in Woolhouse & Francks, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-90, and in WF pp. 143-52.

⁷ Leibniz to Bernoulli (GM 3. 696-97).

⁸ GP 4.577-90 (WF, pp. 152-64 for English trans.).

⁹ GP 3.66.

¹⁰ L p. 585, n. 7.

¹¹ *Op. cit.* p. 81, n. 176.

¹² NE, p. l/lxxii ('Notes', s.v. 'Lamy'). They have corrected the date in the second edition.

¹³ Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁴ Leibniz to Coste, 4 July 1706 (GP 3, 383).

¹⁵ The Library of Congress in Washington has 1st edn vol. 1 (BJ.1499.S6L32); the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has a complete 1st edn (R.18697-18700) and 2nd edn vols. 1 and 2 (R40568, R40569); the library of Christ Church Oxford has 2nd edn vols. 1 and 2 put together with 1st edn vols. 3, 4, and 5 (NC.8.2-8.7)—as explained earlier, these 1st edn vols are equivalent to 2nd edn vols. 4, 5, and 6, so the library in effect lacks 2nd edn vol. 3; the library of Arizona State University has 2nd edn (1701 repr) vols. 1, 5, and 6 (SPEC E-736 v.1, v.5, v.6).