Voisé, Waldemar

Leibniz's Model of Political Thinking

Organon 4, 187-205

1967

ORGANON 4(1967)

Waldemar Voisé (Poland)

LEIBNIZ'S MODEL OF POLITICAL THINKING *

HISTORY AND POLITICS

Although Leibniz had initially pronounced himself for the mechanistic conception, the dissertation *De principio individui* (1663) showed that he had remained faithful to traditional metaphysics. According to his own words, he had shaped his views during a period of "twenty years of meditation". Today we know more or less exactly the development of the great philosopher's thoughts on logic, physics, mathematics and the many other disciplines he worked on. Therefore now, on the ocassion of the 250th anniversary of his death, it seems to be worth while recalling his occasionally mentioned but very little known work entitled *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum*, which he wrote at the end of 1668 and at the beginning of 1669, at the age of twenty two. We shall be concerned here not only with the analysis of a definite stage of the history of political doctrines, but also with reflections on the methology of historical and political thinking in a century that—by no means accidentally—enjoys the name of the "great century" of science.

It has almost become customary to begin a comparison of Descartes with Leibniz by stating that their respective starting-points were entirely different. Descartes rejected history completely as a source of creative inspiration starting from the presupposition that a true philo-

* The first version of this article, which was considerably shorter, was read in French as "La Mathématique, politique et l'histoire raisonnée de Leibniz dans son *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum*" in Paris, 28 May, 1966, during the *Journées Leibniz* organized by the Centre International de Synthèse. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Tadeusz Czeżowski for his valuable help in the logical analysis of the *Specimen*.

The present paper, presented in November 1966, at Hannover, during the Internationaler Leibniz Kongress will also be published in German, in the Congress papers by the Gottfried—Wilhelm—Leibniz—Gesellschaft.

sophy can be created only after the rejection of the authorities of the past. This was not an isolated opinion then: it was shared by Malebranche, and even by Bossuet, who, though he was a historian himself, came later to a conclusion similar to that of Descartes. Leibniz, however, attributed great importance to the heritage of the previous times. In his wish to build a new science he did not annul the accomplishments of the old one. On the contrary, he thought the sum of the previous knowledge must be preserved in order not to be forgotten and with a view to preventing thinkers from repeating the old mistakes. His respect for the past covered even the accomplishments of centuries which at that time were held in contempt, since he declared that "there is hidden gold beneath the dung of Scholasticism." He described the position of the enemies of history as a taken of "narrow-mindedness" (*la petitesse d'esprit*). Out of a deep conviction of the importance of history grew Leibniz's interest in the historical sources of past centuries, thence he drew stimulation to perusal of ancient philosophers' works, and thence sprung his reflections on a conception of history and of politics.

Leibniz remained principally faithful to Bacon's classification of sciences, in which history was the "field of memory." Hence his lifelong emphasis on the significance of historical erudition, which should be based on a possibly exhaustive knowledge of the sources. At the same time, however, he wished to transform history into a science of a new type by way of linking it to politics. Thus, in Leibniz's conception the past (the domain of history) and the present (the domain of politics) were to be bound up into one whole: history was to be an introduction to political life, and politics was to aim at realizing the principles drawn from the study of history. This view comprised both traditional and novel elements.

The historiography of the 17th century bore a peculiar mark. Grotius (who was also the official historiographer of the Dutch states--general), the "bollandists," Muratori and many other historians of that time put almost exclusively emphasis upon researches of the erudite type. It is to them that we owe the priceless editions of sources. To Leibniz, a typical representative of this kind of researcher and author of the *Annales Imperii, Codex Diplomaticus* and of other erudite and archival works, history was the field of facts in contrast to the field of reasoning. For instance, in 1671 he wrote: "Historiae sunt propositiones singulares contingentes, sumptae a sensu composito seu inductione." On the other hand, however, Leibniz was perfectly aware of the insufficiency of the bare knowledge of facts; he wrote several times that "erudition does not illuminate the mind" ("l'erudition n'éclaire pas l'esprit"), and stated that a mere registration of facts does not

deserve the name of history. He thought that although history conceived of eruditely is not a science, it can nevertheless become a science under certain conditions. Thus Leibniz encountered the classical problem which had disturbed (and continues to disturb) whole generations of historians: since the registration of facts does not deserve the name of science, one has to decide upon the making of a selection of facts. This diagnosis generates a further question: what criterion should decide upon the selection of these and not other facts?

More than half a century ago, as he was considering the essence of Leibniz's historical methodology, Louis Davillé wrote, among others, that the modernity of this methodology consisted in linking the past to the present.[1] Unfortunately, Davillé did not develop this thought and therefore did not pay proper attention to the linkage between history and politics as the essence of Leibniz's conception. Leibniz himself made many efforts to prove his thesis. Thus, for instance, in a letter to Burnet he wrote, among other things, that there were actually many good philosophical and historical books, but that none of them led to "establishments" (*établissements*), and added that "establishment" meant such kind of reasoning which proved some theses in an indisputable way. "In this consists—he continued—the method employed by mathematicians, who separate what is certain from what is uncertain" (*certum ab incerto*). In other words, to attain general knowledge one has to draw a dividing line between what is certain and what uncertain, between what is known and what is unknown. To reject uncertain facts and uncertain statements in order to attain a general knowledge of the historical process—this is the task of the historian who wants to deserve the name of a scientist. In this way, Leibniz with full awareness denied the possibility of the existence of an "objective history," i.e., a history that would register all that happened in the past. Of course, it could be remarked here that in registering facts a historian is not yet a scientist, while in making a selection of them he ceases being one.

But this would not alter the essence of Leibniz's paradox of the historian: either he is not a scientist, or else he is not objective.

It deserves in turn to be stated that a "politics-history" thus conceived of was to serve "the mighty of this world," whose favours Leibniz had always striven after. For it could not be by accident that he had been for many years at the service of the Hanoverian house, whose importance in Germany and Europe was ever growing then. In his desire to link history to politics and to transform the science in this sense into an instrument of managing people from the stand-

[1] "Revivre le passé d'après ce qui en subsiste dans le présent"—*Leibniz historien*, Paris (Alcan) 1909, p. 355. This book contains a huge systematic material, upon which this article is partly based.

point of the rulers' needs, Leibniz formulated the fundamental principles of the "enlightened absolutism." This can be witnessed if only by the high estimate of Leibniz, several years later, by Frederic the Great himself. [2]

Out of Plato's alternative (to make kings of philosophers or philosophers of kings) Leibniz chose the latter possibility, which is shown by his attitude to the reigning sovereigns and their wives (mainly to Sophia Charlotte), whom he was always ready to serve, whether asked to or not, with advice and help. "Il étoit très profond dans l'histoire, et dans les interêts des Princes"—Fontenelle wrote later in his *Eloge*. This notwithstanding, Leibniz was deeply convinced that the "philosopher-king" ruled not only in his own but also in his subjects' interests, and the latter should be satisfied with the existing state of affairs. It must be added, however, that he was one of the first to understand the possibility of a conscious shaping of the future. For, it was Leibniz who authored the frequently reiterated thought (which was formulated not only in the *Théodicée*) that "the present is pregnant with the future." In this manner, the past, the present and the future shook hands, plaiting in Leibniz's historiosophy into one indivisible whole.

Nowadays, as the problem of a modern conception of history becomes increasingly pressing, it seems to be worth while recalling Leibniz's reflections on the subject. Gradually, we are realizing that what we term by the name of history is often but the product of imagination of a historian or of a historical school. It seems, therefore, that the demand to create an objective history is equivalent to the wish to create a history without a historian. And, since each epoch has that kind of history which it has deserved itself, should we not attempt to transform history into a science serving the present? This demand has been recently brought up with increasing frequency; e.g., the 25th *Semaine de la Synthèse* (Paris 1964) was entitled *Histoire, science humaine du temps présent.*

Three centuries ago, in his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, Bossuet conceived of history as the "realization of the secret sentences of God's Providence." Bossuet's contemporary Leibniz suggested a different solution; namely, contracting a "marriage of convenience" of politics and history, although he was not always consistent in doing this (e. g., sometimes he designated history to the role of an impartial umpire, and treated it as a set of examples to be followed in everyday life). In this manner, Leibniz wanted to realize one of his favourite thoughts, i. e.,

[2] J. O. Fleckenstein, *G. W. Leibniz. Barock und Universalismus*, Thun—München (Ott Verlag) 1958, pp. 162—163. Besides, the author excellently exposes the "political sense of his metaphysics" ("politischer Sinn seiner Metaphysik") in translating into the language of politics the apparently philosophical fragment of Leibniz's letter to Arnauld from the 23rd of March 1960 (p. 152).

to transform historical works from sets of curiosities (*simples curiosités*) into readings useful to mankind's welfare. This thought fascinated him continuously in various formulations; only a few months before his death he contrasted the history conceived of as the knowledge of the lives of the dead with a history that would aim at getting to know the living and at teaching them the principles of the law of nature and of politics. [3] It was to be—as he wrote—a *nova ars sciendi*, which would extract from history what is of greatest usefulness in it. One has—he wrote in his *Nouveaux Essais*—to "tirer de l'histoire ce qu'il y a de plus utile."

Disregarding the contents of his writings (for Leibniz adhered to a decidedly conservative political doctrine), it must be stated that his general proposition may perhaps prove to be more useful than the incessant expectation of the realization of an unattinable ideal. If this is the case, the concept of history must be revised once again, since nowadays more than ever before one perceives a need to indicate the way leading to an ever increasing co-responsibility of mankind for its common future. This demand, however, must be addressed to more that one partner, since not only historians decide upon the kind of their science. It seems therefore useful to quote the words of Leibniz, who—with the optimism characteristic of him—wrote in a letter to Arnauld that the approaching epoch would generate a desire of knowledge so great that even politicians would be infected by it: "Un siècle philosophique va naître, où le souci de la verité gagnant au dehors des écoles, se répandra même parmi les politiques."

THE EARLY POLITICAL-HISTORICAL WORK

Though Leibniz made his general reflections on history and politics mainly in the later years of his life, he wrote a work which fulfilled to a wide extent his postulates in this respect already at the start of his philosophical activity. This is a further proof of the consistency in developing his principal tenets.

The full title of that work runs: *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum pro eligendo rege Polonorum novo scribendi genere exactum.* It deals with problems of political theory and practice, i. e., with a field in which Leibniz's all-embracing genius did not manifest itself in its fulness. Nevertheless, as the first work in this field from the chrono-

---

[3] L. Davillé, *op. cit.*, p. 341, footnote 4. Davillé regarded this conception as being mistaken, for by linking history to politics Leibniz made the former arbitrary and deprived of "de cette exactitude scientifique à laquelle elle tendait déjà de son temps," pp. 374—375.

logical point of view it opens the political series in his writings,[4] and recently Emilienne Naert mentioned it at the very outset of her considerations of Leibniz's political thought, writing about that *singulier Specimen.*[5] Leibniz wrote it under the pseudonym of "Georgius Ulicovius Lithuanus" (it was actually an anagram), inspired by his protector, chancellor baron Christian von Boineburg, in order to support Palatine Philip Wilhelm, Duke of Neuburg's candidature to the Polish throne. The previous king, Jan Kazimierz Waza, after his abdication in 1668, went to France, where he died as abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Près in Paris a few years later. In addition to Philip Wilhelm a few others candidated, among them there were Duke Charles of Lorraine, Louis de Condé and Alexei Mikhailovitch, the Russian czar's son. Moreover, there were a considerable number of those who wanted to elect a "Piast," a candidate descended from one of the Polish aristocratic families.

On about 350 pages of his work, Leibniz exposed the merits of his candidate, taking the opportunity to survey the political history of Poland and to make an analysis of her position in Europe at that time.

He grouped his arguments around a few principal theses, among which the two favourite ideas of the Polish nobility came to the fore: namely, the aims of Poland (he called her the "Spain of Eastern Europe") coincide with the goals of all Christendom ("Reipublicae scopus... cum scopo orbis Christiani coincidit") and the welfare of the country is identical with the welfare of the ruling nobility ("bonum Reipublicae cum bono Nobilitatis coincidit"). As far as the candidates to the crown are concerned, at almost every place Leibniz exposed the faults of Philip's rivals (this constitutes a sort of *pars destructiva* of the reasoning) and his client's merits (this in turn constitutes as if the *pars constructiva* of his argumentation). Finally Leibniz came to the conclusion (easy to be guessed) that neither the Russian or the French, nor Piast should be elected, but only Philip.

Apart from the introduction, epilogue and conclusions (these constitute as if separate wholes), Leibniz's work consists of 60 "tasks" (*propositio*), some of them being enlarged by more or less abundant "corollaries" (*corollarium*). The gist of the reasoning is contained in the parts of the "tasks" put down in a logical order, and the historical

---

[4] *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe. Politische Schriften,* Erster Bd (1667—1676), Darmstadt (Otto Reyhl Verlag) 1931, pp. 3—98. In the introduction to this work (pp. xvii—xx) there are remarks on the genesis and circumstances of its fabrication (already after the election of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki, because of the delay at the printer's office at Königsberg). For bibliographical information cf. vol. II of this book (Berlin 1963, pp. 627—635). About other Polish items in Leibniz cf. K. Bittner, "Slavica bei G. W. Leibniz," *Germanoslavica,* 1 (1931—1932), Prague 1932, mainly pp. 15ff.

[5] *La pensée politique de Leibniz,* Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 1964, p. 15.

material (the editor separates it from the rest by using a different printing type) serves as illustration to the successive syllogisms. These "historical notes" were put as a rule at the end of respective "tasks" or "corollaries." This historical material is particularly rich in the two final "tasks" and the four final conclusions (*conclusio*). These final "tasks" were intended to convince the readers definitively that it would be best to call to the throne either someone from the Jagiellonian dynasty or else someone related to the Jagiellos (Philip, of course, proved to be akin by blood to them); the four final conclusions contained a list of the faults of the rivals and the merits of Philip.

Leibniz proved not only to have a good knowledge of the psychology of the nobiliary electors (for the book was intended to perform a propagative function), but also a good knowledge of Polish history and wide reading in this respect. Apart from such writers as Grotius, Bacon, Hobbes and de Thou (who was also a student of Polish history), Leibniz mentioned many Polish writers, e. g., Długosz, Hozjus, Zamoyski, Starowolski, Ossoliński, Stryjkowski, Fredro, etc. Because the work was intended to pass for one by a "Lithuanian" author ("Georgius Ulicovius Lithuanus"), Leibniz frequently referred to the *Historiae Lithuanae* by a Jesuit of Vilna, Adalbert Wijuk Kojałowicz (1609—1677), author of many theological and historical works on Lithuania and the Jagiellos (*Historiae* were published in Danzig in 1650 and in Antwerp in 1669 and afterwards translated into German). Leibniz also quoted John Barclay (1582—1621), whose works were translated into Polish in the first half of the 17th century (*Argenis*, *Paraenesis*, and *Icon, sive descriptio animorum quinque praecipuarum nationum in Europa*, in which he characterized the Spaniards, the French, the Italians, the Germans and the Poles).

Though it was to serve immediate purposes and, formally at least, belonged to the field of political pamphleteering, Leibniz's work bore the mark of a scientific treatise. He strove after making his reflections of a general nature, digressing at any moment from the requirements of the situation of a country before the election of the king. That this endeavour was to a great extent successful can be witnessed by the fact that the *Specimen* was translated into Polish in 1843 and published in Paris with the conspicuous intention to serve as a sign-post for the disunited Polish emigrants.

THE CONCEPT OF A POLITICAL "DEMONSTRATION"

Leibniz's intention in setting out to write the Specimen can be described with a high degree of probability as follows: while writing to the order of a powerful client, the scientific character of the work

must be possibly striven after, to preserve its value in the history of political thought. He symptomatically linked the general problem (*Specimen demonstrationum politicarum...*) with the particular question (*...pro eligendo rege...*) already in the title, while bringing the former to the fore. The putting of the word *specimen* in the first place was in accordance with the particular love of Leibniz and of other writers of the epoch to it; it was to draw the reader's attention to the fact that it was a model, or a sample, of patterned thinking in a field, owing to which he would be able to make himself an opinion on the whole system of thought of the author and, at the same time, to find a solution to an interesting question announced in the title. Hence the word specimen is contained in many a work by Leibniz and his contemporaries.

Upon what principles was that new mode of reasoning to be based? The thinkers of the 17th century were in agreement in a severe criticism of the traditional syllogism and of logic understood as a system of syllogistic reasoning, in spite of the differences between them. Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Pascal, Weigel and Leibniz regarded it as a completely useless instrument in searching truth. They contrasted this "false" logic with a new mode of reasoning called "demonstration," i. e., a reasoning aiming at proving the validity of a proposition by help of premisses recognized to be true. In their opinion, the "true" logic was to consist in linking "demonstration" to the principles of mathematical thinking. Hobbes differentiated with particular distinctness between these two variations of reasoning contrasting the old logic with the new one. The latter is recognized to be the only true one: "Citiusque multo veram logicam discent qui mathematicorum demonstrationibus, quam qui logicorum syllogizandi praeceptis legendis tempus conterunt".[6]

As usually, it was easier to criticize the predecessors and to announce the construction of a new, unfailing method of reasoning than to realize this intention. As it came to constructing the "new logic," it proved that after all much had to be borrowed from the old one. Particularly, the despised syllogism proved to be the "gold" that Leibniz—as we know—wanted to look for "beneath the dung of Scholasticism." Leibniz's teacher, a professor at the university of Jena, Erhard Weigel overcame the difficulty by supplying the old concept with an adjective and thus introduced the term "real syllogism" (*syllogismus realis*). In his book entitled *Analysis Aristotelica ex Euclide restituta*, published in Jena in 1658, he wrote that he regarded Euclid and Aristotle as his models (which was already clear from the title itself). The former, Weigel wrote, reduced science to a few basic assumptions (axioms),

---

[6] "Computatio sive logica," cap. IV, 13, *Opera philosophica quae latine scripsit omnia*, Amstelodami 1668, p. 30.

the latter showed the manner in which to draw conclusions from these axioms. However, he added immediately that he did not mean reasoning conceived of formally (*formaliter*), but utilizing the syllogism materially (*materialiter*). He saw the basis of this new method in the "demonstration": "scire est rem per demonstrationum cognoscere." [7]

Leaving to the next section an analysis of the difference in this respect between the thinkers of the 17th century, let us look at the sense given to the concept of "demonstration" by Leibniz. It must be begun by recalling that Philip of Neuburg has not been called a "client" by accident here. For Leibniz had first been informed about Philip's candidature and only afterwards he set out to write the book. It can be phrased differently: still before he wrote the book he had believed—or perhaps had been persuaded to believe—that only Philip should be elected as king. This kind of "orders," not too infrequent in the history of political doctrines, acquire an abstract nature in philosophical language, because they are separated from economic questions. Before we proceed to showing the matter in this concrete case let us quote Louis Couturat in his continuation of the thought of J. Lechelier, who maintained that demonstration differs from other forms of deductive thought in that it presupposes a truth already known ("suppose la verité déjà connue"). It is—he writes—a truth known only from the psychological point of view. [8] Thus, Leibniz wished to present to the reader a truth, which was known to him from the psychological point of view, in such a manner that the reader could recognize it as logically proved. This sentence not only translates a description of a fairly prosaic situation into abstract language, but it also — which is more important — contains a corroboration of the primacy of logic in the Leibnizian political science.[9]

---

[7] O. Feyl in his *Beiträge zur Geschichte der slavischen Verbindungen und internationalen Kontakte der Universität Jena* (Jena, VEB Fischer Verlag, 1960) wrote on the significance of Weigel as the central personage of the Jena centre (mainly pp. 218ff). From the standpoint of the development of the social sciences, the most accurate analysis of Weigel's works, as well as of other authors of the 17th century, was made by E. V. Spektorskiy in his book *Problema sociyalnoi fiziki v XVII stoletiye* (Problems of social physics in the 17th century), published in Warsaw in 1910 at the expense of Warsaw University. This valuable book was, to some extent, made use by G. N. Clark (*Science and Social Welfare in the Age of Newton,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949), and I owe to it the solution of many a difficulty in the interpretation of Weigel's work, which is complex and full of contradictions.

[8] "Déjà connue au point de vue psychologique, sans doute mais non reconnue comme verité au point de vue logique." A. Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie,* Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 1956, p. 215.

[9] More than 60 years ago, in opposition to Kuno Fischer and others, B. Russell and L. Couturat showed that the starting-point of the whole of Leibniz's system was his logic rather than his dynamics. Cf. H. Elzenberg, "Podstawy metafizyki Leibniza," *Rozprawy hist.-filozof. AU,* LX, Kraków 1917.

In the introduction to the *Specimen* Leibniz declares that in astonishment about the scholars' ignorance in questions concerning human relations he decides to strive after mathematical exactness in his considerations, because only mathematicians can prove their propositions exhaustively and convincingly. Besides Aristotle and Euclid, he mentions Galileo and Descartes as those who contributed to progress in mathematics; while in civil philosophy (*philosophia civilis*) he estimates Bacon, Hobbes and Grotius most highly.[10] Following their example Leibniz resolved to discover "the invariable laws" governing the behaviour of people and thus to "enter the camp of certainty" ("impetum sumsi, eo in campo certitudinem humanam periclitandi"). As a "mind desirous of rationality" (H. Elzenberg), Leibniz conceives of this "certainty" as proof a priori of all truths, also factual ones.

In his search for an immovable truth (it was also to be the decisive argument against scepticism), Leibniz employed the method of mathematical thinking in political-legal sciences; in his *Nouveaux Essais* he spoke with the deepest reverence of the Roman legists because they could employ the method of Euclid, Archimedes and Appolonios, i.e., on the basis of axioms and definitions they built a whole imposing system. Leibniz shared the opinion of many of his contemporaries that reality consists of a number of elements into which it must be decomposed in order to be described in full. In this manner, a science was to appear that would be built in the same way as geometry. Hobbes, whom Leibniz always respected and—as a young man—even admired, regarded society as a sum of individuals, and the individual as a sum of affections; to define these elementary components meant to build—Hobbes wrote—the science of the motion of "political bodies," equally certain and immovable as the science of "physical bodies." Similarly, Spinoza in his *Ethics, Demonstrated in a Geometrical Order*, tried to give a definition of human affections (*Pars tertia: Affectum definitiones, Affectum generalis definitio*).

Leibniz termed demonstration as a "combination of definitions," or else—as he expressed it in a letter to Conring—a "chain of definitions" (*catena definitionum*). The *Specimen* is a classical example of employing polysyllogismus, i.e., a chain of syllogisms, that are linked to one another in such a way that the conclusion of the preceding is simul-

---

[10] K. Müller in his article on "G. W. Leibniz und Hugo Grotius" in the collection *Forschungen zu Staat und Verfassung—Festgabe für Fritz Hartung*, Berlin (Duncker und Humblot) 1958, pp. 187—203, writes on the high estimate of Grotius by Leibniz. Moreover, the article deals with the important problem of Leibniz's view on the question on the sovereignty of the state and of the limits of the subjects' obedience to the ruler. Grotius' attitude to Galileo is discussed by W. Voisé in his article „Grotius, apprenti de Galilée" published in the *Proceedings of the international symposium on Galileo's 400th anniversary* (Florence-Vinci 1967). pp. 317—320.

taneously a premiss in the following one. These syllogisms are given in the enthymematical form, in which some parts of the reasoning are not distinctly given, therefore in analysing this course of reasoning one must give them in their full form. By way of example, here is a proof of a proposition, which Leibniz repeated twice: once in the introduction, the other time as "task" XIV:

Omne turpe periculosum est;
Omne turpe honorem minuit;
Honor est opinio potentiae;
Qui minorem potentiae opinionem habet, laedi facilior habetur;
Quod facilius habetur, id minus molestum factu habetur;
Ergo libentius fit.
Esse vero, qui libenter nos laedat, periculosum est;
Ergo omne turpe periculosum est.

The first syllogism in its full form runs as follows:

Honor est opinio potentiae;
Omne turpe honorem minuit;
Omne turpe opinionem potentiae minuit.

This is a categorical syllogism of the Barbara mood, but in the untypical shape of the so-called *syllogismus obliquus*, because the terms *honor* and *opinio potentiae* in the minor premiss and in the conclusion do not occur directly but in a case dependent on *minuit*. The remaining syllogisms have the same form.

Here is another example, concerning the analysis of the situation in the nobiliary Republic:

Propositio:
Bonum Reipublicae cum bono Nobilitatis in Polonia jure coincidit.

1. *In Comitiis Poloniae, suffragia jure in Nobilitatis potestatae sunt* [here Leibniz gave the example: *Magistratus urbani: Cracaviensis, Vilnensis et Dantiscanus, Nobilibus comparantur*].
2. *Ergo et Comitia.*
3. *Comitia Rempublicam repraesentant.*
4. *Ergo et Respublica jure in Nobilitatis potestate est.*
5. *In quorum potestate jure est respublica, in eorum potestatem translatum est Jus Reipublicae.*
6. *In jure reipublicae persona eius civilis seu moralis continetur.*
7. *Ergo persona Reipublicae in nobilitatis personam translata est.*
8. *Quorum persona coincidit, eorum et bonum coincidit.*

Conclusio: Ergo bonum Reipublicae cum Nobilitatis in Polonia coincidit.

The first syllogism runs as follows:

Si suffragia in Comitiis Poloniae sunt in potestate Nobilitatis;
Et Comitia sunt in potestate Nobilitatis;

Suffragia in Comitiis Poloniae sunt in potestate Nobilitatis;
Ergo: Comitia sunt in potestate Nobilitatis.

This is a hypothetical syllogism *modo ponendo-ponente,* and the remaining syllogisms are—in their full forms—identical with it.

The passage from point 6 to 7 jumps over from the conclusion of syllogism 5 to an identification of the personality of *Reipublicae* and of the *Nobilitatis.* To fill in this gap, Leibniz needed a premiss, which he had omitted and which is at least dubious, namely:

Si in alicuius potestate persona continentur, cum eo coincidit
In Nobilitatis potestate persona Reipublicae continentur;
Ergo: cum ea coincidit.

This is a hypothetical syllogism *modo ponendo-ponens;* the next one has the following form:

Quorum persona coincidit, eorum et bonum coincidit,
Persona Reipublicae et Nobilitatis coincidit,
Ergo: Bonum Reipublicae et Nobilitatis coincidit.

In this way, Leibniz proved one proposition after another throughout his work to arrive at the end to the conclusion we know already. In the foreword he wrote that "we have exact computations and proofs concerning the motion of the clock, and only declamations concerning the welfare of the people" ("de horologio aliquo demonstrationes, de salute tot populorum declamationes habemus"). After the completion of the work he must have certainly been convinced that he had been able to prove in what consisted the welfare of the country where Philip ought to reign. Moreover, on the example of Poland (which he also called, in the foreword, the "bulwark of Christendom") Leibniz tried to show how the machine of the state should be constructed to attain the precision of the clock, which was the classical symbol of perfection in physics to the scientists of the 17th century.[11] In this manner, Leibniz desired to realize the ideal of a universal science, which was to comprise all the *globus intellectualis* of mankind in order to explain in full both the world of nature and the world of man (both, in his opinion, being subject to invariable though different laws). Three years later, in 1672, the same thought was brought forward by Molière in one of his most philosophical plays (*Les femmes savantes*), as he made Armande say symptomatically:

Nous approfondirons, ainsi que la physique,
Grammaire, histoire, vers, morale et politique.

In the conclusion to the foreword, Leibniz assured the reader that he had resolved to enter the camp of certainty in which "no man's foot ever stood" ("quem nulla pedum vestigia signat"). Was it actually

[11] J. O. Fleckenstein, "Die Einheit von Technik, Forschung und Philosophie in der Wissenschaft des Barock," *Technikgeschichte,* 32, Düsseldorf (VDI Verlag) 1965, No. 1.

so? Did the *Specimen* represent a "new kind of writing" ("novus genus scribendi"), as it was announced by the title, and were the first words of the foreword true in declaring that therewith the readers were given a work introducing a method of scientific reasoning that had previously been unusual ("Raram, novaque scribendi rationem affero, Lectores")?

A NEW OR AN OLD METHOD?

The answer to a question put in this way could not be unequivocal. This is not exceptional as far as an evaluation of Leibniz's work is concerned. In one sense, the *Specimen* actually did represent a new kind of writing, in another it did not.

The "novelty" of this kind of publication consisted in drawing all consequences from the theoretical assumptions of the deductive method and in publishing a work that constituted a classical example of rationalistic thinking in political science. The "novelty" also consisted in the conscious binding up of politics and history into a cohesive whole and in showing that as soon as one assumes the basic presuppositions of "demonstration" the problem cannot be solved in any other way.[12] Leibniz could regard his work as new, in spite of the fact that he had had predecessors and—as we saw—not all stages of his reasoning were faultless. But, on the other hand, this word was gradually devaluating since it started to appear in the titles of an ever increasing number of works. At the turn of the century, Kepler published his *Nova Astronomia* (1609) and Bacon was then writing his *Novum Organum* and *The New Atlantis*. Leibniz himself publishes successively, to mention but the most important titles, *Nova methodus discendae docendae jurisprudentiae* (1667), *Hypothesis physica nova* (1670), *Nova methodus pro maximis et minimis* (1684), *Système nouveau de la nature* (1695) and *Nouveaux Essais* (1704). As almost all epochs, this one was also convinced of the novelty of the discoveries it made, and this conviction was manifested with great ostentatiousness.

Fascinated by the power of deduction, Leibniz did not notice the appearance of the possibility of another, really new method of thinking on matters associated with politics conceived of as the science of managing the affairs of the state and of its subjects. This method started to be employed primarily by inhabitants of cities, i.e., those who had the greatest chances to be transformed into "citizens" from "subjects." Thus, already towards the end of the 16th century in

[12] "Le fruit de la démonstration est la science. Tout ce qui est démontré ne peut pas être autrement qu'il est démontré" wrote Bossuet in *Traité de la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même*, Paris (Lecoffre) 1900, p. 84.

London yearly mortality rolls were being elaborated, and since 1603 they started being printed. In his excellent *History of the Royal Society of London,* published in London in 1667, Thomas Sprat wrote much on the subject, as well as on the revolutionary book by John Graunt with a lengthy but well-informing title: *Natural and Political Observations ... upon the Bills of Morality with Reference to the Government, Religion, Trade, Growth, Ayre, Diseases, and the Several Changes of the Said City* (i.e., London, where the book was published in 1662).

Leibniz, a Fellow of the Royal Society, who in his youth had been enthusiastic about Bacon (he admired the latter's postulate to base science upon experience) and about Hobbes, and who was an eager reader of all "novelties," could not have not known about that. Already in 1669 he projected the elaboration of a history of medicine connected with a postulate addressed to scientific societies to publish annualls of births, mortality, epidemics, etc. in various population concentrations (Dresden, Austria, Prussia). His *Consilium Aegyptiacum* addressed to Louis XIV in 1672 (he advised to conquer Egypt and to transform France into a colonial power) contained plenty of unusually accurate economic, statistical, and demographic advice. Several years later, Leibniz brought up a project of founding "economic faculties" at some German universities. Demography was his particular passion, because he was convinced that the number of population constituted the power of a country: he associated the decline of Spain with the depopulation of this country, and the diagnosis of the malady of France was that "Paris flourishes, the provinces become desolate."

Leibniz cherished this kind of interest since early youth down to the last years of his life. However, he kept them as if on the side-track of his thought. Perhaps the immense richness of his ideas, the incessant abandoning of one subject for another made it impossible to reflect more deeply on these matters. A characteristic example is provided by his remarks on Weigel and Petty. Erhard Weigel, an odd mind full of metaphysical-symbolic speculations (e.g., he held up the geocentric view, propagated the Pythagorean mysticism of numbers, etc.) had occasionally strikingly novel ideas. Thus, his *Arithmetische Beschreibung der Moral-Weisheit* (Jena 1674) dedicated to the municipal council of Nuremberg, contained a project for handling social phenomena exclusively from the numerical point of view; what he meant was no less than the creation of a kind of statistics covering the whole of city life. And Leibniz in his *Remarques sur Weigel* observes that Weigel omitted the most important part of mathematics, i.e., the infinitesimal calculus, and therefore brought the doctrine as if to half-way its completeness. [13]

[13] "... la science de la quantité en général ou de l'estimation (calcul), comme l'appelle notre célèbre Weigel, ne me paraît être traité qu'à moitié", *Nouvelles Lettres et opuscules inédits* (ed. A. Foucher de Careil), Paris (Durand) 1857, p. 149.

Similar remarks were made by Leibniz on the two works by William Petty, *Two Essays in Political Arithmetic* and *Five Essays in Political Arithmetic,* published in 1691 but written earlier. At the very outset Leibniz writes that "studies of this kind may be of great importance to politics: either in the evaluation of the power of the state (in relation to the number of population), or in determining the lenght of human life." After this he sets out to make tables aiming at the deepening of the mathematical analysis of phenomena (of mortality, longevity, etc.). In both cases he is interested primarily in the mathematical aspects of the problem. At that time he writes an essay of a few pages, which was never extended, on *Questiones calculi politici circa hominum vitam, et cognatae,* in which he outlines a programme for scientific researches in the population number, the ratio of women to men, the number of unmarried people, the agricultural land area, natural resources etc. [14]

Thus, Leibniz was but one step from the re-building of statistics into a general science bound up, in addition, with politics. He did not, however, make that step. This is the more strange that he always maintained that all branches of human ability tend to perfection, and he saw—better than any other of his contemporaries—the relationship between the power of a state and the efficiency of managing its resources. [15] But, on the other hand, he shared the conviction of many of his contemporaries that "pure" thought excels in quality "practical" thought, and that "general" thinking is better than "particular" thinking. Leibniz always used to contrast decidedly these two kinds of thinking, in particular where the transiency of individual sensory perceptions was concerned: "Philosophia est complexus doctrinarum universalium, opponitur historia quae est singularium." [16] It is thought which can give a general (i.e., scientific) character to our perceptions, and nothing but thought can prevent us from sensory illusions. This contained the right conviction about the importance of thought as a co-factor in the creation of the most important systems; the discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo consisted in a negation of the validity of our uncontrolled sensory perceptions (we perceive "with our own eyes" that the sun is moving in the sky, that a feather falls less fast than a stone, etc.). But this right reflection led Leibniz to the false

[14] Both texts were published in the work edited by O. Klopp, *Die Werke von Leibniz.* Hannover 1866, *Erste Reihe: Historisch-politische und staatswissenschaftliche Schriften,* V, pp. 326—337 and 337—340.

[15] During his life, the great Dutch statesman, John de Witt in his struggle with Louis XIV, took resort to statistics in trying to calculate accurately the natural resources of the country. De Witt himself was a student of mathematics and published a book on this subject; cf. G. W. Clark, *op. cit,* p. 136.

[16] L. Davillé, *op. cit.,* p. 340. Leibniz emphasized at almost any place that the senses are exclusively a source of particular truths, because they provide individual examples only.

proposition that one can construct a science in no dependence on experience (later this mistake was repeated by the positivists).

The conviction about the prevalence of "pure" thought was also rooted deeply in the belief, universally shared in that epoch, in the superiority of metaphysical problems; for this reason, one wanted to find a rational solution to all existential questions of mankind in the language of metaphysics.[17] In this respect, Leibniz pronounced himself clearly and unambiguously, as he wrote, e.g., in a letter to Arnauld in 1686, that although the laws of nature should be explained mathematically and mechanistically, it must not be forgotten that these laws have their metaphysical reasons.[18] He employed the same principle in "human affairs." In his dispute with Pufendorf and Thomasius he explained that any doctrine that bases itself on the temporary is insufficient and incomplete,[19] and in his remarks on Weigel's works he stated that "the truths of metaphysics are certainly the most important for... a true science of morals."[20]

Leibniz's teacher, Weigel, declared mathematics to be the basis of the science of the world. However, in the foreword to the *Arithmetische Beschreibung der Moral-Weisheit* he maintained that out of the two parts of that science (i.e., arithmetics and geometry) arithmetics is the more important one (*vielmehr die Arithmetik*) because God, the "eternal calculator" (*der ewige Rechenmeister*) created the rulers (*Regenten*) in order to make them his deputies (*Vicerechenmeistern*) and to allow them to serve his glory in managing the affairs of the majority of people, who had not yet learned the art of calculation and therefore were still apprentices in this field (*Rechenschüler*). Thirty years later, John Arbuthnot, a physician and a friend of Swift's, published in Oxford *An Essay on the Usefulness of Mathematical Learning* (1701), in which he emphasized the significance of mathematics for a "clear, demonstrative and methodical reasoning," but, at the same time, he stressed that it should be taught for its usefulness "in civil affairs"; arithmetics is necessary—he wrote—primarily for merchants and politicians and geometry is useful in measuring land, distances between towns, the sizes of pieces of cloth in selling etc.[21]

[17] "Dem Barock war die Metaphysik die Sprache, in welcher es rational sein Existential auszudrücken versuchte." J. O. Fleckenstein, *G. W. Leibniz*, p. 41.

[18] "Il faut toujours expliquer la nature mathématiquement et mécaniquement, pourvu qu'on sache que les principes mêmes ou les lois de mécanique ou de la force ne dépendent pas de la seule étendue mathématique, mais de quelques raisons métaphysiques." *Lettres de Leibniz à Arnauld* (ed. G. Lewis), Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 1952, p. 45.

[19] M. Barillari, "La dottrina de diritto di Leibniz," *Atti della Reale Accademia di Scienze Morali e Politice*, XLIII, 1915, parte 2, p. 140.

[20] "La découverte des verités de la metaphysique, qui sont assurément les plus importantes et qui servant le plus à la vraie science des moeurs." *Nouvelles lettres et opuscules inédits*, p. 149.

[21] G. A. Aitken, *The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot*, Oxford (Clarendon Press) 1892, pp. 410f.

Far from that sort of practicalism, Leibniz always attributed primacy to geometry, of which he conceived, as a matter of fact, as a purely abstract science. There was nothing odd about it: the inductive method had not yet been developed, whereas geometry was the most axiomatized science in accordance with the most severe requirements of deductive and *a priori* thinking. Therefore, without much risk we can assume that if Leibniz had written his *Specimen* several years later, he would have elaborated it in an either identical or very similar manner, employing the "geometrical" manner of reasoning. It is very characteristic that even in connection with the statistical considerations he thought of constructing *a priori* the calculus of probability, and only much later (after 1700) he was shown the possibility of constructing this calculus on the basis of *a posteriori* reasoning by Jacques Bernoulli (though he acknowledged the latter to be right not before 1714).[22] This is one more proof—perhaps a too blatant one—of how deeply Leibniz was fascinated by the thinking *more geometrico*.

This kind of thinking has, however, other consequences, apart from the strictly scientific one. Namely, it seems to be worth while comparing it with the reflections of some ancients on the famous Platonian concept of the "God-Geometrician". In his book on the relationships between science and politics in antiquity. B. Farrington[23] analyses, among others, the eighth chapter of Plutarch's *Dinner-table Discussions*. One of the interlocutors recalls that Lycurgus prohibited the Spartans to study arithmetics and introduced instead the teaching of geometry, for numbers induced them to distribute goods equally, whereas the principles of geometry suggested a distribution according to merits. Another interlocutor brought up a similar problem in drawing attention to the fact that Plato in calling God a "Geometrician" wished to emphasize that only geometry was able to set in order the world of matter, which always proved to be a source of conflicts and disorder.

Twenty centuries afterwards the Platonian God-Geometrician took on the shape of the Leibnizian God-Architect. In Leibniz's opinion, it was the God-Architect (frequently called also a God-Monarch by himself) who in his rule over the best of all possible worlds instituted in it the best of all possible orders. Those whom the existing order does not suit do not deserve the name of truly pious people.[24] The "republic

[22] *Leibnizens mathematische Schriften,* hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt. *Erste Abteilung. Bd III: Briefwechsel zwischen Leibniz, Jacob Bernoulli, Johann Bernoulli und Nicolaus Bernoulli,* Halle 1855. Mainly the letter of Jacques Bernoulli from Basles, written on 30th Oct. 1703, in which he exposes that possibility—p. 78. Cf. L. Couturat, *La logique de Leibniz d'après des documents inédits,* Paris (Alcan) 1901, pp. 274f.

[23] At the beginning the author writes: "In this Chapter it appears that arithmetic is democratic, geometry oligarchic and that God prefers the latter." *Science and Politics in the Ancient World,* London (Allen and Unwin) 1946, p. 26.

[24] This is a paraphrase of one of the sentences from Leibniz's letter to Arnauld (23rd March 1960): "Que ceux qui ne sont pas contents de l'ordre des choses

of noble minds" instituted by the Supreme God is ruled by divine Governors, who are as if Little Gods.[25] Some of the subjects comply with the will of these Governors in a hope of obtaining favours or in fear of punishment, but there are many who are loyal to them out of delight or patriotism; and, if one adds to this the wish of these subjects to live in peace, it can be stated that public peace is the source of the subjects' duties.[26] Thanks to this, everybody can be happy, since to be happy in this vale of tears means to be satisfied and quiet.[27]

This is an outline of Leibniz's political doctrine comprising, evidently, also part of the science of morality. In other words, his doctrine can be summed up as follows: one has to put up with the fact that the world is as it is, but one has also to realize clearly that it should be as it is. Therefore, the model political thinking consists not so much in explaining why it is thus, as in explaining that it should be just as it is.

The social history of the last three hundred years appended a commentary to this reflection. And the fact that it was born in the mind of a genial scholar and a great philosopher, who in his desire to satisfy everybody satisfied no one, once more proves that it is most difficult for human thought to pave its way in the knowledge of man's place in society.

*

Instead of the customary full-stop, we must put an interrogation mark at the end of our considerations. For, Leibniz was not only an unusual personality but also an enigmatic one. For a fairly long period

---

ne sauraient se vanter d'aimer Dieu comme il faut." *Lettres de Leibniz à Arnauld,* p. 103.

[25] This is a paraphrase of one of the sentences from Leibniz's letters to Arnauld (9th Sept. 1687): "Et c'est cette société ou république générale des esprits sous ce souverain monarque qui est la plus noble partie de l'univers, composée d'autant de petits dieux sous ce grand Dieu." *Ibid.,* p. 92. The expression *esprit* has been translated into "noble mind", which is not too great a licence if it is recalled that J. Fleckenstein, in his wish to render the Leibnizian metaphysical terms into the language of current politics, has translated Leibniz's expression "les intelligences ou âmes capables de réflexions" simply into "princes and monarchs." Cf. *op. cit.,* p. 152.

[26] The original text runs thus: "L'on veut qu'elle n'est que l'espérance des bienfaits ou la crainte des supplices. Il me semble qu'on a tort de faire ce reproche aux peuples. Il y en a beaucoup qui sont fidèles par l'affection qu'ils ont pour leur prince et pour leur patrie. Si le désir de se conserver en repos s'y mêle, il n'y a rien à rédire, la sécurité publique est le principe de l'obligation des sujets." It is a fragment of the chapter entitled "De la fidelité des sujets envers les princes" taken from *Réflexion sur l'art de connaître les hommes;* Leibniz wrote these reflections for Madame l'Electrice de Brunsvic-Luneburg about 1702: *Lettres et opuscules inédits de Leibniz,* p. 144.

[27] "La vie heureuse icy bas consiste dans une âme tout-à-fait contente et tranquille," *ibid.,* p. 241.

of time, it has been known that he published only one version of his philosophical conception, i.e., the indeterministic one, while leaving in hiding the other version, the deterministic one, in which there was no room for freedom because there was exclusively necessity. Several years ago, in his book on *Leibniz et Spinoza* (2nd ed. 1962), G. Friedmann analysed precisely Leibniz's interest in the doctrine of the "anathemized atheist." He corroborated the opinion (which had already appeared during Leibniz's life, and was later persistently reiterated) that Leibniz had actually been a Spinozist in disguise. His letters show that he endeavoured to hide his respect for Spinoza, whose views he proclaimed publicly to be "monstrous." Similarly, Leibniz's attitude to another "monstrous" conception, i.e., to Hobbes' doctrine, was also ambiguous: he criticized the latter publicly but did not get weary of seeking private contact with that philosopher.

This kind of "double-facedness" was not exceptional at that time: it is sufficient to recall the known fact of the existence of two versions of Galileo's views, or the enigmatic "larvatus prodeo" ("I walk on and mask myself") of Descartes. The milieu in which Leibniz lived could only accept the doctrine he proclaimed publicly (although the ostentatiousness of some pronouncements is at times astonishing). Fontenelle, as we have already pointed out, was right in saying that Leibniz "had well understood the interests of princes." On the other hand, Leibniz knew that wisdom persuades one to adjust himself to his milieu (la sagesse veut qu'on s'accomode aux gens et aux choses"). It was a variant of the famous device *Caute,* which Spinoza had had carved on his signet-ring with a view to remember always to act with extreme caution in relationships with his environment. In the light of that, the known statement by Leibniz: "he who knows me only by what I have published does not know me" takes on a specific sense. It is difficult to exclude the possibility of a surprise which may be hidden in European archives, mainly in the renowned archives of the Hanoverian Landesbibliothek.